

# Flexibility comes with pop-up leadership

Debbie Nicol

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Pop-up shops seem to be emerging left, right and centre. In fact on most weekends, pop-ups, as they are fondly called, can be found across the UAE displaying their wares. People flock to them for their uniqueness, freshness and creativity. An element of scarcity influences the mystique that surrounds these outlets. But why should these little gems be reserved for the world of products? And how could the pop-up concept be applied to the service of workplace and community leadership?

Many years ago in my earlier career, my company at the time was considered cutting-edge for leasing a bus, splashing artistic versions of our logo all over its exterior and driving it around Malaysian regional cities to attract new employees. In today's terms that might be a pop-up of sorts, allowing us to take our company to regional hubs.

## For social enterprise

[Leadership](#) is a function that designs and creates hope for the future. A great example of that definition in a pop-up sense could be Nestlé's Cooking Caravan that travelled African regions sharing the Maggi brand. In doing so, Nestlé managed to both expand its brand awareness for its own benefit while also bringing great value to the people of Africa.

The travelling caravan focused on creating awareness of nutrient deficiency and education about the power of balanced diets, as well as options for primary industries.

A leader will always enable others to behave in ways that will empower a better future, and explore options for ways to apply this to their current situation. As the story goes, give a man a fish, he'll eat for a day yet teach a man to fish and he'll eat for a year.

A leader's job is to grow more leaders and more leadership; if the whole village now becomes aware of nutrition, it's the forerunner for a desire to find ways to source and provide nutritious choices. Pop-up leadership? Yes, a short-term intervention resulting in high interest levels along with channelled, focused and ongoing change.

## For the daily workplace

So many workplaces have top leadership omnipresent, so decisions can default automatically to them. There are clearly defined times their presence and essence is needed. One would be the time for bringing folk together to access or design a new plan and discuss the next steps around the corporate dream. Another may be to facilitate the collaborations and methodologies that will assist progression towards that. Others might include ongoing relationship building and dealing with the unknown unexpected factors. Beyond that, is it possible that others could perform a degree of leadership without the "big one" being present?

Scarcity can create excitement as the scarce resource is perceived as a new, fresh or evolving perspective. With the common expression "familiarity

breeds contempt”, could less exposure to leadership result in precision listening, a desire to explore more and greater interest in what is being said when it is present?

Let’s not exploit this and take it to the other extreme, as during any organisational change, many interdependent relationships prosper and if a leader is missing for too long, there may be a negative effect. Yet absence can make the heart grow fonder.

### For our lives

Self-leadership offers options to build self-sufficiency and self-validation, allowing these traits to strengthen the inner self-confidence and outer self-demeanour. Often people embark upon changes with a “too much too soon” approach; this will simply never last. Pop-up self-leadership offers the chance to take on bite-size changes, allow things to settle then add further additional “modules of life”.

Leadership is simply everyone’s job and can and should happen anywhere at any time; it should not depend on an office or a time schedule. With the world hungry for change, could “smaller” be the new “bigger and better”?

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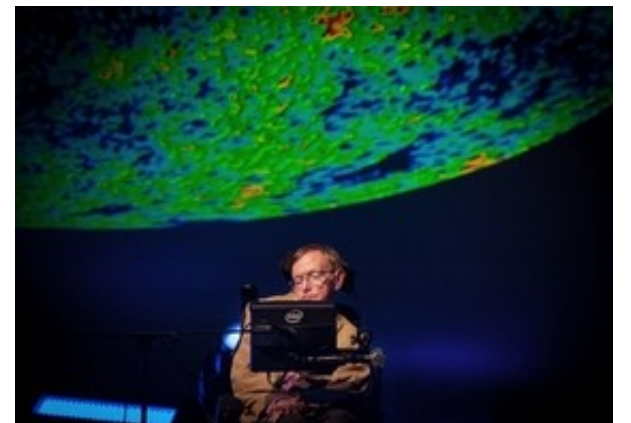
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