

M MARZUKI MOHAMED

GROW OR DIE



5 Power Keys To Stay Relevant
In Career And Business

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M Marzuki Mohamed has extensive experience in the field of Human Capital Development. Not only is he an excellent, dynamic and resourceful instructor of international standing, he is also skilled in the management and leadership of an organisation with international experience in the field of construction. His success in management and leadership stems from his starting premise that every person is an individual human being and a special entity that makes a difference in this

world. Thus, it is with this principle that he ventured into training and teaching to generate widespread and effective impact to this message.

Participants to his programmes receive enhanced benefits and more impact full results from his training and coaching because of his extensive practical knowledge and skilful application of Neuro and Behavioural Sciences using the Accelerated Learning technology.

Marzuki is a Certified Neuro-Semantics and NLP Trainer, and Associate Certified Meta-Coach by the International Society of Neuro-Semantics®.

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The specialist construction company that I grew for six years died the day I left it in 1998.

No, the company didn't actually die but the specialist construction company died. I was the expert in the company. When I left, I left with the company's expertise. It had to turn into general construction, as its expertise was gone.

BUILDING EXPERTISE

After graduating as a civil engineer in 1985, I joined a start-up construction company, specialising in soil improvement. As the design engineer, I had to quickly learn the technical specialisation of the company. At the time, it specialised in a soil improvement technology using vertical drainage. I had a senior in the company, a co-engineer who appeared to me to be at the forefront of technology. I used to look over his shoulder at what he was working on, the books that he read and followed him to the conferences on the latest developments in soil improvement technology. Starting off with Vertical Drainage, we helped the company develop additional specialist techniques in soil improvement technology, such as Vibro-Compaction, Dynamic Compaction, Stone Columns and other soil reinforcement and stabilisation techniques.

Within five years, we became subject matter experts in Malaysia. Developers came to us for advice on their projects on marginal lands. Consulting engineers consulted us on the most appropriate engineering solution to improve the ground for their projects. Contractors engaged us for the most cost-effective soil improvement solution. Universities and regulatory bodies invited us to give talks and seminars. The technologies that we imported from other experts from the Netherlands, Germany, Hong Kong and Japan, we were now exporting to Singapore, Indonesia, Brunei, Thailand and Vietnam. We were respected in the field of soil improvement and business was good.

How do you get to be an expert? You deliberately work on it, one skill at a time to gain competency. Then you need to deliberately develop your competency, one element at a time, to gain expertise.

The oft-repeated phrase is practise makes perfect. No! Practise makes permanent! Deliberate practice makes perfect. That is why you need to deliberately practise your skills in order to gain expertise.

COMPETENCY = ATTITUDE + SKILL + KNOWLEDGE

Your attitude about learning is key. How do you think-feel about learning? Do you feel good about it? Are you enthusiastic about learning? Are you curious to learn? If you answered “Yes!” to these questions, then 80% of the problem is solved. Do you realise that 95% of the people do NOT read non-fiction books after they graduate from high school, college or university? No wonder that only 5% of the people consider themselves to be successful in life. You need to have a learner’s mind-set, a BEGINNER’S MIND. The Beginner’s Mind is like the mind of a child. It is ever curious, ever probing and asking questions. Do you remember the questions you asked as a child? Do you remember the questions you were asked by a child? I remember a question my daughter asked me when she was about four. “Daddy, why is fire hot?” I opened my mouth to provide a glib answer, took a deep breath and shut it again because I realised that I didn’t know the real answer! Luckily for us, I had the honesty to reply, “Fia, daddy doesn't know the answer to that question. Why don’t we look for the answer together?” By admitting that I did not know, I accidentally activated my Beginner’s Mind. A year later, as I was reading ‘Critical Path’ by Richard Buckminster Fuller, the answer to that question jumped out of its pages and I was able to share that with her.

The Beginner’s Mind is all about attitude towards learning. Having the right attitude about learning will spur you to acquire more and more knowledge. **LEARNING IS THE KEY FOR GROWTH.** Without learning, stagnation sets in, then regression and ultimately death.

Learning is a skill that can be learned; that has to be learned. When you have the skills of learning, then you are opening yourself up to Word Lessons and World Lessons.

Word Lessons are the lessons that you learn from reading books, listening to audio lessons, viewing video lessons and attending classes, seminars or training. Now, which of these are you doing right now?

Then there are the World Lessons. These are the events that you go through in life and each event is there for learning for you. One major skill that will stand by you for World Lessons is the skill of Self-Reflection. To reflect upon each event and asking yourself “What do I learn from this?”

You may begin by developing technical excellence in the field that you are currently in. Having the commitment to excellence in that particular field to become an expert in it. Robert Pante, Master Life Coach and author of “Image Builds Business” and other books, puts out a challenge that I find most compelling when he defined excellence. “On your worst day, you are better than anyone else on their best day”. What are you good at? What field are you currently in? What field can you master? What skills do you need to enhance to become a master in your field?

Other than excellence in your chosen technical area, you may also begin developing other transferable skills. For me, at the top of the list is the Leadership set of skills. What are they? What does a leader need to do? A leader creates an inspiring vision of the future. A leader engages people with that vision such that the people identify themselves with the vision. A leader then manages the accomplishment of the vision. A leader builds and coaches teams to actualise the vision. Leadership brings together all the skills necessary to do all of these. To learn these, start by understanding the systems and processes in your organisation - systems thinking. Then, for you to appreciate the systemic nature of how each component in the organisation affect other components - systemic thinking.

ENTREPRENUERIAL MINDSET

In 1987 the country and the region went through an economic downtown. The construction industry was first hit. Construction projects began grinding to a halt. Payment for work done, slowed down. Ageing list began to lengthen; payment that was supposed to be made in 30-days, dragged to 60-days, then to 90-days, then to 120-days. Companies struggled to make salary payments. I remember working for two months without pay and then receive half a month's salary. What did we do? Apart from doing what we can do to reduce cost for the

company, like using our private vehicles to transport equipment to project sites, we kept a close relationship with the client's chain of command from the project manager right up to the finance manager. By doing that, whenever the client has money to disburse, our company would be included. In that way, we kept our salaries from drying-up altogether.

Some may be tempted to say that payment of salaries is the responsibility of the company owner. Well, we started thinking like the company owner to make sure that the company has money to pay our salaries. We could have just said, "I have done my job. It's the boss' job to pay me my salary!" No! We began thinking "Where can I collect money for the company so that it can pay us our salaries?" We began thinking like the entrepreneur and taking responsibility for our own situations instead of leaving it to others.

Thinking like an entrepreneur, instead of employee mind-set, and thinking about responsibilities, instead of entitlement mind-set, are critical if you want to survive and thrive in times of accelerating change. You cannot rely on others to make things better for you. You cannot rely on your current competencies and to keep doing what you have always been doing. You need to ask yourself "What do they want? How do I give that to them?" 'They' and 'them' here refer to your customers - your boss, your company, the company's customers, vendors and stakeholders. What is the 'Value' that you need to give to them? What additional competencies do I need to be able to do that? If you keep on thinking "I am the <profession> here and this is what I do", then you will very swiftly be as dead as the dodo.

CHANGE

By 1990, the economy had picked up considerably and the company was doing very well. So well that the company began to expand into infrastructure engineering, building construction, environmental engineering and even information technology. Geotechnical engineering, which was the sole source of income for the company before the additional businesses, then became a small department and contributor to the company's coffers. The pioneers and the stalwarts of the company were happy for the company's success until words that resulted in ill feelings began to filter into our ears. Words like "What are these engineers doing, playing with their computers all-day long?" Many felt unappreciated. After all the hard work and sacrifices to sustain the company

while it was in dire need, and the bosses had this to say when things turned for the better. People began to leave.

Eighty percent of people leave the company they worked in because of their bosses. There are competent bosses and there are less than competent bosses. How do less than competent bosses come about? One of the reasons how less than competent bosses come about in many corporate and public organisations is that people get promoted to positions of their incompetency. Let say that you are an engineer and you are very good in your particular area of engineering expertise. After years of solid work to the organisation, the company decided to promote you to Engineering Manager. You have now been promoted to a position of your incompetency. Engineering competency and management competency require different skill sets. Whereas in engineering, you mainly concern yourself with the 3 M's; Materials, Machines and Methods, in management you need to concern yourself with the fourth 'M'; that is Man. You need people skills apart from technical skill. What happens to many bosses is that when they get promoted to their position of incompetency, they revert to their areas of competency. That is why you may find that many Engineering Managers revert back to doing the work of engineers rather than managing their engineers.

Many people want to feel appreciated in the jobs that they do. When they end up with a boss who does not know how to manage people, they feel unappreciated and unhappy. So, what do you do if you have such a boss? This is one of the most often asked questions amongst executives and non-executives when I run my training programmes. Even amongst managers, they would ask this same question about their bosses!

First thing to remember is you cannot change others. You can only change yourself. "For Things to Change First I Must Change". Yes, it feels good when people appreciate you. At the same time, do not expect appreciation from others. When you are not expecting it and they do, it feels good. If they don't, it doesn't really matter, does it? What is more important is that you know how to appreciate yourself. Do you know how to appreciate yourself? How do you know that you have done a good job? This leads us to the second point - know how to measure your performance.

In the Industrial Age, the measure of performance is Time. In the Information Age, the measure of performance is Result. Thus, performance measurement is

as equally important a skill as performing the job itself. There are lead measures and lag measures as well as tangible measures and intangible measures. Do you know how to measure all of them?

Lag Indicators are measures focusing on results at the end of a time period, normally characterising historical performance. Market Share, Sales, Employee Satisfaction are examples of Lag Indicators. They are normally easy to identify and capture. They are historical in nature and do not reflect current activities and lack predictive power.

Lead Indicators, on the other hand are measures that drive or lead to the performance of lag measures, normally measuring intermediate processes and activities. Hours spent with customers, proposals written, absenteeism are examples of Lead Indicators. They are predictive in nature and allow organisations to make adjustments to achieve desired results. Lead Indicators may prove difficult to identify and capture, and often new measures with no history in the organisation.

Measures that are Tangible in nature, such as Net Income, Market Share, Output per Production and Absenteeism, are easier to capture. When measures are Intangible, such as Innovativeness, Continuous Learning, Quality, Commitment and Customer Focus, they may be more subjective in nature and more difficult to capture.

You may ask, “Why bother to measure my own performance? Is that not what the boss is supposed to do every year end?” Yes, the boss is tasked with appraising your performance. The question is, “How well is he be able to measure your performance?” Does he stand guard over you all the time when you are at work? Is that all that he is tasked to do or is he not also tasked to do his own job? Is he also not being measured for doing his own job? If he is, which he definitely is, then would he not be more concerned about measuring his performance than measuring yours? Does it not make more sense for you to measure your own performance so that you have evidence of the quality of your performance? Measuring your own performance is your responsibility. If you do not know how to measure your own performance, do not expect your boss to know how to either. And be ready to be under-evaluated and disappointed with your performance appraisal.

RE-ENGINEERING

I felt under-appreciated and unjustly evaluated by my bosses at the time. I, too, decided to leave but not after key technical people had left en masse. That was when I was hit with a bigger issue. I became indispensable to the company and I couldn't leave. I was threatened with "If you leave the company, we'll close down the whole department and we'll have to fire everyone there". I was naive enough to fall for the trick and stayed, but not after getting them to agree to incorporate the department and that I would run the new company. I resolved that the livelihood of people in a company should not be held ransom by an individual and that people should be appreciated for the good work that they do.

"What do I know about management of an organisation?" that was the first question I asked myself and the answer was "Very little!" So, I started with what I knew: engineering and systems. Thus I began to systemise work processes. The area that I particularly looked into was information management for efficient storage and retrieval of information. That was the easy part.

I was most aware of my lack of experience in financial and organisational management. I had to learn that, very quickly. I attended courses and seminars to up-skill myself in these areas. Whatever that I learned, I immediately applied to running the company. I hired experienced people in areas that I lacked experience. The company grew and grew - from a turnover of US\$250,000 to US\$40,000,000 in six years. I was happy and the people were happy. However, there was one thing that was still nagging me. I was the CEO and I was still the technical expert of the company. I had two engineers that I was grooming to take over my place but I was not doing a good job of it. At the time, I did not know how to train them and I did not know why I was failing.

"The livelihood of people in a company should not be held ransom by an individual" and I was still that individual. Then, I did not even know that there was terminology for the issue that I was facing - Knowledge Management. In as much as I was growing through continuous learning, beginning with specialised technical knowledge in soil mechanics and soil improvement, I turned to learning about project management, business management, financial management, organisational management and performance management. The company, from the perspective of technical expertise, was not. Though I was

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able to transfer much of my management knowledge into organisational processes, I failed in developing new experts and translating the expertise into system processes in the company. Looking back, I now see why I was failing to do so. It was Leadership. More specifically two core sub-skills of leadership and they are Communicating and Coaching.

Communicating is more than just speaking. It involves Listening, Supporting and Questioning. Without these three sub-skills, I was merely talking and telling. I may be enthused about technical expertise but I know next to nothing about what was going through peoples' minds. What were their hopes and desires? What was it that they want and what drives them? What was stopping them from achieving their dreams? Was it fear, doubt, confidence, self-esteem or what?

I was trying to drive them towards a goal that I wanted using the way that I used!

Coaching skills would have allowed me to elicit their private goals and link these to the organisational goal. It would have helped them to identify their stumbling blocks and utilise their internal resources to overcome these. It would have helped them to elicit their success strategies and use them in achieving their goals in ways that work for them.

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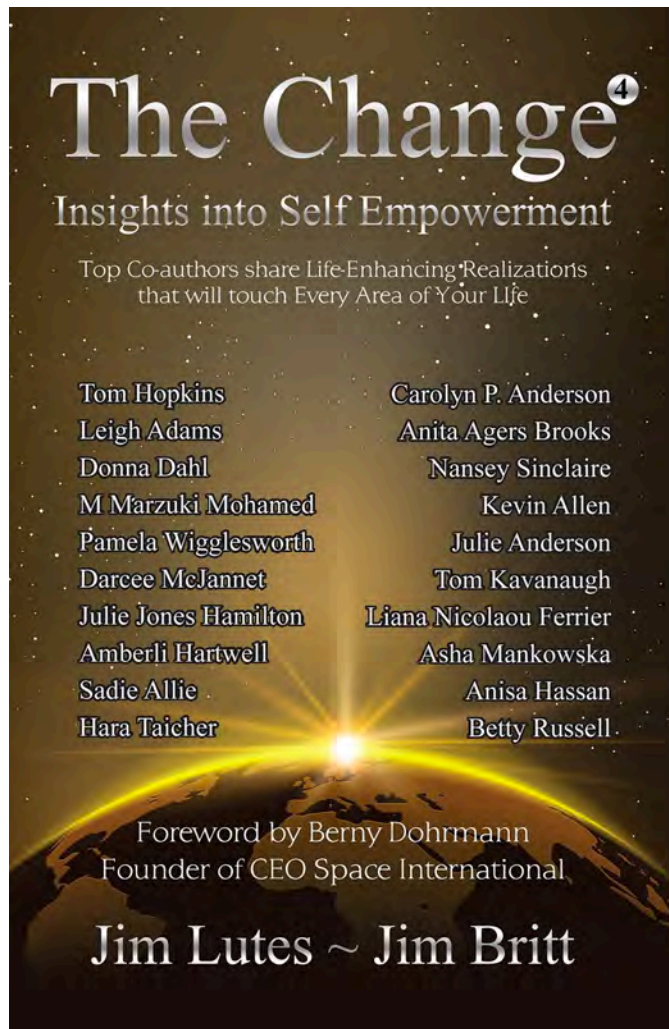
The company's Score Card was not balanced. The company was healthy from the Customer, Internal Business Process and Financial Perspectives. From the technical expertise standpoint, there was very little Learning and Growth of the organisation.

Growth is mandatory. You need to grow to develop. You need to grow to be empowered. Growth is part of change.

When I approached a second roadblock in my career, and this time I decided to leave, I left with the company's expertise. The specialist construction company that I grew for six years died that day. Grow or Die!

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This e-book was first published as a chapter of an internationally published book:



The Change 4 Insights Into Self-Empowerment

Jim Britt ~ Jim Lutes
SKU# 2370000235589
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