

500 WORDS ON LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT



Harmonious Passion

“I can’t change the direction of the wind but I can adjust my sails to
always reach my destination”

Jimmy Dean

These 500 words on Leadership Development is for all leaders and managers who are interested
in supporting their people through challenging times



I train in the Gym. And I am seeing my therapist - one for my biceps, the other for my mind.

Actually, I am seeing my therapist or counsellor (the name they give therapists here in the UK) as a preventative measure and for fun. My counsellor is like a psychologically trained 'friend' - someone who knows how to help, to explore, to reflect, and to ask the right questions. Reflection and later conceptualisation of experience are two main parts to facilitate learning. To stay mentally fit and to grow, you need both.

Last month was Mental Health Awareness month. The news and social media has been awash with advice, anecdotes and stories about mental health and how we can help those around us. It seems we are now more aware of mental health than ever before.

The World Health Organisation has named stress the 'health epidemic of the 21st century' so it is no wonder employers and policy makers are increasingly taking the stress, anxiety and depression affecting valuable members of the workforce much more seriously.

One way to reduce stress and burnout is having a passion for what you do. BTW, burnout is a state of physical and emotional exhaustion often followed by apathy and illness and is astoundingly experienced by almost 50% of all people, according to some studies. I recently stumbled upon the "Passion Paradox" by Stulberg and Magness who make the distinction between harmonious and obsessive passion. As you might have guessed, obsessive passion is when you get hooked because of an external reward like money, promotion, social media followers or alike and is closely linked to stress and burnout.

Harmonious passion on the other hand, is being absorbed in an activity because you love it and is the petrol that keeps your engine running without experiencing burnout. To achieve harmonious passion requires three main things:

1. Autonomy: the ability to have a significant control over one's work.
2. Mastery: the ability to see improvement and progression in one's craft.
3. Belonging or relatedness: a feeling of connection and community.

If you think about the corporate world where burnout and stress is especially prevalent, you might claim that leaders often suffer from two of these three factors to achieve harmonious passion.

The smaller factor of these two is Autonomy. Leaders (the higher the hierarchical ladder the better) usually have a good part of control over their work. Though often for operational duties and less for strategic, which is created by the executive board and channelled down the organisation. Mastery, however, is difficult to feel for many since the more complex the knowledge economy becomes, the harder it is to see clear cause-and-effect impact based on one's actions. Mastery requires you to keep up with how your job is likely to change within the fourth industrial revolution.

We can, however, increase one's mental complexity and the ability to keep up with the rising complexity of the knowledge economy and digitalisation to be able to see a bigger picture and being able to deal with day to day tasks. In short: we have to scale up our game to be able to keep up.



Leadership development is therefore focussing less on skills and tools, especially as tools can be better learned on YouTube. Learning how to learn, reflection and conceptualisation of past experience with peers and others is the key to increase mental complexity, gaining a better understanding of the fast-changing world and to achieve harmonious passion.

Next time you are in the Gym, strengthening your back, think of the ways to strengthening your mind with the help of your peers, coach or your therapist.

Yours,
Dr Marcus Gottschalk
CEO at CLP

