Better Business Focus

October 2018

Expert inspiration for a Better Business

Better Business Focus is the essential key for business owners and managers. It achieves that by focusing on the way in which successful businesses compete and manage their organisations. It focuses on how people are recruited, coached and developed; on how marketing and selling is undertaken in professional markets as well as in markets with intense competition; on how technology and the Internet is reshaping the face of domestic and home business; and on how people are being equipped with new skills and techniques. In short, it offers expert inspiration for a better business.

This month's contents

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Barry Urquhart

Compromised by association - with lawyers, accountants, bankers and recruiters

More wisdom from down under

Good service.

By what measure?

There is a new dawning, and more hopefully, an awakening that many currently applied matrices related to customer service are not truly reflective of consumer experiences, or indicative of their collective satisfaction levels.

Celebrations that echo through the corridors of corporate and public service power are, in many instances, misguided and inappropriate.

Witness the evidence emanating from the Australian Financial Services Royal Commission. It is damning. Indeed, it seems that some standards and practices are allegedly or potentially criminal.

Judgements applied do not require a Royal Commission, a Royal Commissioner, a Court Magistrate or jury. The Court of public opinion is invoking its own verdicts and punishments.

Supermarkets, retailers at large, home builders, property developers, real estate agents, financial planners, mortgage brokers, accountancy practices, law firms and supposed service consultants are all being subjected to scrutiny and review.

The veracity and relevance of external professional resources and the reported innate value of Big-Data and Meta-Data are being questioned and re-evaluated.

And rightly so. It is evident that for a significant percentage such spheres-of-influence do not have the right answers. Indeed, they are often part of both the problem and the cause, because they are asking the wrong questions. The need exists for Smart Data.

We at Marketing Focus are in a unique position. An immense bank of market research findings which extends for decades provides absolute and relative advantages and benefits for clients, to enable them to isolate and analyse those factors that satisfy, influence and resonate with existing, prospective and past customers.

One thing learnt, recognised and – to the degree possible – respected, is that in service, as with marketing, plagiarism is alive and well.

Monitoring, measuring, analysing and refining 3 or 4 key service matrices to establish and sustain fulfilment of customer expectations and aspirations do little to differentiate and provide competitive advantage.

Suffice it to say: typically the interactions between customers and service providers – at the point-of-sale – are consistently the most highly and positively rated aspects and attributes of the service delivery. A natural by-product of that emphasis is that team members quickly become disenchanted and disconnected, when references are made to sub-standard service.

Compromised by association - with lawyers, accountants, bankers and recruiters

Little wonder.

Some members of their representative trade, sector and professional associations have difficulty understanding, valuing and justifying the presence and activities.

Periodically, attrition rates spike with the receipt of member renewal accounts. Put simply, members do not renew.

The complexities of modern commerce and society dictate that it is seldom advisable to go it alone. Collegiate endeavours, learnings and the sharing of experiences underscore the worth of being involved with those of common interests.

Inputs from the disciplines of law, accounting, finance and human resources can be, and are, invaluable, if not mandatory, within context, and up to a point.

Tempered senses of worth

In times of suppressed demand, intense competition and increasing digital disruption, many association members, the owners and managers of small businesses in particular, find little solace and value in being advised that their own association executives have been busy tramping the corridors of power, often political, to put forward their collective and individual cases.

The need for cashflow-now - can overwhelm thoughts and reset priorities.

More unsettling, disturbing and irritating is the seeming widespread transformation of association activities towards the conduct of networking events. Compounding the qualifications of such pursuits is the declared or undeclared preference for the repeated, at-no-cost use of Board members or selected membership luminaries to address attendees at gatherings.

The complexities of modern commerce and society dictate that it is seldom advisable to go it alone...

Profiling to targeted audiences can be, and often is, a great generator of business, for those chosen few. But at what cost to individual association members, and their commercial interests?

"Bored" composition

The membership of elected Boards and governance committees or professional associations can be enlightening.

Large percentages, sometimes majorities, can be made up with lawyers, accountants, bankers and recruitment consultants, none of whom have direct participation in the activities of members.

Doubtless, their perspectives, insights and expertise are valuable and valued: all of these can be solicited from outside the composition of the Board.

Strikingly apparent to some is that Board memberships of associations, institutes and federations of the disciplines of law, accounting and banking in particular, seem totally homogenous. Each is dutifully qualified in skills but there is a noticeable absence of plumbers, carpenters, travel agents, graphic designers and advertising professionals. Interesting.

Boards, committees and governing authorities represent an opportunity to enhance the interests of members. Ideally, they should also be representative of those members.

Understandably, some ethnicity-based associations have similar characteristics.

For non-conforming intending members, judgements should be made about if one seeks to be an (inner) planet, or is happy being a satellite. The light (and benefits) typically shine on those bodies closest to the "sun".

Fear of Failure

This simple three-word phrase that profiles and explains in a large part why so many entities and individuals are reluctant, or resistant to change, innovation and original creativity.

The implicit, if not explicit consequences of this phrase provide a measure of the power and force of three words. The presence and outcomes are accentuated in many circumstances for subordinate staff and team members. Concerns about fear of failure tend towards inertia and tokenism. The fear provides insights in the culture and philosophy of the Board of Directors and Senior Management.

The dynamism and resilience of high-performing corporations typically indicate a high tolerance of risk and a leadership style which is prepared to delegate…

This is a profound belief system and sentiment. It is breath-taking, compelling, supportive, understanding and, yes, authoritative.

There is no suggestion of an abrogation of responsibility, accountability and transparency. The flow of each is up. The natural progression of authority is downward. It breaks shackles, dismantles bureaucracy, shatters constraints, facilitates personal actions and expedites performance, growth and competitive advantage. Natural outcomes include enhanced morale, confidence, loyalty and commitment.

So many business and professional disciplines are limited by adherence to the need to comply and conform. Thus, the status quo – rapidly acquiring obsolescence and irrelevance – is retained.

Losses in competitiveness and resonation soon mount.

Fear of failure does not afflict alone the meek and the mild. Disturbingly, it's infectious.

The best and the most immediate antidote to Fear to Fail is:

Authority to Fail

It works every time.

About the Author

Barry Urquhart, Managing Director, Marketing Focus, Perth, is an inspiring speaker, author of Australia's top two selling books on customer service and an international consultant on dynamic innovation and creativity.

Barry is the author of six books, including the two largest selling publications on service excellence in Australasia. He is a regular commentator of consumer issues on ABC radio, is featured on a series of interview topics on "Today Tonight" and contributes articles to 47 magazines throughout the world. He is one of Australia's most active keynote speakers and is an internationally recognised authority on quality customer service, consumer behaviour and creative visual merchandising. Marketing Focus is a Perth based market research and strategic planning practice. The firm and Barry consult to multinational, national and local entities in the private sector and the public sector. He is a former lecturer in Marketing and Management at the Curtin University of Technology and has degrees in marketing, political science and sociology.

Co-ordinates

Mail: 26 Central Road, Kalamunda, Western Australia 6076
Tel - Office: 006 1089 257 1777
Tel - Mobile: 006 1041 983 5555
E-mail: Urquhart@marketingfocus.net.au
Website: www.marketingfocus.net.au

Drayton Bird

Strictly for those interested in copy

That heading was not entirely serious, because if you're not interested in copy you're not really interested in marketing are you?

Anyhow I just happened to stumble across this, which I wrote two years ago and which only appeared once in Clayton Makepeace's Total Package - an excellent on-line publication that is now defunct. It's *called "What Some Famous Copywriters Taught Me"* with a subhead: *Few copywriters study enough.* And many who commission copy study even less. So the partially-sighted serve the blind. No wonder most copy isn't very good.

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I've always liked this old New York joke:
A man asks for directions. *"How do I get to Carnegie Hall?"*
"Study," comes the reply.

I started studying how to write copy before I even got a job in advertising. I sat in Manchester Public Library and read everything I could find. I have never stopped. If others have done the job before you, start by studying and copying the best people you can find. It's the only way to learn.

Most copywriters study little, if at all. They think the key is ingenuity and clever ideas. They put their faith in flair and luck. They "pick it up" as they go along. That is why most copy is so bad.

Their chances of success are not improved by those who employ them or commission copy, few of whom know much about the subject either.

Of all the kinds of copy, direct response is the hardest, yet few clients pay very well for it. To make big money you have to get a royalty deal, which is a rare and wonderful beast outside North America.

If you pay peanuts you get monkeys, so most copy is not very good. A shame, as it is perhaps the cheapest ingredient in success.

I have never specialised in any kind of copy: I take my money where I can get it. But the principles that apply to one kind of copy apply to all kinds of copy. What's more, I have found they apply equally to all messages designed to get results - speeches, articles, presentations: you name it.

Here are some of the people I learned from. Maybe you will, too.

I suspect I learned most from John E. Powers - possibly the first really professional copywriter.

He talked about what a product does for the customer, rather than what it is. He popularised the free trial offer and the money back guarantee. To this day many do not realise the effectiveness of those three things.

In an interview he said, "The first thing ... is to have the attention of the reader. That means to be interesting. The next thing is to stick to the truth, and that means rectifying whatever's wrong in the merchant's business. If the truth isn't tellable, fix it so it is. That is about all there is to it."

His two chief weapons were honesty and giving reasons for his claims rather than just plain boasting. He also said to his interviewer, who was from Printer's Ink, the advertising trade paper, "*Never read any of those advertising publications. They ain't worth reading.*"

That was in the 1890's, so nothing much has changed.

To this day many people think unsubstantiated boasting works - look at most car advertising. It doesn't. Not in real life. Not in copy. And if you don't explain why you are so good, people tend to disbelieve you. Both these facts are unknown to many marketers, but my partners and I have had considerable success just by applying honesty.

And to this day people still imagine a bad product can be saved by advertising. It can't; in fact good advertising kills bad products faster.

Claude Hopkins was perhaps the most able copywriter ever - so good that allegedly by 1917 his boss used to give him a blank cheque every year and let him set his own salary.

From his book *Scientific Advertising (1923)*, I learned many things, but principally that copy is "just salesmanship". Your copy should do what a good salesman would do.

A salesman gives every good reason for buying; a salesman forestalls objections; a salesman is not brief. Yet little copy does a complete selling job, and many still imagine brevity works best. It doesn't. Time after time, for nearly fifty years, I have seen long copy beat short.

John Caples was the master of testing. I used to re-read his book Tested Advertising Methods regularly when I was young. I still turn to it. From it I learned many, many things - but especially that - as another good man, Richard V. Benson, put it, "*There are only two rules in direct marketing. Rule 1: Test everything. Rule 2: Refer to rule 1.*"

Two of my other teachers admired him. David Ogilvy, with whom I worked for some years, was one. He told me that he and Rosser Reeves agreed that they learned all they knew from Caples.

He also told me one night over dinner that the secret of success was charm - and that "the customer is not a moron: she is your wife". So I try to avoid the usual crass, copywriter's English and treat the reader like an intelligent person. It seems to work.

David was a great student. He encouraged me in my belief that study was the key.

His book, *Confessions of an Advertising Man*, had an enormous influence on me in my first big job as a creative director: I used to test things he mentioned, like the use of certain words which increase readership. Then when I wrote my own first business book, Commonsense Direct Marketing, I copied his idea of making it very personal. People are more interested in people than theory.

Reeves' book *Reality in Advertising* sold the idea of the USP. I learned that you need to be able to offer something different and better to succeed. So I spend a lot of time looking for it. And I still find that giving a competitive argument usually increases response - yet few bother to do it.

Many years ago a friend asked me if I'd like to go and work for Reeves as a creative director; I wanted to stay in England for some personal reasons so I said "no". I suspect I would have learned a lot, though.

Vic Schwab was a partner in one of the first specialist direct response agencies, back in the '30's. He wrote a book called *How to Write a Good Advertisement*. I have had the same copy for 40 years. And I still refer to the list of 100 headlines in it when I'm stuck for idea.

There are many others I knew and am indebted to. Bill Jayme, Gene Schwartz, Joe Karbo, Monroe Kane, Murray Raphel, Denny Hatch, Joe Sugarman and Gary Halbert.

And I still study in the hope that one day I'll really know what I'm doing.

Best,

Drayton

About the Author

In 2003, the Chartered Institute of Marketing named Drayton Bird one of 50 living individuals who have shaped today's marketing. He has spoken in 53 countries for many organisations, and much of what he discusses derive from his work with many of the world's greatest brands. These include American Express, Audi, Bentley, British Airways, Cisco, Deutsche Post, Ford, IBM, McKinsey, Mercedes, Microsoft, Nestle, Philips, Procter & Gamble, Toyota, Unilever, Visa and Volkswagen. In various capacities – mostly as a writer – Drayton has helped sell everything from Airbus planes to Peppa Pig. His book, *Commonsense Direct and Digital Marketing*, out in 17 languages, has been the UK's best seller on the subject every year since 1982.

Co-ordinates

Drayton Bird Associates
Web: http://draytonbird.com
Tel: +44 (0) 845 3700 121
Email: drayton@draytonbird.com or db@draytonbird.com

Scientific Advertising

Claude Hopkins was one of the greatest advertising pioneers who ever lived. He believed that "Advertising is salesmanship" and as such, it should be measurable and justify the results that it produced.

He was a strong believer in "Reason why copy" and the principles that he discovered and documented are as true today, as then. It does not matter what type of advertising medium you use, from print advertising to the Internet, the fundamental taught by Claude are universal and timeless.

He believed that a good product was often its own best salesperson and as such he was a great believer in sampling. To help trace his results, he would often use coupons. Coupons gave him the ability to not only measure results, but feedback on how to improve results. He could now test one headline against another - or one proposition against another. This one simple strategy may not sound like rocket science stuff, but when you consider that one headline has the potential to out-pull another headline by 5, 10 or perhaps 15 times, one quickly understands the huge effect that this could have on one's bottom line profit.

Scientific Advertising By Claude Hopkins
This has been described as "arguably the greatest book on advertising ever written, by the greatest copywriter of all time".

Claude C. Hopkins invented test marketing, coupon sampling, and copy testing. These are standard practices in today's world of advertising. Originally published in the 1920's, this is still one of the most useful books on advertising and mail order ever written.

This advertising classic book is now public domain.

Paul Matthews

"Capability at Work: How to find out the real cause of poor performance!"

Many organisations struggle with poor performance. Despite investing in various training, learning and development initiatives they seem unable to solve the performance puzzle. They cannot get to the real underlying cause of the lack of performance, and so it continues.

Think about it this way – wherever there is poor performance, it is simply because someone is not capable of doing what needs to be done. Something is stopping them doing the job in front of them, and you need to identify that barrier, so you can fix it.

My five-page Best Practice Guide shows you how by giving you a model of capability, and a way to use that model to drill down into the true causes that contribute to an employee being unable to adequately respond to the task they are asked to do.

I've put together this Best Practice Guide to provide an insight into the slippery concept of Capability. Many people think they know what it is, but do they really?

I often find that they don't, and this common misunderstanding leads to the trouble people have identifying the real root causes of low performance.

Claim your FREE Best Practice Guide by entering your name and business email at: https://www.peoplealchemy.co.uk/free-stuff/guides/guide-6-capability-at-work/ and a PDF copy will be emailed to you immediately.

This Guide can show you how Capability is structured, and how to drill down into the various components to decide what needs to be done to change incapability into capability, and thereby improve performance.

If you have any questions about the simple but powerful ideas in the Guide, please do give me a call on my direct line number 01908 200 707 or email me on paul.matthews@peoplealchemy.co.uk

About the Author

Paul Matthews is People Alchemy's founder and managing director. Paul's key skill is in making the ideas come alive with stories and making sure his listeners receive practical tools and tips to take away and implement.

Paul is a regular speaker at HR and L&D events and exhibitions covering topics such as harnessing the power of informal learning, capability at work, workplace performance, and how L&D can be effective in these tough times.

Paul is the author of *Informal Learning at Work: How to Boost Performance in Tough Times*, praised as 'a thought provoking practical book with ideas and insightful examples which challenges us all to embrace informal learning'. The book explains how companies can harness the power of informal learning using practical advice from workplace learning experts and practical examples and case studies from around the world.

His 2014 book *Capability at Work: How to Solve the Performance Puzzle* has also been widely acclaimed as a 'must' for anyone in HR or learning and development.

Co-ordinates

Address: People Alchemy, Alchemy House, 17 Faraday Drive, Milton Keynes, MK5 7DD
Tel: +44 (0)1908 325 167
Email: info@peoplealchemy.co.uk
Linkedin: linkedin.com
Twitter: twitter.com/peoplealchemy

New guidance on references from Acas

Most employers use references as part of their recruitment process. It's important to know the rules around references, whether you're asking for or supplying them.

Employment References

References are often asked for in job applications. There is usually no legal obligation to provide a reference. Employers who give references must make them fair and accurate. Employers who ask for references must handle them fairly and consistently.

What is an employment reference?

A reference gives important information to a potential employer that helps them to decide if a job applicant is suitable.

Does an employment reference have to be provided?

A previous employer can usually choose:

- if they want to provide a reference or not
- how much information they want to provide

Previous employers may choose to provide a few basic facts about the job applicant and nothing more.

A job applicant's previous managers and colleagues may also be happy to provide more detailed references.

Employers should have a policy to help them handle reference requests, telling them what information they and their employees can provide. Only certain industries such as those regulated by the Financial Services Authority are required to give a reference by law.

What can an employment reference include?

References can include:

- basic facts about the job applicant, like employment dates and job descriptions
- answers to questions that the potential employer has specifically asked about the job applicant that are not usually given as basic facts, like absence levels and confirming the reason for leaving
- details about the job applicant's skills and abilities
- details about the job applicant's character, strengths and weaknesses relating to the suitability for the role they have applied for

Previous employers will usually be asked to provide the basic facts and possibly answer some additional questions. However, previous managers and colleagues might also be asked to provide character details.

A reference must be a true, accurate and fair reflection of the job applicant. When opinions are provided, they should be based on facts.

Personal references can sometimes be provided from individuals who know the job applicant such as a teacher. References should not include irrelevant personal information.

When are employment references needed?

References can be required at any stage of the recruitment process. Job applications should say if references will be required and at what stage of the recruitment process they will be needed.

Employers must only seek a reference from a job applicant's current employer with their permission.

Job offers and references

If a job applicant is offered a job there are two types of job offer that can be made:

- A **conditional** job offer. This can be withdrawn if the applicant doesn't meet the employer's condition for example, satisfactory references.
- An **unconditional** job offer. Once an unconditional offer is made this cannot be withdrawn and if accepted a contract is formed.

Once an employer has received satisfactory references and informed the job applicant an unconditional job offer can be made.

Employees should consider waiting until they get an unconditional offer before handing in their notice.

Can an employer give a bad reference?

Employers can usually choose whether to give a reference but if they do it must be accurate and fair. References must not include misleading or inaccurate information. They should avoid giving subjective opinions or comments that are not supported by facts.

This means that some references might show a job applicant is not suitable for the role they are applying for. It might suggest that the job applicant doesn't have enough experience of relevant responsibilities, that the reason for leaving the current job is different to what the job applicant put in their application, or that the job applicant didn't describe their current job properly.

Potential employers should remember a referee may not provide a reference or might inaccurately suggest the applicant is unsuitable. In these circumstances it may help to discuss any concerns with the job applicant directly first. An employer might consider offering a job role on a probationary period in these instances.

Resolving problems with references

In the event that a job applicant is unhappy with a reference provided about them they can request, usually in writing, a copy of any reference sent to a new employer. The request would be made to the author of the reference.

For further information go to GDPR - The General Data Protection Regulation

If an external job applicant believes a reference provided for them was inappropriate they may be able to claim damages in a court, but the job applicant must be able to show that the information was misleading or inaccurate and that they have suffered a loss such as withdrawal of a job offer.

For further information go to GOV.UK - Job offers: your rights

Where a job applicant is applying for an internal vacancy, for example a promotion, they should approach their line manager or human resources informally in the first instance if there is an issue with a reference.

For more information go to Raising an issue at work

Employers who are unable to obtain a reference from the job applicant's nominated referee should inform the job applicant and consider whether other suitable references can be obtained. Other options include hiring the job applicant on probationary period to assess their suitability.

John Niland

Stay ahead of your clients: ask why

Going back to work after the summer, some people faced the challenge of being busy, of "delivering everything I promised before the summer", as one lady described it to me. Others face a different challenge, such as a worryingly empty pipeline or a contract renewal, or a crucial conversation with an alliance.

Time and time again, I find that most professionals can face any challenge, as long as they are crystal clear *why* they are doing it. The why is a rallying point: not just for us, but with clients, too. For example:

- **Ask a new prospect:** "Why are you making this investment or initiating this project?"
- **Ask a difficult customer:** — perhaps one who is complaining a lot "Why are you dissatisfied?"
- **Ask a worried or anxious colleague:** "What are you concerned about?"
- When you yourself feel anxious (or bored, or low in energy) **ask yourself:** "Why do I feel this way?"

The "Why" becomes even more important when you want to get a step ahead of your client and be able to influence their thinking.

By understanding the "Why" in their marketplace — the new imperatives of cost, or demand, or growth/decline, or opportunity — you are in a position to guide them to better decisions.

If your clients perceive you as one step ahead of them you are in a better position to build long-term relationships, to affirm your position as a trusted advisor and to charge more for your services. With that..

About the Author

John Niland is best-known as a conference speaker on doing higher value work and creating more opportunity via better conversations. His passion is energising people: boosting growth through higher energy levels, that in turn leads to better dialogue and business growth.

Since 2000, John has been coaching others to achieve success, with a particular passion for supporting professionals "who wish to contribute rather than just to win, and hence do higher value work via better conversations with clients and colleagues".

In parallel, John is one of the co-founders of the European Forum of Independent Professionals, following twelve years of coaching >550 professionals to create more value in their work. Author of The Courage to Ask (together with Kate Daly), Hidden Value and 100 Tips to Find Time.

Co-ordinates

Tel: +351 914 840 771
Email: john@vco-global.com
Web: www.vco-global.com
Skype: john.niland

Yoram Solomon

How administrative assistants can help creativity in a big way

As the hidden communication and prioritization network, administrative assistants can have a great impact on company innovation.

Last year, I was asked to deliver a keynote to an internal company conference for administrative professionals in Virginia. The topic was culture for creativity. My "standard" talks typically focused on engineers, marketing people, and others in the organization who are the type of folks you consider when you think of innovation. You don't normally think of the administrative professional as related to a culture of creativity, but as the following will reveal, they play a significant role in it. In fact, four roles. And this is the talk I delivered.

1. Facilitation

Tom Wujec has been facilitating the *Marshmallow Challenge* in many organizations, for many years. He has a 7-minute TED talk with more than 3.5 million views at the time of writing this article.

I facilitated it myself with groups varying from middle-school kids to Fortune 500 executives, with consistent results. The *Marshmallow Challenge* is a creative teamwork exercise that examines how a team works together creatively to solve a challenge. In his TED talk, Wujec compared the performance of different demographic, age, and professional groups in solving the challenge. At 3:52 in that video, he shows that a team of CEOs were doing just a little better than the average, but when you added an executive admin to the team, that team performed significantly better. In fact, his chart showed close to 40% improvement. His explanation was that administrative assistants have special skills of facilitation. While executives continue to jockey for power and control, the assistant keeps them focused on the task at hand. In the company setting, the administrative assistant can help keep the executive focused on the important things.

2. Controlling Information

Executives are bombarded by emails and other forms of communications. They rely on the administrative assistant to screen some of it. Often, when I write an email to an executive, I get the reply from the assistant. Research of factors affecting creativity in organizations showed that free flow of information is critical to achieve such creativity. However, if the average employee receives 121 emails a day, it is safe to say that executives get more. Much more. As a result, it is almost left completely to the hands of the administrative assistant to determine what is more important, and what is less important. You don't expect the administrative assistant to know everything that's in the executive's head, or fully understand the technical or business aspects of every email or communication, but given a strong enough intuition, they are in a perfect position to make sure important information flows and flows quickly.

3. Prioritization

The administrative assistant controls the executive's calendar, for the most part. In 2005, I was in the midst of trying to get an executive's support (and budget) for an important project, and I asked for a meeting with him. The assistant looked at his calendar, and scheduled it at his fist available opening, in the first week of September. The problem was that it was mid-July, and this meeting could not have waited 6 weeks. So, I walked to his office to speak with him. His assistant stopped me. I explained the importance of having the meeting much earlier than 6 weeks from now. She rescheduled it to the next morning. As a former executive myself, I know how little control I had over my calendar and relied on my assistant to prioritize my time appropriately. I didn't expect her to know everything I knew, but I trusted her judgment and intuition. Prioritizing the important things is critical not only for creativity, but also for productivity and efficiency.

4. Back-Channel Network

Finally, one of the major impediments for creativity in organizations is the silo effect, and the NIH ("Not Invented Here") syndrome. Different groups tend to sometimes be competitive with others. Information is being blocked across organizational boundaries, and creativity is thus adversely impacted. However, the administrative assistants don't suffer from this problem. They network, sometimes better than the executives they work for. Whether at the coffee room, the copier room, the break room, or any other place–they don't live the competition between groups. They form a back-channel, ad-hoc network.

As they share what their respective groups are working on, not necessarily in a way that would violate confidentiality or intentional compartmentalization, they help their peers in other groups know what's important. In fact, it was probably easier for me to schedule that meeting by having my assistant informally let the assistant for the executive I was trying to meet know how important this is. The key word is "informally." If my assistant believed that the meeting was really important to me, then, without me asking, she would have made sure her counterpart knew that. And that would make a much bigger impact.

5. Shortcuts

Administrative professionals know all the shortcuts in the organization. One of the biggest impediments to creativity is bureaucracy. In one of my interviews for my doctoral study on creativity in Corporate America I found that bureaucracy, although created for perfectly good reasons such as coordination and compliance, slows creativity to a crawl. However, through their back-door network, administrative assistants know how to get things done. And quickly.

I'm sure I'm missing more ways in which administrative professionals affect creativity and productivity in the company. They are the "hidden force" that is often underestimated in its power to affect creativity. Don't underestimate that power. Harvest it.

About the Author

Yoram can often be found speaking in different venues, from University Graduate business schools to Rotary Clubs, the Association for Strategic Planning National Conference, DEMO, and many more. He is an engaging speaker who was said to make people think afterwards. He is a professional member of the National Speakers Association.

Dr. Solomon published 7 books: "*Un-Kill Creativity*", "*Blueprints for the Next Big Thing*", "*Bowling with a Crystal Ball (two editions),*" "*Business Plan through Investors' Eyes*", "*From Startup to Maturity,*" and "*Worst Diet Ever.*" He authored numerous articles, many of them published at Inc. Magazine, Innovation Excellence, and his blog on this website.

Co-ordinates

Twitter: @yoram
Web: www.yoramsolomon.com/

10 Coco Chanel quotes to make you irresistibly bold .....

Coco Chanel lived a truly spectacular life. As well as creating one of the most iconic fashion brands in history, Chanel was an ardent advocate of gender equality and freedom of expression.

The forward-thinking designer – née Gabrielle (Coco was her nickname) – was raised in an orphanage where the nuns taught her how to sew, and started her career as a singer in Paris cafes before eventually turning to design.

Her personal life had its twists and turns as did her fashion label. During World War II Chanel was forced to close the business and only re-entered the world of fashion in 1954 when she was 71 years old, because she was bored by the fashion of the time.

Above all else, Chanel was irresistibly bold throughout her life. Here are ten of her best quotes:

1. If you're sad, add more lipstick and attack.
2. I don't care what you think about me. I don't think about you at all.
3. The most courageous act is to think for yourself.
4. Elegance is when the inside is as beautiful as the outside.
5. A girl should be two things. Who and what she wants.
6. Keep your heels, head and standards high.
7. Beauty begins the moment you start to think for yourself.
8. How many cares one loses when one decides to be not something, but someone.
9. I don't do fashion. I am fashion. The bags under my eyes are Chanel.
10. Be with someone who ruins your lipstick and not your mascara.

Attribution:

Sunil Bali
Sunil is a Performance Coach, Speaker and Author see page 17.

Anthony Mills

Customer co-creation: A deeper path to empathic understanding

Each year businesses spend an aggregate of $40B on market research. This is largely in an effort to mine new insights about customers' unmet needs, or to test out new ideas to see if a large enough segment of their customers (or of the general population) will react positively to them.

Businesses have begun to realize however that rather than – or in some cases, in addition to – spending millions each year on conducting market research in a simulated or hypothesized manner, they can often get better insights, and at less cost, by engaging customers directly in a co-creative process. When done properly, this can produce extremely useful outcomes. But to make the process work, there are several important considerations that have to be taken into account, primarily around the steps to be used in a B2B versus B2C scenario.

In a B2B scenario, the business can set up a special co-creation laboratory where they have their customers' staff come in and explore specific challenges together with their own staff, looking at numerous different potential solutions together. An example of this is Cisco's Customer Co-Creation Workshops held at one of its Innovation Labs. These labs / events are equipped with the resources needed to enable innovative experimentation between the two parties,

Businesses have begun to realize…they can often get better insights, and at less cost, by engaging customers directly in a co-creative process

as reflected in this video from Cisco... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MglxF1ALefM. B2B co-creation labs work best when similar peers are able to engage with one another, such as Designers with Designers, or Engineers with Scientists, as shown in this example with Cisco.

In a B2C scenario, the business can once again set up a special laboratory – often part of a larger User Research lab within an overall Innovation Lab. Here, Designers and Researchers can engage directly with would-be customers to explore certain problem spaces and their corresponding solution spaces. The business must be careful however to not let these turn into 1970s-esque focus groups where customers are asked about solution spaces for which they have no context (which almost always leads down a wrong path).

Thus on one hand, Researchers can use this exercise as simply a means of observing how customers go about thinking about their challenges and the associated problem / solution space, so as to develop an empathic understanding of their needs, values, motivations, and priorities (from which they would then conceive the solution). On the other hand, Researchers can in fact have customers directly lead the design of a final solution, but in so doing they must be very careful to ensure there are solid fundamentals behind the framing / conceptualization of the problem being addressed, as well as the solution taking shape – is the real problem being tackled, and does this solution in fact solve that problem? This is where lead users can often prove helpful.

There are several different forms of B2C co-creation, including open crowdsourcing, co-creation workshops, open-source software code, mass customization, and customer-generated content. A classic example of the workshop approach was Heineken's 2012 *Heineken Open Design Exploration Edition 1: The Club*, which engaged designers from all over the world with a panel of 100 veteran clubbers to conceive a progressive pop-up club in Milan intended to be representative of the next generation of clubs.

A classic example of open crowdsourcing has been Cisco's iPrize competition, aimed at finding the next billion-dollar business ideas – a venue that has led to such winning ideas as a sensor-enabled smart-electricity grid and others. Linux and Firefox have been well-known examples of open-source code, while NikeID is a well-known example of mass customization.

Customer co-creation is a powerful emerging method for lean and frugal innovation.

Examples of customer generated content have included Domino's Pizza Mogul platform that lets customers create and sell unique recipes through the Dominos franchise, and the LEGO IDEAS platform that allows customers to vote on one another's designs, with the winning designs sometimes becoming real products. This is not even to mention customer-generated content platforms like YouTube, Medium, and SlideShare.

Customer co-creation is a powerful emerging method for lean and frugal innovation. It allows businesses to uncover numerous insights about their customers and those customers' problem needs, usually in a faster, easier, and less expensive way than does traditional market research. It also tends to yield more direct and reliable insights than does indirect market research. Over the last several years countless companies and brands have begun making effective use of customer co-creation, including such well-known brands as DHL, DeWalt, Coca-Cola, Samsung, BMW, MTV, E.ON, Manchester City FC, Tata Group, and hundreds more. Many businesses can benefit from this method, and should therefore, give serious consideration to setting up a customer co-creation practice in the context of their broader innovation research work.

About the Author

Anthony Mills is one of the world's foremost authorities on strategic innovation and hyper-growth strategies. He has taught, consulted, written, and lectured on these all over the world.

Anthony is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Legacy Innovation Group, a strategic innovation consulting firm serving clients from all over the world. Legacy Innovation helps companies tackle their biggest and most pressing growth challenges and become relentless innovators.

Anthony also serves as the Executive Director of the Global Innovation Institute (Gini), the world's foremost accreditation and standards body in the field of business innovation. GInI provides certifications globally to individuals and businesses whose lives depend on making innovation work in the real world.

Anthony's work builds on 30 years of leadership in business, design, product development, marketing, engineering, and manufacturing.

He remains deeply embedded in each of these worlds, giving him a broad and holistic perspective that is rare among business leaders. He knows how to bridge these disciplines to deliver innovations that have a lasting impact on the business and its markets.

Anthony also knows how to build and drive winning innovation strategies. In his work, he uses strategic innovation to ensure the ongoing relevance and long-term resilience of businesses. Equally important, he knows how to transform businesses into human-centred networks capable of constantly delivering new value to their markets. His methods for strategy, culture, and process have enabled business leaders all over the world to make lasting transformations in their businesses.

Co-ordinates

Anthony Mills
Chief Executive Officer
Legacy Innovation Group, LLC
Tel: +(001) 844 534 2294 x700
Web: www.legacyinnova.com/

Barry Urquhart

Going to hell – In a one-use plastic bag:

More wisdom from down under

It's not all wrapped up.

Particularly so, with one-use plastic bags.

It's difficult to comprehend accept or rationalise the flip-flop decisions of the supermarkets, - above all others Coles, on the replacement policies of so-called one-use plastic bags.

Consumers are confused and bewildered. A coterie of marginal, but stridently vocal environmental activists have become emboldened. It seems, that if one agitates sufficiently and aggressively, corporate Australia will yield.

With corporate idealism, no one will be happy, or be a winner in this imbroglio involving the fluid state of one-use plastic bags policies.

MY, HOW THE MIGHTY FALL

Just two decades ago, Wesfarmers and GE (General Electric) were held up on pedestals as consistently successful corporate icons, disproving the contention that corporate conglomerates were redundant.

Since that time Jack Welch has moved on from GE and in recent years the corporation has needed to sell-off companies, products, brands, IP (intellectual property) and geographic-specific networks to survive.

Its share price, and thus value, has contracted by over 90%.

That is a long way from its genesis with Thomas Edison, the incandescent light, and entrepreneurism.

Wesfarmers, the past beacon on the Australian corporate hill, seems to have lost a lot of its sheen and brightness in recent times.

The costs incurred with the ventures (or misadventures) of Bunnings UK, Target, coal mining and now plastic bags, will be carried forward well into the future.

Consumers, like investors, appreciate and reward consistency, transparency and continuity.

Short-term, oscillating and, often, contradictory policies and practices are frowned upon, and elicit emotive personal reactions, which have been imposed upon countless front-line service providers, throughout the Coles supermarket network as a consequence of the stop-start decisions about one-use plastic bags and their replacements.

UNBELIEVABLE

Utterances that contend *"putting the customer first is part of the corporate DNA"* are often, at best, questioned or summarily discussed. For the deeply inquisitive and scientific, better understanding may be achieved from the fact that medical practitioners will readily acknowledge mutated DNA is not rare.

In the seemingly parallel universe of the Australian parliamentary Senate, many elected members on the cross-benches are held in contempt, because of a lack of consistency and focus on voters. Populism, opportunism and political adventurism cast a poor light on the science, or art of Australian politics.

Grid-lock is common in the legislative schedule. It is expensive, with substantial long-term and short-term consequences.

NO ONE WINS

The words and sentiments of the Hot Chocolate 1970's hit "Everyone's A Winner" sound hollow in the one-use plastic bag scenario.

Voluntarily withdrawing them from two large-population states, that did not have enabling legislation, appears - in hindsight – ill-advised.

"Plastic Bag Rage" became an *all-day, everyday* reality for many front-line retail staff members, who found it difficult to understand and articulate the policy, and its underlying rationale.

Surrendering the need for consumers to pay 15 cents for a heavier duty, multi-use plastic bag – by providing them free-of-charge – riled environmentalists, particularly Greenpeace spokespersons.

The alternatives had more plastic content, heavier duty form and accordingly, degraded slower than what it had replaced.

And what about health and hygiene? Multiple-use of plastic carry bags for conveying food, especially fresh merchandise, is potentially and ultimately unhealthy and un-hygienic.

No measures appeared to be in place to protect and enforce the well-being of the unthinking, naive and unknowing consumers.

WHAT ADVANTAGE

Significantly, extensive and intensive attitudinal research quickly established that no one business would be greatly or sustainably advantaged or disadvantaged with plastic bag policies.

Consumer emotions would be and were being piqued in-store. However, there was little evidence of mass changes of loyalty and store visits because of unavailability of "one-use plastic bags" or the need to pay 15 cents for each of their replacements.

So, who is the winner and why was this issue brought on the agenda?

DO THE RIGHT THING

Having, exhibiting and being driven by the desire to "do the right thing" are laudable.

The sentiments resonate in the corridors of power, read well in corporate literature and look good on plaques on head office walls.

Care needs to be given to who decides, determines and implements those values. It is not for businesses to arbitrarily impose their values on the marketplace. That seems inconsistent with the ideals of *customer-first*. And, when corporate leaders prevaricate on what is the right thing, consumers, customers, clients and the public at large become confused.

They look for evidence and verification of leadership. Expressions evolve, many of which reflect poorly on senior management, and the Board of Directors, rather than on the brand, the products and front-line service providers.

The plastic bag debacle was responsible for many memorable quotes, including:

- Management is "a confused circus"
- Mockery
- Betrayal
- Corporate cowardice
- Slapstick gymnastics

Brand authenticity is questioned. It is a difficult, complex, involved and long path to recover from such perceptions, sentiments and expressions.

Audie Murphy was a World War II American military hero, reportedly, the most decorated soldier of his time.

The title of his auto-biographical movie was "To Hell and Back".

Retrieving the journey to hell in a one-use plastic bag seems to be long and complex.

About the Author

Barry Urquhart, Managing Director, Marketing Focus, Perth, is an inspiring speaker, author of Australia's top two selling books on customer service and an international consultant on dynamic innovation and creativity. Barry is author of six books, including the two largest selling publications on service excellence in Australasia. He is a regular commentator of consumer issues on ABC radio, is featured on a series of interview topics on "Today Tonight" and contributes articles to 47 magazines throughout the world.

He is one of Australia's most active keynote speakers and is an internationally recognised authority on quality customer service, consumer behaviour and creative visual merchandising. Marketing Focus is a Perth based market research and strategic planning practice. The firm and Barry consult to multinational, national and local entities in the private sector and the public sector. He is a former lecturer in Marketing and Management at the Curtin University of Technology and has degrees in marketing, political science and sociology.

Co-ordinates

Mail: 26 Central Road, Kalamunda, Western Australia 6076
Tel - Office: 006 1089 257 1777
Tel - Mobile: 006 1041 983 5555
E-mail:
Urquhart@marketingfocus.net.au
Website:
www.marketingfocus.net.au

Paul Sloane

For innovators, rejection comes with the territory

Joanne K Rowling is the British author of the Harry Potter series of fantasy novels which have become the best-selling book series in history with over 400 million copies sold.

She acted as screenwriter and producer on the Harry Potter movies which is the second highest-grossing film series ever. Rowling was born in Gloucestershire in England in 1965. She worked as a researcher and secretary for the charity Amnesty International. In 1990 while on a delayed train journey she had the idea of a young boy going to a school for wizards. But the next seven years were difficult for her. Her mother died of multiple sclerosis.

Rowling moved to Portugal to teach English and there she met and married her husband. They had a daughter but the marriage broke down and she fled with her child to Scotland. Her abusive husband followed her and she had to obtain a court order to keep him away. She lived as a jobless single mother on state benefits in relative poverty. She suffered from clinical depression and contemplated suicide. The script for her first book, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, was finished in 1995. She wrote it using an old manual typewriter.

The manuscript was rejected by twelve London publishing houses. After a year of unsuccessful attempts she submitted it to the publishers, Bloomsbury. The chairman of the company gave the first chapter of the manuscript to his 8 year-old daughter, Alice, who loved it and demanded to read the next chapter. Bloomsbury agreed to publish the book but advised Rowling to get a job as she would never make money from writing children's books. The novel was published in 1997 and the following year it won the British Book Award for Children's Book of the Year. In the next 10 years she wrote six sequels. The last four Harry Potter books each consecutively set records as the fastest-selling books in history,

The Harry Potter books became a global brand worth an estimated US$15 billion. They have been translated into 65 languages. The series is credited with reviving an interest in reading among a generation of children who had previously given up books in favour of computers and television.

Lessons for innovators

The darkest hour is just before dawn. J K Rowling was at a very low ebb in her personal life but continued to work at her dream. She wrote her first novel in cafes with her infant daughter asleep in a stroller beside her. She struggled to make ends meet but is now one of the wealthiest women in Britain – she is also one of the most generous in her gifts to charities. If you are feeling depressed that your innovation is not succeeding, think of all the people who gave up too soon and those like Rowling who did not.

Rejection comes with the territory. Innovations break with conventions and therefore are hard to accept. Conventional publishers, all experts in their fields, saw no prospects in a book series which went on to sell 400 million copies. Don't let rejection get you down. Gone with the Wind by Margaret Mitchell was turned down 38 times. Skype, Google and Cisco were all rejected more than 30 times by investors on their initial pitches.

Is there a way to franchise your innovation? J K Rowling has written a series of books which then spun out into films, toys, clothing and many promotional items. How can you extend the reach and appeal of your new product to turn it into multiple revenue streams?

About the Author

Paul was part of the team which launched the IBM PC in the UK in 1981. He became MD of database company Ashton-Tate. In 1993 Paul joined MathSoft, publishers of mathematical software as VP International. He became CEO of Monactive, a British software company which publishes software asset management tools. In 2002 he founded his own company, Destination Innovation, which helps organisations improve innovation. He writes and speaks on lateral thinking and innovation. His latest book is The Leader's Guide to Lateral Thinking Skills published by Kogan-Page.

Co-ordinates

Web: www.destination-innovation.com
E-mail: psloane@destination-innovation.com
Tel: +44 (0)7831 112321

Sunil Bali

Please bare with me ...

Do you remember playing pass the parcel as a child? Holding onto the parcel and hoping that the music would stop whilst it's in your hands.

Hoping that you would get the big present in the middle of the parcel?

With both personal and business relationships we need to un-wrap the outer layers to get to the prize at the middle.

The world of business is overflowing with "professionals" who try to be pristine and perfect, but they come across as having suffered a charisma by pass and have as much depth as a cardboard cut-out.

It's not about being professional, it's about being authentic.

When it comes to building trust "*If you show me yours, I'll show you mine*" works.

Wearing a mask on the other hand wears you out. Faking it is fatiguing. The most exhausting activity is pretending to be who you know you're not.

When you choose you, there's a good chance that others will choose you.

Being personal is far more important than being perfect.

Many leading brands are now being human and telling it how it really is.

Domino's is allowing customers to post their unvarnished reviews – warts and all – on a Times Square billboard:

Car insurer Aviva is doing the same on its website.

The following brands make a virtue out of being transparent, and highlighting a possible weakness:

1. We're No. 2, but we try harder. (When you're not no. 1 you have to) – Avis
2. The taste you hate twice a day – Listerine
3. Reassuringly expensive – Stella Artois

It's not about B2B, or B2C anymore, it's about H2H: Human to Human.

Fashions may come and go, but the one thing that will never go out of fashion is being human.

When you come from a place of authenticity doors open and people let you in.

When you speak your truth people will trust you.

When you open your heart, it gives permission to those around you to open their heart.

Your authenticity removes the wrapping and is the foundation to your brand.

About the Author

Sunil is a Performance Coach, Speaker and Author.

Ex Head of Talent for Vodafone Group and Santander, and having run a £50m business, Sunil has been responsible for hiring over 50000 people and has had the pleasure of working with some great entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders.

Moving minds - Transforming performance

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E-mail: sunil@sunilbali.com
Web: www.sunilbali.com
LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/sunilbali1

Jeff Eilertsen

Creating customer journey maps that work

Many organizations are using customer journey mapping to understand and improve the experience of their customers. But the variety of terms used to describe journey maps can be confusing. And that makes the mapping process itself confusing, too.

Let's clear up the confusion and see how the UP! Your Service toolset adds clarity and power in the process.

What is a Customer Journey Map?

Customer Journey Maps are a visual representation of a customer's relationship with your people, products, services and brand over time. Journey maps may be created for various customer segments. They can be for internal and external customers. They may include various product lines, service offerings, contact and distribution channels.

A good customer journey map should be easily understood and applied to generate customer experience improvements. However, since each map may represent a complex set of players, interactions, relationships, processes, timelines, and emotions, maps too often become vague or confusing with language and visuals that limit their effectiveness as a communication and improvement tool.

To help you maximize the value and effectiveness customer journey maps, here is a clear structure you can apply to customer journey mapping.

1. The Customer Life Cycle

A natural collection of Customer Journeys over the life of the customer relationship. Other common terms include: cradle-to-grave relationship, end-to-end relationship, customer for life experience, and lifetime customer connection.

2. The Customer Journey

A series of unique paths a customer takes to interact with your company, brand, products, and services over time and across channels. In UP! Your Service terms, this is a series of Service Transactions, also commonly called end-to-end experiences. For example, an organization may define these common Customer Journeys in a typical Customer Life Cycle:

LEARN > TRY > BUY > INSTALL > USE > SUPPORT > UPGRADE

3. The Service Transaction

These are unique and specific transactions experienced by a customer within a journey to obtain the value that they seek. Other common terms include service events, service episodes, and customer interactions. Confusingly, these complete transactions are sometimes called touchpoints. (See #4 below.)

4. The Perception Points

These are individual points within a Service Transaction, or between Service Transactions, where a customer notices something, or experiences something, and forms an opinion about your service. Perception Points are not the process you follow, it is your customer's experience of your process that matters. Other common terms: moments of truth, moments of magic, moments of misery, pleasure points, and pain points.

5. The Process Steps

These are the consistent, documented sequence of actions and other steps taken by service providers to complete a Service Transaction or transition the customer between Service Transactions. Other common terms include: process map, process flowchart, and checklists.

What are common problems with weak Customer Journey Maps?

How you define the language you use in customer journey mapping impacts your ability to create common understanding, take collective action, and create new value. Lack of clarity and agreement on terms will lead to these unnecessary problems:

Lack of clarity downstream

A web search for "customer journey mapping" returns an enormous collection of terms and phrases. However, many are used interchangeably, the same word may describe different levels of detail, and the result is predictable confusion.

The words you choose is less important than making and promoting a clear choice, defining a simple hierarchy with clear distinctions at every level.

Ineffective measurement of service

Being clear about what you are doing at each stage of a journey map helps you choose the right measurements for that level of the map. You can measure many things about service and customer experience, but these measurements may not be well connected to each stage of your customer's overall journey.

A common example is when customer satisfaction (CSAT) scores or Net Promoter Scores (NPS) scores are captured at the Service Transaction level. A customer may rate you highly within a specific transaction, but consider you a problematic provider in another transaction, or in the transition between transactions. Measures at the level of the Customer Lifecycle or Customer Journey are required.

Unfocused generation of new ideas

You may want to involve your employees and partners in generating new service improvement ideas. But an unfocused request for "ideas to help us make service better" will produce a list of equally unfocused ideas.

A better approach is to solicit ideas with clear focus on key areas at each stage of the customer mapping process, on specific outcomes you wish to achieve, and for specific customer segments taking the journey.

An effective Customer Journey Map, with each level and each term clearly understood, allows you to isolate key points of joy to be expanded or enhanced, and key points of frustration to be eliminated or significantly improved.

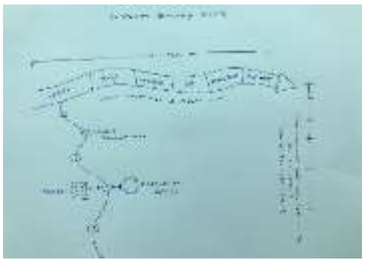
Ultimately, Perception Points is the level where opportunities for service improvement will be implemented. But without a clear hierarchy of terms and understanding, your team may not focus on these points, may miss seeing what causes problems at these points, and may fail to generate good ideas to improve service at these points.

Gradual decline of engagement and service culture

Customer Journey Maps are often used in an attempt to build a more customer-centric culture. But poorly defined maps create more confusion and questions than insight and answers. When struggling with vague or confusing maps, you may hear reactions that point to barriers deeply embedded in existing systems, practices, process, policies, traditions, and leadership behaviours. Common reactions from colleagues include; "We don't really understand the issue…", "We can't do this because…", and "They won't let us do that…"

However, by looking holistically and working with well-defined Customer Journey Maps, you can bring everyone to a shared view on what needs to be improved, and what barriers are standing in the way. Overcoming "we can't" becomes easier when everyone can see the problems. A culture of service excellence accelerates when everyone can work solving these problems together.

Are you using Customer Journey Maps where you work, or do you plan to use them in the future?



If so, we hope this article helps you create clarity and communicate easily to generate new ideas for improvement.

PS: Thought you might enjoy this visualization I drew recently for a client. – Jeff

About the Author

Jeff Eilertsen leads Global Service Education for UP! Your Service, bringing over 20 years of experience working in organizational development, training and human resource firms. As a project leader and Master Trainer, he ensures successful implementation of Actionable Service Education, working with clients to develop the people, processes and best practices to turn learning into action and service improvement.

He also manages a community of Course Leaders from a wide variety of clients, sharing ideas and insights across a global network. As a speaker, Jeff shares the UP! Your Service methodology and experience with audiences seeking to uplift service culture.

Co-ordinates

E-mail:
enquiry@UpYourService.com
Web: www.UpYourService.com

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Amy Morin

Here's why the internet has made us lonelier than ever

The cruel ironic twist to social media is that we're feeling less socially connected than ever.

Throughout the last couple of decades, our ability to connect with people around the globe has exploded. Initially, the internet allowed us to chat, join newsgroups, or email anyone in the world. The invention of cellphones allowed us to talk to people when we were away from our desks and outside of our homes.

Then, social networks allowed us to connect with our neighbours, childhood pals, college buddies, and co-workers with a click of a button. Finally, smartphones made it easier than ever to connect with anyone we wanted around the clock.

So, you'd think we'd be feeling good about our social lives, right? After all, never in the history of the universe has communicating with people been so simple and accessible.

Unfortunately, however, the internet hasn't helped us feel more connected with anyone. Studies show almost half of us feel lonely and isolated. Here's why we're feeling less connected than ever during the digital age:

1. Our relationships have grown more superficial.
You can't form a meaningful relationship with someone unless you talk about real issues and share real problems. But that's not what happens on social media.

"loneliness" by *NoirKitsuné* is licensed under CC BY 2.0

There's a lot of pressure to make your life look better than it really is on social media. So rather than share what's really going on, you're more likely to talk about your latest accomplishment, awesome vacation, or best meal.

The need to keep up the façade that everything is perfect often spills over into real life and keeps relationships superficial. Without meaningful connections, it's possible to feel lonely even when you're surrounded by people.

2. Screen time interferes with our ability to read social cues.
We know that screen time interferes with kids' abilities to read social cues. There's even a study that found that kids get better at reading other people's emotions after just five days away from their digital devices.

It's likely that screen time takes a toll on adults' social intelligence too. After all, communicating with emojis is much different than communicating face-to-face.

You can tell a lot about what someone is thinking and feeling if you can read their facial cues and non-verbal gestures. But you won't get that if your face is buried behind your screen or if you've spent so much time using your digital devices that you've dulled your ability to read people.

3. The emphasis is on the quantity of relationships, not quality.

The average Facebook user has 338 friends. But clearly, having hundreds of friends on social media doesn't make you feel less lonely.

In fact, some studies show the more connections you have, the more stressed out you're likely to be. This is partly due to the fact that you probably don't communicate with your grandmother in the same way you talk to your former college buddies.

It's not the quantity of relationships that matters--it's the quality. Having five real friends is better for your mental health than having 500 social media connections.

4. Smartphone addiction interferes with face-to-face interactions.

How many times have you looked around at a restaurant to see families or partners ignoring one another because they're staring at their smartphones? And how many times have you been talking to someone who responds to a text message or email when you're in mid-sentence?

Studies show people check their phones, on average, between 35 and 74 times per day. Younger people are more likely to check their phones more often.

It's ironic that many people are scrolling through social media to see what other people are doing, rather than paying attention to the people who are right in front of them. You can't have quality face-to-face interactions when you're distracted by your phone every couple of minutes.

5. Remote work can increase isolation.

The internet has increased our ability to work remotely. That can be good for our mental health in some ways--such as by reducing our commute time.

But, remote work also means less comradery with your colleagues. Communicating via email or the occasional phone call isn't the same as meeting around the water cooler.

Sometimes, it's your co-workers who best understand what you're going through on a day to day basis. For many individuals, whether they're entrepreneurs or remote employees, work can be quite isolating because other friends and family members don't really understand what they do all day.

Combat Loneliness

Ironically, it takes extra effort to stay socially connected in the age of social media. But it's important to do so because loneliness can be bad for your physical health as well as your emotional well-being.

Get proactive about combatting loneliness. It can be difficult to reach out when you're feeling bad but inviting someone to meet for coffee or joining an organization that will help you interact with others on a regular basis could be good for you. According to some studies, it might even help you live longer.

About the Author

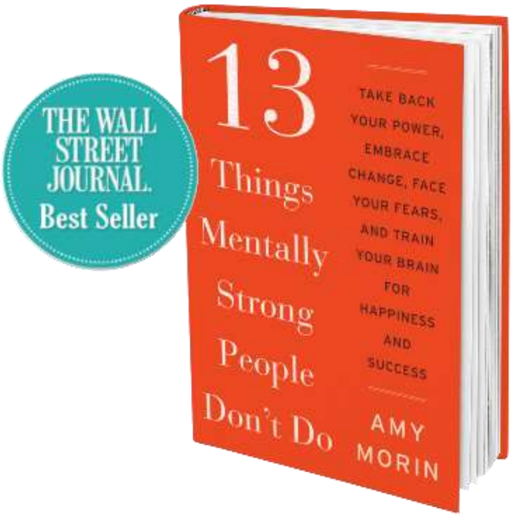
Amy Morin is a licensed clinical social worker and psychotherapist. Since 2002, she has been counseling children, teens, and adults. She also works as an adjunct psychology instructor.

Amy serves as About.com's Parenting Teens Expert and Child Discipline Expert. She's a regular contributor to Forbes and Psychology Today.

Her expertise in mental strength has attracted international attention. Her bestselling book, 13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do, is being translated into more than 20 languages.
Amy's advice has been featured by a number of media outlets, including: *Parenting*, *Time*, *Fast Company*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Success*, Oprah.com, Health.com, Fox News, NBC, ABC, MSN, Lifetime Moms, and We TV. She has also provided on-camera interviews for Fox Business, Forbes, and TheBlaze TV. She's a frequent guest on a variety of radio shows as well.

Co-ordinates

Facebook:
facebook.com/AmyMorinAuthor
Web: www.AmyMorinLCSW.com
Twitter: twitter.com/AmyMorinLCSW



Rebecca L. Morgan

Defrosting telephone cold calls

How cold calling can help keep you warm on those slow sales days.

Do you hate to make calls on the phone? Would you rather do anything, anything, than dial that stranger? Do you find yourself reading the newspaper, taking an early lunch, cleaning your desk, even filling out paperwork, rather than making those calls? Do you tell yourself you'd make those calls more easily if you only had some guidelines to help you know what to say? Then read on for some help.

1. Have a clear objective before calling. Know specifically what you want from this call-an order, an appointment, whatever. The more specific you are before you call, the more successful you will be.

2. Strategize before calling. Determine what you know about this prospect and his company or family. What hot buttons might they have, and have you helped people in similar situations or lines of work? Make brief notes to yourself about these things so if they or you get off track, you know where to refocus the conversation.

3. Call the president's secretary if you don't know who is in charge of the area you're trying to reach. The secretary will often know who makes the decisions on insurance or other financial services.

4. Start with "Good morning/afternoon." It gives the person answering time to get situated and listen to you. It is also more upbeat than just "hello".

5. Give your full name and the full name of the person you're calling to the receptionist. Do not ask, "Is Pam Prospect in?" or "May I please speak to Mr. Prospect?" The receptionist will screen you out. And don't ask for the prospect by first name only unless you're personal friends. Simply say: "Good morning/afternoon. (Your full name) calling for (prospect's full name) please."

6. Only give your firm's name to the receptionist if it's well known. Receptionists will weed you out or ask screening questions if they've never heard of your company.

7. Tell her something nebulous if she asks what it's regarding, but don't be too evasive. Just say you'd like to discuss doing business together, or you'd like to discuss financial planning services. The receptionist needs to tell the prospect something, and as long as you're pleasant, she'll often put you through. Avoid "It's personal" if you don't know the prospect.

8. Eliminate "How are you today?" It sounds phony and too salesy. You are a professional, not just another sales person. Project class from your opening to your close.

9. Avoid "You don't know me." When you begin your conversation with the prospect, say "We haven't met yet," instead. It's more upbeat and positive.

10. Use "Are you in the middle of something urgent or pressing?" Avoid asking if the prospect is "in the middle of something," is "in the middle of something important," has "a few minutes," or is "busy." Everyone is always in the middle of something and is always busy, although it might not be urgent or pressing.

11. Start with either a reference name or, "The reason for my call is..."

12. Offer to share an idea with the prospect if you want to set an appointment. "I'd like to meet with you to share an idea that has helped other people or companies in your situation." If the prospect wants the idea over the phone, explain you have some visuals that explain it better than you can over the phone.

13. Get the prospect's permission before asking questions while fact finding and qualifying. Don't jump right into a needs assessment. Ask, instead, "In order to see if my services may be useful to you, may I ask a few questions?" This is so rare you will stand out as an exceptional salesperson.

14. Ask questions. Don't talk at the prospect. Get him involved. Ideally, you will do 25 percent of the talking and the prospect will do the rest. "Could you tell me who makes the decisions about purchasing insurance coverage?" Don't ask obvious, sales-oriented questions. They're more likely to irritate than stimulate.

15. Be very polite and courteous. Again, it's rare. Use, "With your permission..." and "Thank you for your time," or "I appreciate your time." "If it's alright with you, may I ask a few questions?"

16. Deepen your voice. Deeper voices are perceived as more powerful. But don't lower your voice volume. If you're too breathy, people will wonder exactly what you're selling.

17. Sound business-like, but not stiff. Don't waste the prospects time by joking around but be flexible and laugh if it's appropriate. Take your cue from the other person's tone and match it.

18. Be friendly and enthusiastic. Let your natural excitement for your product come across, without sounding like a cheerleader. Put a smile in your voice.

19. Use the prospect's name occasionally. Calling a person by his name is a compliment, unless it's overdone. If you use it every other sentence, it will sound insincere.

20. Show you're listening. Paraphrase what the prospect tells you and ask clarification if something is unclear. While the prospect is speaking, use "I see," "Right," and other vocal clues to demonstrate that you're following along.

21. Avoid saying, "I'd like to drop by." It doesn't say that this appointment is important to you. Make the prospect feel important by showing you are setting aside a specific time to devote to him.

22. Plan the timing of your calls. Executives are often approachable on Mondays and Fridays, during lunch, and at the very beginning of the day. Often you can get through to the top person because the secretaries are out.

23. Always return phone calls. If you can't personally return the call, ask someone else to contact the person for you. You never know who will be calling with a lead or for an appointment.

24. Always leave your name. Even though you don't expect the prospect to return your call, leave a message so that your name is familiar the next time you call.

25. Make it a game. For instance, some life insurance agents celebrate no's because statistics show that for every 24 no's there will be one yes. Remember that each no brings you closer to a sale. Just dial the next number and say to yourself, "Next!"

Telephone cold calling is never easy, and don't believe anyone who tells you it is. But by following these guidelines it can at least be bearable. Try some of them and you may be pleasantly surprised at the results.

About the Author

Rebecca L. Morgan, CSP, CMC, specializes in creating innovative solutions for people-productivity challenges. She's appeared on 60 Minutes, Oprah, National Public Radio and USA Today. She has authored four books and co-authored three more.

Co-ordinates

E-mail:
Rebecca@RebeccaMorgan.com
Website: www.RebeccaMorgan.com

Tom Koulopoulos

Nine steps to make the hardest decisions easier

Decision making can be tough, especially for highly creative individuals, but this simplified approach of "Separating the Seeds from the Weeds" can clarify virtually every decision you make.

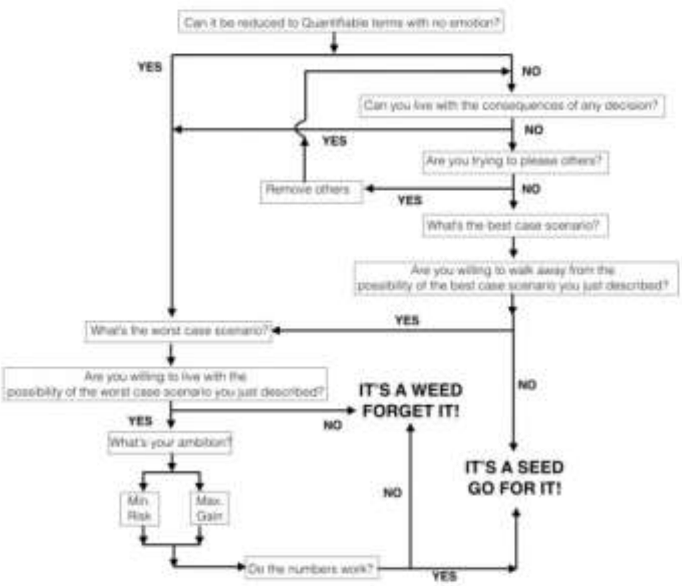
If you want to make good decisions you have to get out of the emotional weeds.

I've seen some of the smartest people I know struggle with decisions, especially those really tough decisions that seem to have endless risks and possibilities. The reason these decisions are tough has nothing to do with the intelligence of the people making them but rather their emotions. Nowhere is that more true than in small and medium sized entrepreneurial businesses and especially those where creativity takes centre stage. But you know that! This is your life we're talking about here. It's not an antiseptic spreadsheet with rows and columns. It's your passion; your heart and soul. And creativity is always tied intimately to deep emotions, right? Yes, which is exactly why you need to get out of the emotional weeds and find some perspective. Otherwise you'll end up emotionally paralyzed by the same creative passion that got you here!

So, here's the good news, even the hardest decisions are ultimately about being able to ask some very simple, but brutally honest, questions about the drivers, fears, and ambitions behind the decision.

"…you need to get out of the emotional weeds and find some perspective. Otherwise you'll end up emotionally paralyzed."

As I've helped colleagues and clients work through tough decisions over the years I've created a model that uses a series of questions which significantly streamline the decision making process by bringing into focus the most critical implications of a GO or NO GO decision. In other words, they reveal the true fears and ambitions that drive every small business.



Trying to talk through this makes it much more complex than it needs to be. So, instead of writing several thousand words of explanatory text, I've reduced it to a straight-forward flow chart that is guided by YES/NO answers to 9 Questions. One of my clients once called this process, Separating the Seeds from the Weeds. Love that!

Decision making can be tough, especially for highly creative individuals, but this simplified approach of "Separating the Seeds from the Weeds" can clarify virtually every decision you make. Follow the chart from top to bottom and take the YES or NO path after each question to determine if you have a seed or a weed.

Although I've used it hundreds of times, this is the first time I'm sharing in a public forum. I was reluctant at first to share it, not because there is anything top secret going on here, but because it's not intended to be a decision making panacea–keep looking if that's what you're after; and by all means tell me when you find it! It is simply a navigation aid. Think of it as you might a compass or sextant. It will show you which way North is and provide at least one of your coordinates, but you still need to plot the course to get the rest of the way to your destination–which, in case that part isn't clear, means you need to have a destination plotted!

Also, as you walk through this model keep in mind that just because you've made a decision doesn't mean it's a great decision with guaranteed outcomes. It just means it's the best decision for the current set of circumstances. Sometimes circumstances change enough to warrant a new decision. It's just as important that you revisit this model regularly to see if your decision still stands on its original merits.

So, if you're ready to separate the seeds of brilliance from the emotional weeds, ready be honest about what drives you, and ready to live with the consequences of your choices give the nine questions a whirl on some of your toughest decisions and tell me how it works.

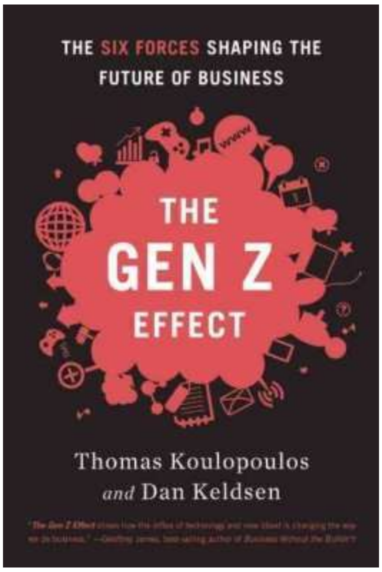
Otherwise, happy weeding!

About the Author

Tom Koulopoulos is the author of 10 books and founder of the Delphi Group, a 25-year-old Boston-based think tank and a past Inc. 500 company that focuses on innovation and the future of business.

Co-ordinates

Web: Delphi Group
Twitter: @tkspeaks



Quotes by John Wayne

Born Marion Mitchell Morrison on 26 May 1907 (died 1979), John Wayne (nicknamed "The Duke") was the son of a pharmacist. He got into acting after becoming a friend of actor Tom Mix who got him a job as a prop man in exchange for football tickets to USC, where Wayne played. He became friends of director John Ford who got him bit parts in movies. He made 70 low-budget B westerns before Ford cast him in Stagecoach, which made him a star.

"Life is tough, but it's tougher when you're stupid."

"Courage is being scared to death... and saddling up anyway."

"Never say sorry - it's a sign of weakness"

"If you've got them by the balls their hearts and minds will follow."

"Get off your butt and join the Marines!"

"Tomorrow is the most important thing in life. Comes into us at midnight very clean. It's perfect when it arrives and it puts itself in our hands. It hopes we've learned something from yesterday."

"I've had three wives, six children and six grandchildren and I still don't understand women"

"Talk low, talk slow and don't say too much."

"Nobody ever saw a cowboy on the psychiatrist's couch."

"Nobody should come to the movies unless he believes in heroes."

"Well, there are some things a man just can't run away from."

"You can take everything a man has as long as you leave him his dignity."

Shelly Greenway

13 plastic packaging alternatives

Why should brands care?

Plastics is one of the biggest challenges the world is facing right now. Thanks to David Attenborough's Blue Planet, consumers are suddenly aware of the thousands of tonnes of plastic filling the ocean.

As plastic is so prolifically used, especially in packaging, brands are going to need to act quick to find plastic alternatives. In fact, 25% of consumers are extremely concerned about plastic packaging, 42% think manufacturers should prioritise making packaging recyclable and 21% think the industry should work toward entirely plastic-free packaging (Kantar). This number is only going to grow as plastic continues to get covered daily in the press. Brands will need to be seen to be taking a responsible approach, otherwise they will risk damaging their hard-earned equity.

With so many plastic alternatives being developed, we've rounded up 13 of the most exciting innovations in plastic replacement.

1. Plant-based plastics

A.K.A. Bioplastics are made from a variety of sources such as corn, which is broken down into PLA, or polylactic acid. This is incredibly sustainable to produce, as it's made from the waste products from the production of corn – which is also easy to grow. PLA can be used to make drinks bottles, various food grade containers, as well as films. Eco-heroes Innocent are now making their bottles from 15% PLA.

2. Mushroom root

With Mycelium (mushroom roots, funnily enough, the same stuff that Quorn is made from), packaging is literally grown. Ecovative Design gather agricultural waste, mix it with the mycelium in moulds and then the packaging quite literally grows. You can see how it works here, though I'm not 100% sure it isn't magic.

3. Bagasse

Bagasse is a by-product of sugarcane processing. Due to its malleability and stickiness, it can be easily moulded into packaging suitable for food delivery and food service – similar to polystyrene. Unlike polystyrene, it's certified biodegradable and compostable,

4. Seaweed water bubbles

UK start-up Ooho have created an edible (and by default, biodegradable) water bubble made of seaweed. Their aim is "to provide the convenience of plastic bottles while limiting the environmental impact".

They have developed manufacturing processes that make this both more efficient and cheaper than producing plastic bottles. The process produces 5x less CO_2 and uses 9x less Energy vs PET production.

5. Shower-friendly paper

Beauty behemoth L'Oréal have just launched an eco-beauty range, Seed Phytonutrients. The products themselves sound lovely (made from 93-100% natural ingredients, cruelty -free, paraben-free etc.) but the packaging is where the real innovation is. Made by Ecologic, the outer card is recycled, recyclable, compostable, glue-free and water-resistant. The inner liner is made with recyclable plastic and uses 60% less material than regular plastic bottles.

6. Stone paper and plastic

It might surprise you to know that paper can be made out of stone. It certainly did me. I have a stone paper notebook and it has the most beautiful smooth finish, almost cool to the touch. This incredible innovation has several possible packaging applications. It can be used as a paper or plastic alternative, being printable, recyclable, water-proof… and its eco-credentials look pretty good too. It is made from calcium carbonate, which is one of the Earth's most abundant resources and its production process uses less water, has a lower carbon footprint, and is more energy efficient than regular paper production.

Stone paper can also be used to make FDA certified food grade packaging. This can be used for making paper (supermarket singlet) bags, takeaway food cartons, greaseproof paper wraps as well as Ziplock bags.

7. Palm leaves

Holy Lama use palm leaves from the areca palm to create the oyster-like cases for their handmade soaps. The leaves fall naturally from the areca palm, then they are collected and moulded into the desired shape. Brilliantly environmentally friendly as they use a natural waste product of the areca palm and the final packaging product is biodegradable.

A Berlin start-up Arekapak is developing palm leaf packaging for food such as fresh fruit, vegetables and nuts.

8. Corn starch and sorghum loose fill

EcoFlo loose fill is made from corn starch and can be used the same way as regular polystyrene loose fill. This eco version – which can also be made from sorghum (a crop similar to popcorn) – is biodegradable, odour free, and maybe best of all; static-free!

9. Edible six-pack ring

Saltwater Brewery in America have developed a material for their six-pack rings which is not only biodegradable and compostable, but also edible. Made of barley and wheat remnants which are a by-product of the brewing process, if it's dropped in the ocean now, this packaging will actually benefit the sea life!

10. Silberboard – metallised paper

Developed as a sustainable alternative to traditional composite metallised papers and boards, Silberboard is both recyclable and compostable. The paper weight can be used for food on-the-go and labelling, the card weight can be used for all kinds of boxes – for food, household goods, pharmaceuticals… etc. etc.

11. Wood pulp cellophane

NatureFlex is the sustainable younger brother of cellophane, which is made from FSC certified wood pulp, and certified biodegradable. It comes as Uncoated, which is perfect for chocolate and confectionery as well as household items; Semi-Permeable, which can be used for fresh produce and dairy; and Barrier for bakery, snacks, coffee, tea, chocolate, confectionery as well as home and personal care items.

12. Prawn shell plastic bags

Scientists around the world are developing plastic alternatives out of the most unlikely things. One of these is chitosan, which is made from prawn and crab shells, which are usually a waste product. No-one has commercialised this technology yet – but the material has the potential to replace plastic in packaging for food and drinks.

13. Milk plastic

Casein – the protein found in milk – has been used to make plastic for over a century, but it went out of fashion in favour of the more hardwearing, long-lasting petrochemical variety. Lactips have developed tech that combines the protein with clay and a reactive molecule (glyceraldehyde) which make the plastic much stronger, but still biodegradable. Lactips already produce milk plastic for the detergent industry (you know those little bubbles you pop in the dishwasher?) and now are looking to move into the food and beverage industry, as well as pharmaceuticals and agrochemicals.

It's only a matter of time before your competitors start using one of these great developments and gain differentiation in the market. (We recently wrote about Veuve Clicquot's eco-packaging initiatives.) How can your brand lead the way?

About the Author
Shelly Greenway is a front-end innovation strategist and partner at The Strategy Distillery – a brand innovation consultancy that specializes in opportunity hunting and proposition development.

Co-ordinates
LinkedIn:
linkedin.com/in/shellygreenway/

Michael Graber

Extending the transformation

Innovation can be the spark that galvanizes an organization and resets the whole of it for higher and faster growth.

After using innovation methods successfully to create meaningful products, services, and perhaps overhaul the business model itself, these methods and mindsets can be used to refine and advance many other operational segments of the business.

We call this growth tendency *Extending the Transformation.* We see this happen inside organizations after they experience some innovation wins in rapid succession, typically 18-24 months after they begin the innovation journey.

Once innovation metrics get assigned to a particular function, it is amazing how that function can use the methods to shake the cobwebs, dust, inefficient processes, and bloated costs out of the system.

Here's the sticky point. This is not a value-engineering process or something akin to Six Sigma that has its roots in the Industrial Revolution, but rather a refreshing of perspective and a refining of objectives, reach, and actions. It is a question of creating and expanding new value and capability, not merely optimizing an existing system.

The mandate is to innovation, not just to improve.

I have written previously about how the most unlikely department created new value, in a piece about Johnson & Johnson's Procurement Department (https://www.memphisdailynews.com/news/2014/dec/1/even-procurement-is-innovating/). Here, they played to their strengths, relationship. They began to source innovation itself and reward innovation from their suppliers, which benefitted all entities in the relationship.

Now we see HR using innovative methods to transform from "paper pushers and complaint departments" to leading Talent Management, Acquisition, and Development. What was a reactive, functional HR department became a strategy driver inside these organizations?

Using methods of empathy, problem definition, Ideation, prototyping, and testing these prototypes with their users, we've seen manufacturing teams and facilities solve problems they previously thought unsolvable.

Moreover, we've seen improvements in areas where previously teams found problems unsolvable—not just workarounds or incremental changes, but total shifts. Morale improves just by the mere act of getting those in the plant to collaborate on these methods.

Then, we have witnessed and participated in engineering organizations retooling their process to include the iterative steps and frequent market testing steps in the Innovation methodology. In fact, they receive great results by blending their Innovation Methodology and New Product Development Process.

Ultimately, extending the innovation transformation to all departments and processes is about culture. This enormous initiative, largely focused at us becoming more innovative and fast moving, empowers deeper collaboration, more market feedback throughout the lifecycle of a concept, and a radical the radical confidence of real leadership.

Extending the transformation is a strategic choice, based on both short- and long-term value growth. We've seen this awaken departments that were once sleepy cost-centres into activated value generators.

Warning: only those who want to be market leaders need to make this shift.

About the Author:

Michael is Co-Founder and Managing Partner at Southern Growth Studio. Michael leads the qualitative team with a particular focus on innovation, to deliver high-impact go-to-market strategies and product launches.

Michael has more than twenty years of experience leading marketing and innovation efforts.

A published poet and musician, Michael is the creative force that compliments the analytical side of the house. Michael speaks and publishes frequently on best practices in marketing, business strategy, and innovation.

Michael holds a M.F.A from the University of Memphis.

Co-ordinates:

Web: southerngrowthstudio.com/
Email: aquavita@southerngrowthstudio.com
Twitter: twitter.com/SouthernGrowth

Greg Satell

To solve complex problems, you need a networked solution

Every leader tries to keep things simple and predictable. You hire good people, treat them well, give them clear objectives and do your best to stay out of their way. If you do your homework, plan things well and your people execute efficiently, everything should go off without a hitch. Or so the thinking goes.

Yet reality often intrudes on even the best laid plans. Technology evolves, customer tastes change and competitors release new offerings. Before you know it, your simple model becomes dizzyingly complex and your organization is struggling to coordinate a response to a rapidly changing marketplace.

The truth is that we need to manage for complexity, not simplicity and many organizations are poorly fit to adapt. The answer does not lie in better planning or execution, but greater empowerment. We need to shift our organizations from hierarchies to networks and learn how to facilitate horizontal connections across the enterprise at an operational cadence.

How Things Get So Complex

What is perhaps most important to understand about complexity is that it is, to a large extent, unavoidable. The US Constitution is prized for its simplicity and elegance, but the current federal legal code we use to execute that initial document is millions upon millions of words long. People work their entire lives to become experts in just a narrow slice of it.

In *Overcomplicated* complexity theorist Sam Arbesman gives two reasons why this is necessarily so. The first is accretion. We build systems, like the Constitution or the Internet, to perform a limited number of tasks. Yet to scale those systems, we need to build on top of them to expand their initial capabilities. As the system gets larger, it gets more complex.

The second force that leads to complexity is interaction. We may love the simplicity of our iPhones, but don't want to be restricted to its capabilities alone. So we increase its functionality by connecting it to millions of apps. Those apps, in turn, connect to each other as well as to other systems.

So, while it's natural to yearn for a simpler existence, we still want to connect to Yelp to find a nice place where we can have a quiet beer and contemplate our spartan values. Then we want the app to connect to Google Maps so we can find that island of tranquillity without getting lost and to Uber so we can get there easily.

A Moving Target

A third factor in complexity is the property of emergence. When we have many things interacting the result tends to be something unexpected. For example, our traffic laws interact not only with other laws, but also with the daily habits of millions of people as well as things like construction and repair schedules. Even a small change can result in radically different traffic patterns.

In *Micromotives and Macro*behavior, Nobel prizewinning economist Thomas Schelling showed how even good intentions can go awry. The best known example is his segregation model, in which even those who prefer to live in mixed neighbourhoods (but not to be outnumbered) can give rise to extreme segregation.

It is the property of emergence that makes managing in the real world a moving target, because as we make our plans, everyone else is making theirs. The combined effect of all these independent actions reshape the competitive landscape in ways that are impossible to predict and traditional hierarchical structures are poorly suited to adapt at anything near the speed required.

General Stanley McChrystal experienced an extreme version of this in Iraq. As he would later write in *Team of Teams*, "the world had outpaced us. In the time it took us to move a plan from creation to approval, the battlefield for which the plan had been devised would have changed. By the time it had been implemented, the plan — however ingenious in its initial design — was often irrelevant."

Networking Solutions

Networking is one of the most overused terms in business today. It can refer to everything from a beer after work to an expensive corporate retreat. The underlying idea, all too often, is that random encounters lead to good and unexpected places. There is some truth to that, but the reality is that it is incredibly rare and the most effective networking isn't random at all.

The challenge today is that change happens so fast that networking needs to happen at an operational cadence. When we have to solve a problem, we can't wait to randomly come across someone who can help us at a social event or annual offsite. We need to continuously connect silos both inside and outside our organization through fostering horizontal connections.

In *One Mission*, McChrystal's former *aide de camp* Chris Fussell describes two strategies they found effective. The first is the Operations and Intelligence (O&I) forum. These are meetings, usually held among a core set of people but open to anybody in the wider organization through videoconference. It is held regularly, usually daily or weekly, and is made up of short briefings on anything important that is going on.

The second are liaison officers.

These are not the usual coordination positions but are restricted to high performing executives that can build credibility throughout an organization. For example, liaison officers at Eastdil Secured, a real estate investment bank, hold their positions for nine months and are responsible for explaining what relevance recent transactions in their office may have for the greater organization.

These are, of course, only two options. Every organization needs to experiment and decide for itself what works best for their culture and strategy.

Losing Control, Gaining Power

As managers, we like things to be simple enough so that we can understand and control them. Yet at some point we need to come to terms with the fact that the lunatics run the asylum. If you limit the problems you can solve to those that you can directly manage, you will soon find yourself swallowed up by the inherent complexity of today's marketplace.

As Talia Milgrom-Elcott, Executive Director of 100Kin10, an organization which is committed to improving STEM education, told me, "complex problems tend to have multiple interconnected roots that require multiple interconnected solutions and can benefit from a networked approach based on shared values."

The answer is not to try to make things simpler and neither is it to design an organizational structure so complex that nobody can understand it, but rather to enable and empower informal relationships across your enterprise. Network theory shows that it takes a surprisingly small amount of these informal linkages to dramatically bring down social distance and help you adapt.

So we should, as Alfred North Whitehead wisely advised, "Seek simplicity but distrust it." If it's simple enough for us to fully grasp, it's probably too slow and rigid to be effective. Or, as General McChrystal put it, "the role of the leader was no more that of controlling puppet master, but of an empathetic crafter of culture."

About the Author

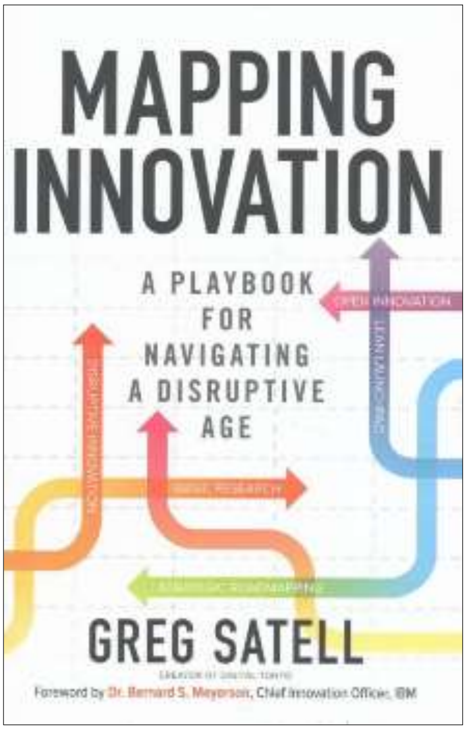
Greg Satell is a popular author, speaker and innovation advisor, whose work has appeared in Harvard Business Review, Forbes, Fast Company, Inc. and other A-list publications. Over the last 20 years he has managed market leading businesses and overseen the development of dozens of path breaking products.

Greg helps organizations to grow through bringing "big ideas into practice." He applies rigorous frameworks to identify the right strategies for the right problems, helps build an "innovation playbook" to tackle the challenges of the future and drive transformative change.

His first book, *Mapping Innovation: A Playbook For Navigating A Disruptive Age* was published by McGraw-Hill in 2017. In November 2017 Greg's book made the long list for 'The 2017 800-CEO-READ Business Book Awards Longlist': http://inthebooks.800ceoread.com/news/articles/the-2017-800-ceo-read-business-book-awards-longlist

Co-ordinates

LinkedIn: LinkedIn profile
Twitter: @DigitalTonto
Website: www.digitaltonto.com/ and www.GregSatell.com



Rob Garibay

How to increase employee engagement

Gallup conducted a study on employee engagement. The results of their findings were shocking for most CEO's.

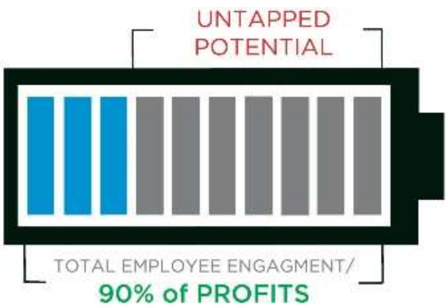
Only 31% of employees in the United States are fully engaged at their jobs! This means that about 70% of US employees are either partially engaged, disengaged, or outright hostile at work!

Fully engaged employees are the ones you are excited to see on Monday morning. They show enthusiasm in their jobs and constantly have high levels of performance.

Disengaged employees do their jobs but put forth just enough effort to not get fired. They show little passion or creativity for their jobs and are just going through the motions.

Actively disengaged employees are the most damaging in a company. They are disgruntled and voice their unhappiness to the rest of their peers. Not only do they look for ways to get out of work, but they are nightmares for team moral and company culture.

What does this type of employee engagement mean to the bottom line?



Frontline employees influence a full 90% of the profits of an average company. Employee engagement is the most untapped source of increased profits available to businesses today. If we could improve the engagement of the 70% of employees who are disengaged, imagine the increased profits in your company!

3 Ways to Increase Employee Engagement:

1. Cast a compelling vision backed by a compelling purpose: Your company vision is the destination. It is where you are going. Southwest Airlines is a great example of this.

   Their vision statement is *"To become the world's most loved, most flown, and most profitable airline."*

   Your company purpose is the "why" behind where you are going. Why do you want to achieve your vision? What does it matter? Why does Southwest want to achieve their vision? It's their purpose statement. Their purpose statement is to "Connect People to what's important in their lives…"

   Your employees want to come to work for more than just a dollar bill. Cast a vision backed by a compelling purpose your employees can buy in to. For a team, the vision becomes the North Star and the purpose becomes the rocket fuel!

2. Create buy in of the Vision and Purpose:
   Most people are inspired to give it their all when they feel like their work has value. Their works feeds their soul.

   Gaining team buy-in occurs when the team clearly understand the vision, they are inspired by it, and they believe that the leaders value their participation in achieving it. They must understand their individual roles, their priorities, and the roadmap for achieving the vision.

Done properly, the team becomes unified, fully engaged, with everyone pulling in the same direction creating team alignment!

3. Facilitate Exceptional Execution

   Accomplish this through:
   1. Setting clear expectations for your employees tied to an actionable plan. It's not enough just to create a compelling vision. Leaders must develop a game plan of how to achieve it.
   2. Provide the support and resources needed for employees to accomplish those expectations
   3. Create a culture of healthy empowerment. (A great resource for this is Kip Tindell's book, "Uncontainable"!)
   4. Lead by example! Lead with humility. Strive to nurture caring relationships with your team members so they sense that they are more than a means to enriching your bank account!

Kip Tindell, CEO of The Container Store, does it about as well as anyone I've seen. By mastering these 3 things to increase their employee engagement, The Container Store enjoys only a 10% annual turnover compared to retail industry averaging 100%! Their employees are 10 times more likely to stay working at their company than employees of other retail stores.

For CEO's and business leaders looking for a tool to increase employee engagement, my best recommendation is Group Activation System provided by Engage and Grow – a company dedicated to increasing employee engagement. Bryan Haynes, CEO of FHG, and his 50 employees recently used their program and their employee engagement sky rocketed! They recently had their best month they've had in 6 years because of this tool.

Employee engagement is the most untapped source of increased profits available to business today. How engaged are your employees? Click here for a free anonymous survey from Engage and Grow that you can send your employees to gauge their engagement!

About the Author:

Rob Garibay is a business owner, business expert & coach, certified with Gazelles International, ActionCOACH, and Engage & Grow, as well as a John Maxwell Founding Partner Leadership Coach. His professional career spans building businesses in manufacturing, R&D, distribution, retail, and IT. Rob has been a guest lecturer at The University of Oklahoma Price College of Business and also a weekly contributor to The Norman Transcript Sunday Business section.

Rob is the author of the book Energize Your Profits and contributing author to Roadmap to Success, both available on Amazon.com. He has achieved #3 ranking in the USA and #15 in the world among over 1400 ActionCOACH business coaches. Rob is a graduate of the Case School of Engineering, Case Western Reserve University. He co-founded and grew a technology business which he sold after 15 years.

Rob has written business plans that have raised $30 million in investment capital.

He is passionate about helping business owners successfully scale their mid-sized businesses by applying the Rockefeller Habits and 4 Decisions concepts to their companies.

Rob lives in Norman Oklahoma with his wife of 39+ years and loves to scuba dive and ski.

Co-ordinates:

Facebook: http://on.fb.me/1U42xpp
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Bizezia Limited Incorporated in England and Wales, Company Number 04017546.
Kingfisher House, Hurstwood Grange, Hurstwood Lane, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH17 7QX, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 1444 884220
Email: info@bizezia.com **Web:** www.bizezia.com