

Better Business Focus

April 2020

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.

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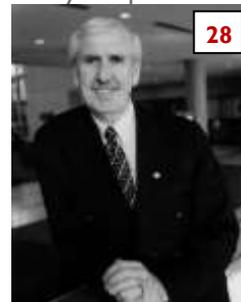
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When tough times are ahead, you should double down on innovation

As I'm writing this, the last couple of weeks have been quite eventful around the world.

There's a lot of uncertainty and even panic regarding the coronavirus, its current and potential impact on our economy, and of course, its effects on people all around the world.

As a result, we're seeing more and more action being taken to mitigate the spread of the virus. Business are preparing for the tough times that might be ahead, should the disease continue spreading and actions to mitigate it become even more common.

While it's obviously smart to prepare for a potential downturn by setting priorities, focusing on the essentials and then cutting back on the rest, we're also unfortunately seeing a number of organizations ramp down innovation until a "better time" emerges in the future.

That is, however, quite shortsighted. Regardless of how dire the situation might be, innovation really shouldn't be one of the things that gets cut when you spot trouble on the horizon.

Let's look at why that is the case. If you're one of the innovators who've had to start defending your work, hopefully this post can provide you with ammunition for the fight.

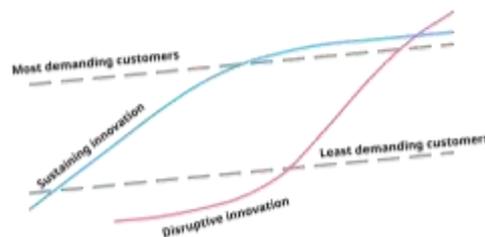
Downturns are prime territory for disruption

No matter how bad the economy, there are always companies that thrive during tough times. But who are these companies?

In essence, it's primarily the companies that offer more value for less.

That of course means that businesses like discount retailers are likely to triumph over department stores.

But, more importantly for us, **economic downturns are always a great time for disruptive innovation.**



Disruptive innovation usually starts from the low-end of the market, which means that these innovators are uniquely positioned for tough times. It's much easier for these disruptors to gain business since both consumers and businesses are actively looking for ways to meet their needs with new, more affordable solutions.

They're also willing to be more flexible regarding some of the other aspects of the product or service, which would've previously tipped the scales in favor of the incumbent.

For example, during the 2008-09 financial crisis, most companies **cut their technology budgets by 20-30%**. That obviously meant quite a bit of trouble for most technology companies. However, during the same timeframe even the worst quarter of revenue growth for Salesforce.com was above 20%, thanks to their then uniquely flexible Software as a Service

(SaaS) business model with very limited up-front costs.

Smart entrepreneurs and business leaders know the opportunity these situations represent for them, which means that we're going to see many new, smarter low-cost alternatives that will use new technology and business models to undercut and disrupt the incumbents in a wide range of markets.

What makes the situation worse for the incumbents is that they often reduce or cut their investments in improving their own products and services to try to cope with the situation, which allows the entrants to actually catch up even faster than they would've otherwise done.

Innovation is a great tool for cutting costs – the right way

When companies spot trouble in the horizon, they naturally try to prepare for it, as they rightly should, which typically means building up cash reserves, cutting operational costs and reducing future investments in areas like increasing production capacity.

However, what you don't want to do is to cut down on costs in a way that actually ends up hurting you in the long-term.

In Finland, this kind of shortsighted behavior is often referred to as "peeing in your pants to keep warm in the winter", and that's exactly what dropping innovation during tough times is.

You might feel cozy for a couple of quarters but if the downturn lasts longer, you'll just end up getting in more trouble.

Even if you survive until the end of the downturn, you have nothing left to build your future growth upon and you're going to be left standing there with the competition soaring past you from all sides as you try to scramble together your response to the new products, services and business models that the competitors have been perfecting for quite some time.

Having said that, there are many ways to cut down on costs that make sense both in the short and long term. Let's use a simple matrix to look at what these kinds of cost cuts are like.



Quick wins

Quick wins can serve as the first-aid kit for your business. These are areas where you can see results right away. These are usually the things everyone knows are costly and not really delivering results, but that have been kept around for one reason or the other – often sunk cost fallacy.

Maybe it's an agency partner that hasn't been able to deliver on their promises, or an advertising campaign that hasn't really seemed to work.

In general, offloading significant unnecessary or unproductive expenditures and moving future purchases to business models with less up-front expenses and more flexibility, such as SaaS, are examples of moves you can make here to increase cash flow and minimize risks.

Unnecessary frivolities

Frivolities are basically the things that are plain unnecessary, or just nice to have things that no one's

really bothered to think about during the good times.

Individually these don't really have much of an effect, but when you combine hundreds or thousands of them, these can actually end up making a difference financially.

Frivolities can be anything from unnecessary travel to an extravagant assortment of snacks, or overly expensive company events.

I recently heard of a large organization that managed to save huge amounts of money simply by switching to a less expensive brand of toilet paper in all of their hundreds of locations.

However, some of these seemingly unnecessary frivolities might still be beloved by employees, so ask around before you proceed to cut all of them.



Restructuring

Even though restructuring is always painful, the sooner you do it, the better off you'll generally be.

For example, if a business unit hasn't grown in years and still continues to bleed red, you might want to consider selling such a business off in preparation of tough times that might be ahead for the business.

Even if it's not the best time to sell such assets, divesting could still be a good idea since this would both save capital going forward and provide an immediately noticeable increase in cash reserves.

You'd also do well to remember that great businesses come out of a recession strong, and the bad ones are simply likely to die. Thus, time likely won't help make these assets more valuable.

Productivity improvements

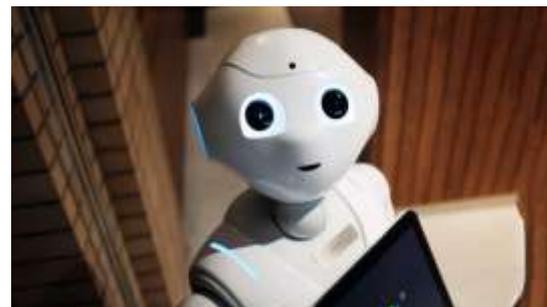
Productivity improvements help you make more with less, which means that they obviously should be at the heart of every cost cutting program.

Productivity improvements often take some time to implement, which means that if the situation is dire, you might need to take some of the above measures to increase cash reserves before the impact of increased productivity starts to really kick in.

However, the beauty of productivity improvements is that their effects aren't limited to just a short-term impact on the bottom line. Their effects will stick around for a long time and can even become a clear competitive advantage for the business going forward.

The interesting thing is that, by definition, you need innovation to achieve improvements in productivity.

Process automation and innovation are probably the most obvious examples of these kinds of improvements.



As you can see, these four areas cover a lot of ground and provide you with plenty of options for cutting costs.

At least in my experience, it's very rare for a healthy business to actually get to a position where they have no option but to cut down on innovation investments to stay in business, even when times are tough.

Tough times provide new opportunities for innovation

So, now that we've established that there are plenty of ways to

improve your cash position and cash flow going forward without decreasing investments in innovation, let's look at why you might actually want to invest more in it during a downturn!

As I'm sure most people who read this already understand, without innovation the future will be exactly the same as today, and that simply won't be enough to be competitive in the future.

Investing in innovation is not a nice-to-have, it's a necessity to just stay in the game.

If the situation is dire, you should, of course, focus your innovation efforts on improving productivity and efficiency first to find ways to survive and make your core business more competitive going forward.

However, as mentioned, a downturn is a great time to introduce new low-end innovations to the market since even though there's less demand overall, there will likely be more demand and willingness to try new services and products that offer more for less.

The positive here is that when demand for your more expensive offerings is nonexistent or significantly down, there's naturally less downside from cannibalization.

It's also much easier to uncover new problems that people weren't previously aware of, or at least didn't consider to be a priority.

Together these factors provide you with many, likely untapped, opportunities that consumers and businesses would be willing to pay for. These innovations can be the drivers of your future growth.



In addition, a downturn is a great time to invest in innovation largely because many of your competitors likely aren't doing so!

This means that by focusing your efforts in innovation, you can build a solid head start over the competition that is just looking to survive and come out strong once demand picks up again.

What's more, talent is always a key driver of innovation and if others aren't investing in acquiring fresh talent, it will be much easier and more affordable for you to do so.

Last but not least, **tough times can help you create a strong sense of urgency**, which is usually needed to make change happen in large organizations, and that's certainly true for innovation as well.

Thus, take advantage of the crisis and try to get people across the organization to stand behind innovation to help you, as an organization, build a better tomorrow together.

Action points

So, to sum up, when tough times are ahead, don't cut back on innovation. Double down on it!

Here's a quick overview of the steps you might want to consider taking when you see trouble on the horizon:

1. **Use the crisis to create a sense of urgency**
2. If needed, find ways to **use innovation to cut down on costs** to provide the cash flow needed for future investments
3. Proceed to **take advantage of the opportunities** provided by the rapidly changing landscape, typically with adjacent or **breakthrough innovation** focused on the low-end of the market.

And remember that speed is of the essence.

To get started, you can **run an idea challenge** for all of your employees. This can help you kickstart the process and focus the cuts on where it hurts the least.

Idea challenges are a great way to build a sense of community and urgency so that everyone in your organization can help do their part to turn things around.

The themes of this challenge could, for example, be either one of the topics below.

Productivity improvements

From the top-down, it's often hard to know which processes are efficient and which aren't, but the employees that face it day-to-day, know that without a doubt. Employees often also have very good ideas on how to actually fix these processes as well.

A well-organized pool of ideas also helps you to better **evaluate** the opportunities and choose which areas to focus on.

Thus, asking your employees for ideas on how to improve productivity certainly makes sense!

Cost savings

When it comes to making cost cuts from above, there are **two fundamental challenges**:

- There are often plenty of opportunities for saving on costs that are impossible to spot from the top down
- There are many areas where cost cuts can face a lot of resistance from employees and damage morale and culture

By making the process of choosing targets for cost savings transparent and bidirectional, you'll address both of these issues. You can spot areas that you otherwise wouldn't have realized, and you'll also be able to see beforehand which cuts will face the most resistance from employees.

Often the ideas of front-line employees have actually ended up saving the company much more than management initially thought possible.

And, in general, when you communicate that you “need to prepare for the tough times ahead so that you can behave responsibly and keep as many employees as possible, but that to do that, you need to work together to find ways to do this”, you’ll have a great opportunity to get the team to stand together and put up a fight as opposed to everyone just covering for their own bases.

You'd do well to remember that no recession has ever lasted for **more than a few years**, so keep investing in innovating to build the future of your organization and you can come out of any possible recession stronger than before.

As the old saying goes, don't let a good crisis go to waste!

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About the Author

Jesse Nieminen is the Co-founder and Chairman at **Viima**, the best way to collect and develop ideas. Viima's innovation management software is already loved by thousands of organizations all the way to the Global Fortune 500. He's passionate about helping leaders drive innovation in their organizations and frequently writes on the topic, usually in **Viima's blog**.

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Sunil Bali

Do the light thing

When he was asked to explain his theory of relativity in simple terms, Einstein replied, "Sit with a pretty girl for an hour and it seems like a minute. That's relativity." Or, as someone else once philosophized, "The length of a minute depends on which side of the bathroom door you are."

Time tends to increase or decrease depending how conscious you are of it.

When you're feeling stressed, time goes slowly, but when you're in the moment, loving life with a lightness of being, then you seem to have all the time you need you look at your watch and what seemed like magic moments and minutes, turn out to be happy hours and delightful days.

Lovers really do make a fool of time.

The ancient Greeks had two different words for time: *Chronos* – this is calendar time. Seconds, minutes, hours and days *Kairos* – this literally means, "when the time is right"

Most of us wear chronometers (watches). But what if we wore kairometers instead which tapped into our heart, our gut and our soul, so we took the right action at the right time. To eat only when we're hungry, to rest whenever we're tired, and to take the action that our intuition is nudging us to take.



Time is a bit like the wind, it lifts the light and leaves the heavy.

So make sure you do the light thing.

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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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Andy Bounds

Communicating well during a Virus Crisis



We're living in unprecedented times.

Things are shutting down all around you.

But it's essential your business doesn't shut down around you too.

So here are four Communication Top Tips, to ensure you and your colleagues continue to work well during our Virus Crisis:

1. **Communicate more than ever.** In crisis time, communication is like healthy eating – “little and often”. So, maybe double the frequency but halve the duration. Make sure your colleagues know what your company's doing, what your team's doing, and what you're doing. There's enough uncertainty, without people having to guess what's going on inside your head.
2. **Empathy, not projection.** You need to know how other people are feeling, and that you don't just project your own emotions onto them. So ask them. Ask how they're doing; what extra help they need; what changes they want you to make. Ask... ask...
3. **Brilliant virtual comms.** There'll be less face-to-face and more virtual – conference calls, Skype, webinars etc (I'm doing more webinars for my customers than ever before). So make your virtual comms as powerful as possible. Be

clear on outcomes. Shorten the agenda and duration (nobody likes long conference calls!)

4. **Better emails (but as few as possible).** It's easy to over-email in times like this. So don't send stuff for the sake of sending it. And when you do email, include a clear action at the end – or the reader won't act!

Use all four. Or something else.

But the world is different now. Which means you need to communicate differently.

So what are you changing, to make it easier for everyone around you?

Action Point

Communicate differently to 'your normal'. But make sure you add value, not just noise.

And if you've free time you weren't expecting, and you'd like to use this time to sharpen your comms impact, my online videos are perfect for this – short, simple, practical communication techniques you can use instantly. You can watch them here:

www.andyboundsonline.com/videos

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About the Author

Andy Bounds is an expert at helping companies communicate and sell better. Author of two best-selling books and winner of

the title Britain's Sales Trainer of the Year, Andy has shared his expertise with some of the world's largest companies, helping every one of them have more success. Marketing legend Drayton Bird said Andy had taught him '... more about effective communicating than a lady who'd taught two American Presidents'.

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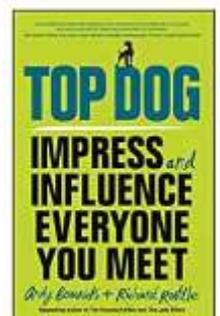
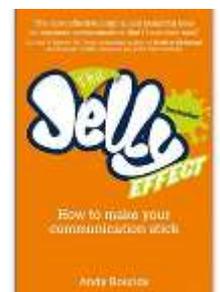
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Short of time? Here are my [Quick Wins](#)

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Dr Lynda Shaw

How to help your business during Coronavirus



The news at the moment about COVID-19 is very alarming, and for many our anxiety levels are on high alert which in the long term can be at the expense of our mental and physical health. So what can businesses do to help ease anxiety and panic and to deal with the current economic uncertainties?

1. Uncertainty is difficult -

The brain finds 'the unknown' the hardest to deal with and research shows that uncertainty is scarier and more alarming than known outcomes, even if they are bad outcomes. When faced with a perceived threat the body responds by releasing stress hormones like adrenaline and cortisol, readying you for action. These hormones narrow down our focus in order to concentrate on survival, which decreases our productivity. Try and focus on the fact that this difficult period will end and that we just need to find ways to best get through it in the meanwhile. Planning, building routines and timetables may help.

2. Look at the big picture and think vertically – What solutions can you provide and what could the positive impact be? Think about what problems your customers or

clients are currently experiencing and what solutions can you offer?

3. Make good use of the time.

Find ways for you and your employees to make good use of the time catching up on administration, writing manuals or building a new website etc. If you are able to keep paying your employees then think creatively about how they can help with all the things you aren't normally able to get to or achieve.

4. Stopping socialising can obviously deeply affect our mood.

Humans are social creatures and when we hang out with people we like, feel good hormones like dopamine and serotonin are released and reward neural activity is stimulated in the brain. Arrange online and video meetings as much as possible and check in with known vulnerable employees.

5. We often see the very best in people in very difficult times. Think if you or your team can help others in any way. Think laterally, creatively and with kindness. More often than not these things always come back to help you or your business in the future.

6. Be a strong leader. Be confident that you have the strength and versatility to overcome challenges when required and that this difficult period will pass in time. Demonstrate credibility, passion and your commitment.

7. Being panicked makes people susceptible to 'fake news' – when the brain perceives a threat, it works very hard to neutralise the hazard and make you safe again. People are naturally inclined to believe information that lies close to their current inherited beliefs even if they are not based on solid science. Stress hormones decrease your rationality and critical thinking and make you more susceptible to inaccurate information. Avoid listening to other's 'strong opinions' and check government websites for official advice.

8. Don't descend into treating each other badly – During times of confusion and anxiety our stress hormones rise, we sleep less and consequently can be more irritable and shorter tempered. Be aware that this happens and make a conscious effort to smile and be positive. Positivity also rubs off on people, so smile and find things to laugh about, one of our best healers.

9. Give your staff autonomy

– Studies show that productivity and morale increase when people are trusted and respected to make their own decisions at work. Don't micromanage just because the team may be working from home. Trust your employees and hopefully you will be pleasantly surprised, not least because work might provide a much needed distraction right now. Trust breeds loyalty.

10. Be as flexible with work patterns as you can

– This is an unprecedented time. Studies show that people increase their productivity when they work from home, a clear benefit to the business. Your staff will have greater morale and commitment to the business if you facilitate them to be flexible with their working hours. They may have family members at home who need help, or they may need to go food shopping at a specific time.

11. Communicate clearly and honestly and allow both your employees and your customers enough time to acclimatise to the change. Try to find capacity to answer any difficult questions. Not everyone will be used to remote working so offer guidance and use line managers to check in regularly on their teams.

12. Plan. Plan. Plan. Know what the company's limits are and ask for help well in advance. Some kind business landlords are for example suggesting retailers prioritise their employees' wages over paying rent. Think about what the financial and strategic impacts of these problems are and start looking for solutions.

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About the Author

Dr Lynda Shaw is cognitive neuroscientist and chartered psychologist, a Forbes contributor, an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, a Fellow of the Professional Speakers Association, as well as an entrepreneur and author of adult and children's books.

Dr Shaw has lectured in Psychology and Neuroscience at various Universities in the UK and conducted research on brain function and impairment, specialising in consciousness, emotion and the effects of ageing. She was honoured to receive the Professional Speaking Award of Excellence in October 2017, it is the highest accolade for UK speakers given by their peers.

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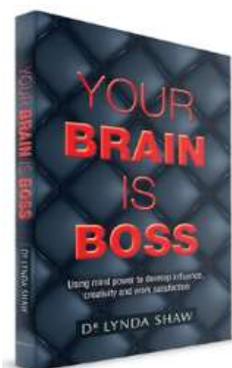
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**Quotes on Courage**

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.'

Eleanor Roosevelt

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

Winston Churchill

I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

Nelson Mandela

What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?

Vincent Van Gogh



Pete Foley

Innovating during a crisis

We are living in interesting times. There is probably nobody out there whose personal and business life has not been impacted at least to some degree by the current COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, in the time between writing this and it publishing, I suspect a lot will have changed.

To that point, it remains to be seen how big a crises this will become.

But it has already resulted in major suffering for large numbers of people around the globe. Obviously we all hope the situation can be brought under control with a minimum of additional loss of life and disruption, but even if it were to go away tomorrow, it has already had a significant impact on the world's economy, psychology, and hence innovation and business in general.

Pace of Change: As a result, in the short-term, businesses are being forced to behave in extraordinary ways. One of the most important of these is expedited decision making. Most companies, especially large ones, normally control the speed of decision making, at least to some extent, via internal processes and hierarchies. That is a luxury that largely disappears in a rapidly evolving crisis. Decision making in a situation like this is dictated far more by the rate of change of external factors. To keep up with a rapidly changing world, internal processes need to be streamlined, command and control relaxed, and autonomy given to those who are making decisions on the ground. Guidelines need to be developed that allow people on the front line

to make smart, but flexible decisions. Likewise, decision making at the top also needs to be accelerated to match rapidly changing external developments, and communication lines shortened and expedited. For example, if someone in an organization tests positive for COVID-19, the decision to protect the rest of the workforce shouldn't need to go up and down the chain of command, but requires action immediately.

This all requires walking a delicate line between panic and speed, but also giving up some of the buffers and safety values built into day to day business practice that usually mitigate or correct errors.

Crisis Accelerate

Evolution: Every cloud has a silver lining, and while this is a horrible situation in many ways, it will also present positives and opportunities. Change is of itself, a friend of innovation. New situations and new problems require new, innovative solutions. Organizations will find themselves on steep learning curves, and will be presented with unique learning opportunities as they by necessity become more agile and adopt new habits. For example, people will grow. Often the biggest barrier to personal growth is lack of opportunity to shine. In extraordinary situations, natural leaders and non 'traditional' thinkers will have a unique chance to step up and show their potential. Extraordinary people will emerge, just as weak links in organizations will become apparent. Crises inevitably accelerate evolution, as well as pulling sometimes surprisingly obvious solutions in from the margins.

New Habits and behaviors will also emerge, and with them, new opportunities. Many people will be forced to explore virtual meetings,

work from home and to embrace more flexible working conditions.

Habitual behaviors, such as travel will be challenged, business processes will be expedited, and I suspect a lot of meetings and face to face interactions will be cancelled. In some cases these changes will be detrimental, but in other cases, we may well discover that we can be far more agile and succinct than we realized. And perhaps we'll learn to be a little less process and CYA driven, and to make good enough, if not perfect decisions faster, and with less data. When the dust settles, we'll have missed the value added by some processes, but I suspect that if we can avoid the default of going back to business as usual, we'll have learnt some really useful lessons. And it's not just in business process where opportunities will emerge, there will also be some inevitable changes in consumer behavior and psychology that will open doors for innovation.

New Consumer Needs and Behaviors. We don't know our future selves very well, and are often pretty poor at anticipating our future behaviors. One of the biggest reasons for this is that we anticipate our future decisions through our current emotional lens. If we feel unhappy, or afraid today, we tend to assume our future decisions will be those of a version of us who is equally unhappy or afraid at that time. One problem this generates is that today's emotions can have a disproportionate impact on future actions, especially if today's emotions are strong. That means that the fear associated with COVID-19 will influence behavior long after the threat of the virus has gone. Consumer behavior will change. We'll likely see habit changes, changes in short and mid-term spending power and mobility.

We'll also probably see an increase in behaviors such as 'flight to the familiar' 'loss aversion' and 'risk aversion', which are typical responses to risk, fear and uncertainty. This won't last forever, but it may mean there will be short and medium term opportunities if we can reframe innovation pipelines towards value, risk reduction, familiarity, psychological safety, and even nostalgia.

Keep Your Eye on the Prize:

As I write this, I have no idea how low the stock market will go, or how long it will take to recover. But even if we come out of this without long-term damage to the broad global economy, recovery will take time, and funds will be tighter than they have been, if only in the short-term.

While on the surface, this sounds bad, it actually represents a huge innovation opportunity. If competition shifts resources away from long-term innovation, we can create a meaningful advantage if we can find ways to continue to innovate behind the scenes, even if we do so at a reduced rate. That doesn't mean we should dig our heels in, or stick rigidly to our plans. As the world changes, so do opportunity spaces and consumer needs, and still being here tomorrow may require us to shift some resources to solve immediate, pressing issues. But it's crucial not to look at tomorrow through today's eyes. In a year or so, what was a really cool idea before we were hit with the current storm will still quite likely still be a cool idea once the storm has passed, and we are no longer focused on short-term damage limitation.

Our innovators brains are subject to the same biases of the consumers we serve, so be cautious of allowing today's unusual situations and hence emotional context disproportionately impacting our long-term strategy.

Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. A couple of years ago, I wrote a blog for Innovation Excellence suggesting

ways to prepare for a major drop in markets.

<https://innovationexcellence.com/blog/2018/02/16/innovators-what-is-your-strategy-if-the-market-crashes/> At some point, some form of crisis was inevitable, and hopefully you already have a plan, or at least a framework in place to deal with it. But even if you do, it can be hard to stay true to a strategy in the face of immediate economic instability. Investment in innovation is often one of the first places to get hit when money gets tight, as money and resources are switched to cost savings, supply chain management, and general fire fighting. And as mentioned above, consumer needs often shift following a socio-economic crisis, requiring at least some course correction.

That course correction is always a vulnerable time for any nascent innovation. But while agility and flexibility is key, it's also important not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. As the dust settles, there will be new and evolving opportunities. For example, to connect with consumers who are searching for value, safety (physical and psychological), to grab market share in a more value orientated market, or to simply get ahead of close competitors if they get overly focused on short-term goals, and pull too much resource from innovation. But innovation is a long game, and so bringing game changing ideas to market usually involves taking a long view.

Tightening budgets and the short-term focus that inevitably comes with crisis creates shorter time horizons, reduces tolerance for productive failure, and so almost always precipitates an increase in smaller, faster initiatives at the expense of big, slower burning, but potentially *game changing* ideas. This can not only impact long-term company growth, but also how much fun it is to be an innovator. The bigger this crisis turns out the be, and the longer it goes on, the more we'll all end up working 'emergency' cost saving projects.

But while some change is both inevitable and essential, it's often

much harder to restart an innovation program than it is to keep an established one on life support while we weather a storm.

Those of us who can keep the innovation pipeline moving, and focus on big, stable long-term goals, while still attending to pressing, immediate short-term needs will be more likely to win the innovation race in the long-term.

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About the Author

Pete Foley is a Behavioural Science and Innovation Consultant who specializes in applying Psychology, Behavioural Economics and Perceptual Science to deliver innovative solutions to a wide range of business challenges.

An experienced innovation leader, facilitator and practitioner. He draws on 25 years' experience at P&G, whereas a serial innovator, he published over 100 patents, and co-led the foundation of their Behavioural Science capability.

For the last five years he has been an independent consultant, working with large and small companies across a broad range of businesses.

Pete is a sought-after keynote speaker, has extensive experience in designing and leading customized innovation and design thinking workshops, and in supporting the design and placement of consumer tests built around principles of consumer psychology.

Pete blogs regularly about the science and psychology of innovation. He has been recognized as one of the top 20 bloggers on Innovationexcellence.com for the last three years, has written multiple articles for the award-winning biomimicry magazine *Zygote*.

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Jeff Haden

Scientists say eating chocolate has an amazing effect on happiness, but with one (literally) small catch



A number of studies show the benefits of **dark chocolate**.

Daily consumption of dark chocolate **can reduce** LDL ("bad cholesterol") levels. Chocolate can help reduce the risk of heart disease by **as much as 30 percent**, and the risk of dying from a stroke **by nearly 50 percent**. Studies even show that eating chocolate at least once per week can **improve cognitive functioning**.

Does that make dark chocolate sound like a superfood?

Maybe so--especially when you factor in the effect eating dark chocolate can have on how happy you feel.

Recent research from University College London studied over 13,000 people and found that individuals who reported eating any dark chocolate in two 24-hour periods were 70 percent less likely to report clinically-relevant depressive symptoms than those who ate no chocolate at all.

Or in non-research-speak, eating dark chocolate can make you feel happier.

How? Dark chocolate contains psychoactive ingredients that produce feel-good results; one is

phenylethylamine, a neuromodulator that helps regulate mood. Plus, dark chocolate contains a higher concentration of antioxidants that reduce inflammation, a condition linked to the onset of depression.

But before you reach for a candy bar, keep in mind there's a catch: All participants needed was half an ounce of chocolate per day.

And there's another catch: If you're watching your weight, even a small amount of chocolate has a calorie impact.

A half-ounce of dark chocolate typically contains between 70 and 80 calories, depending on the percentage of cacao solids, the paste that results from fermenting, roasting, and crushing cocoa beans.

The cacao then gets mixed with other ingredients like milk and sugar to produce a wide range of chocolates.

While "dark chocolate" can contain as little as 45 to 50 percent cacao solids, **research shows** the greatest benefits come from dark chocolates containing at least 60 percent cacao solids.

And there's one more catch, but this time a good one. Since some dark chocolates contain as much as 85 percent cacao solids, you might be

tempted to think venturing way over into the dark side will make you even happier.

Yet the evidence suggests mood improvements only occur if you enjoy the chocolate you eat, suggesting the experience of eating the chocolate is a factor as well.

Sure, the chemical ingredients can make an impact. But so can the taste.

All of which means the relationship between dark chocolate and mood may be more correlated than causal. As the researchers say:

This study provides some evidence that consumption of chocolate, particularly dark chocolate, may be associated with reduced odds of clinically relevant depressive symptoms.

However, further research is required to clarify the direction of causation—it could be the case that depression causes people to lose their interest in eating chocolate, or there could be other factors that make people both less likely to eat dark chocolate and to be depressed.

But then again, past studies found that consuming chocolate may help **improve your mood** and make you feel calmer and more content, partly because dark chocolate stimulates the production of endorphins, the chemicals in the brain that

create feelings of pleasure. And dark chocolate also contains serotonin, an antidepressant that **can elevate mood**.

Sounds pretty causal to me.

So, if you enjoy chocolate, don't see a half-ounce as a diet killer.

Even if you think it is, there's a simple solution: Eat your half-ounce, then take a 15-minute walk, preferably with a loved one or friend.

You'll burn off the calories while strengthening a relationship... and double-dip on chocolate's emotional benefits and the impact of **walking on mood and cognitive ability**.

Win-win-win-win.

Give it a try. (I am, especially since I love chocolate. That, to me, is an immediate "win.")

After all, if you find that eating a half-ounce of dark chocolate a day makes you happier and less likely to feel depressed... who cares how it works?

Because when something works, does it really matter why it works?

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About the Author

Jeff Haden learned much of what he knows about business and technology as he worked his way up in the manufacturing industry from forklift driver to manager of a 250-employee book plant. Everything else he picks up from ghostwriting books for some of the smartest innovators and leaders he knows in business. He has written more than 30 non-fiction books, including four Business and Investing titles that reached #1 on Amazon's bestseller list. Jeff is a contributing editor for **inc.com** and a LinkedIn Influencer.

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Drayton Bird

An impossible question sent in by 'Princely'

Often People ask me all sorts of questions and I try to reply.

The most impossible one was asked by a chap called 'Princely'.

He said, "If you were to start all over again today, given all that you now know; with no product of your own to sell, very little or no money, what will you do, and how will you go about it?"

Of course, this would take a small book, and indeed I was selling one three weeks ago that told what I did when I had less than no money - I was drowning in debt to the tax people.

But this is what I said to Princely yesterday:

The answer is that what you go into depends on who you are. The main rules are (to me).

Only go into something you like - or your life will be one long pain. Confucius said, "Do something you love, and you will never do a day's work in your life."

This is not entirely true. I love writing, but I've had a few long days' work. Nevertheless, it's mostly been a pleasure.

Do something you not only like but understand. Lots of people say they want to write - you've heard people say, "I know I've got a book in me". Well if you don't know how to write, forget it.

Look for something that you think is not being done well and could be improved.

The first supermarket in the world was Piggly Wiggly 96 years ago, in Memphis, Tennessee. Obviously, Clarence Saunders who thought it up believed there was an easier way to shop.

The one thing I would add is that in the business I started, which was an agency, we did some test mailings to see what people might want. If you can test your ideas, for goodness sake do.

Research is important.

Best, Drayton

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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.

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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, and being a by-product, much more sustainable to produce.

4. Seaweed water bubbles

UK startup **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 CO₂ 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 startup **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?

Want to explore packaging innovation? **Talk to us.**

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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.

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Coronavirus disease

Help and information



Coronavirus condition overview - United Kingdom

NHS

nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19

Coronavirus advisory information

World Health Organization

who.int/emergencies

Coronavirus Q&A

World Health Organization

who.int/news-room/q-a-detail

Coronavirus condition overview

World Health Organization

who.int/health-topics



Soren Kaplan

Forget your business plan. Create a strategy map.



Strategic plans become outdated the moment they're created. Instead, create a one-page strategy map.

Having **run the internal strategy consulting group at HP**, and then consulting to both startups and big companies like Disney, Visa, Colgate, Medtronic and others, I've created hundreds of **strategic plans**.

Business strategy used to be a clear and methodical process. **No more.**

Today's discontinuous technologies and disruptive change have reinvented the rules of strategic planning. If you're going after a new market space or creating a new-to-the-world product or service, or reinventing an industry business model, gone are the days of traditional plans and forecasts. There's just too much uncertainty in the world now to be constrained by rigid planning processes.

So, what do you do? You create a Strategy Map.

A Strategy Map is a visual representation of your vision and related priority strategic objectives. A good Strategy Map basically communicates what needs to happen to achieve your vision at a high level in the short, mid- and longer-terms – ideally on a single page.

Here's a template that anyone can download and modify to build out their own strategy map. The template includes the following categories, organized by what needs to happen in the short-, mid- and longer-terms:

- **Vision** – what's the world you want to create in the future?
- **Strategic focus** – how does your strategy needs to shift over time?
- **Strategic goals** – what specific goals support your strategy?
- **Target markets & customers** – what markets or customers will you tackle over time?
- **Solutions** – what offerings will you provide and how will these change over time?
- **Key risks & barriers** – what risks or barriers might you encounter?
- **Key metrics** – how will you measure success?

In full disclosure, this template comes from **upBOARD**, the company I co-founded that's creating the world's largest library of business process apps. Modify the categories in the template to suit your specific organization's focus. And be sure to update the template regularly as you learn new things and as the world changes around you – that's what

modern-day strategy is all about in today's disruptive world.

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About the Author

Soren Kaplan is the author of two bestselling and award-winning books, *Leapfrogging* and *The Invisible Advantage*. He is a former corporate executive, an affiliated professor at USC's Center for Effective Organizations, and the Founder of **InnovationPoint** and **upBOARD**.

Recognized by the Thinkers50 as one of the world's thought leaders in disruptive innovation, new business models, and innovation culture, he works with Disney, NBCUniversal, Kimberly-Clark, Colgate-Palmolive, Hershey, Red Bull, Medtronic, Roche, Philips, Cisco, Visa, Ascension Health, Kaiser Permanente, CSAA Insurance Group, American Council on Exercise, and numerous other organizations.

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Mike Shipulski

Four pillars of Innovation – People, Learning, Judgment and Trust



Innovation is a hot topic. Everyone wants to do it. And everyone wants a simple process that works step-wise – first this, then that, then success.

But Innovation isn't like that. I think it's more effective to think of innovation as a result. Innovation as something that emerges from a group of people who are trying to make a difference. In that way, Innovation is a people process. And like with all processes that depend on people, the Innovation process is fluid, dynamic, complex, and context-specific.

Innovation isn't sequential, it's not linear and cannot be scripted. There is no best way to do it, no best tool, no best training, and no best outcome. There is no way to predict where the process will take you. The only predictable thing is you're better off doing it than not.

The key to Innovation is good judgment. And the key to good judgment is bad judgment. You've got to get things wrong before you know how to get them right. In the end, innovation comes down to maximizing the learning rate. And the teams with the highest learning rates are the teams that try the most things and use good judgement to decide what to try.

I used to take offense to the idea that trying the most things is the most effective way. But now, I believe it is. That is not to say it's

best to try everything. It's best to try the most things that are coherent with the situation as it is, the market conditions as they are, the competitive landscape as we know it, and the facts as we know them.

And there are ways to try things that are more effective than others. Think small, focused experiments driven by a formal learning objective and supported by repeatable measurement systems and formalized decision criteria. The best teams define and implement the tightest, smallest experiment to learn what needs to be learned. With no excess resources and no wasted time, the team wins runs a tight experiment, measures the feedback, and takes immediate action based on the experimental results.

In short, the team that runs the most effective experiments learns the most, and the team that learns the most wins.

It all comes down to choosing what to learn. Or, another way to look at it is choosing the right problems to solve. If you solve new problems, you'll learn new things.

And if you have the sightedness to choose the right problems, you learn the right new things.

Sightedness is a difficult thing to define and a more difficult thing to hone and improve. If you were charged with creating a new



business in a new commercial space and the survival of the company depended on the success of the project, who would you want to choose the things to try? That person has sightedness.

Innovation is about people, learning, judgement and trust. And innovation is more about why than how and more about who than what.

This article originally appeared on: <https://www.innovationexcellence.com/blog/2020/01/26/four-pillars-of-innovation-people-learning-judgment-and-trust/>

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About the Author:

Mike strives to define best practices and tools for *Product and Technology Development* and embed them into company culture. With that, practices and tools become a working part of how a company does business instead of ending up in a thick handbook that defines how things "should be done" which is read by no one. To Mike, behavior is most important.

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Mukesh Gupta

Four strategies to being fully present in any given moment

Premise:

Earlier today, I came across a blog post on The School of Life blog about the difficulty of being in the present. You can read the entire post here. It so happens that I've been having a conversation with my wife and son recently about the same topic (which is a slightly better way of saying that both of them don't think I am being present in the moment when I am with them). And there are countless articles that I have read which espouse the importance of being fully present in the moment for leaders as well, so exploring this topic deeper will prove to be good for me as a husband and a father but also as a leader in my workplace.

The Struggle:

So, just today morning, I committed to my wife that I will figure out a way for me to be able to do just that. So, here I was thinking about some strategies that I can employ to be present in the moment and the blog post pops up in my feed.

So, I was super excited to read the post and was totally disappointed at what I read. It seems that our body, mind and our entire physiology works towards keeping us away from the present and either in the past or in the future. What a bummer!!!

After doing a bit more research and going down my memory lane to think about everything that I learnt while researching for my book Thrive, I realised that this is a mechanism that was required for us to survive in the evolutionary

past. This still is a survival mechanism for us today.

- We need to think about what happened in the past so that we can learn from that and hopefully use that learning to survive in the future.
- We need to think about the future (meeting with your boss or customer, a difficult conversation with your wife or son or daughter, etc) in order to be prepared with strategy and information to deal with this.

This might not be a life-threatening need but nevertheless our physiology gives it the same kind of importance to this (out of habit).

So, the question that I started out to answer still remains open. What strategies can I use to be fully present in the moment? Here are some that I have figured out so far that I intend to put into practice and see which one's work and which one's don't.

Strategy I: Recreate the Cinema Hall experience:

When I think of moments in life when I am fully present, consistently, is when I am watching a gripping movie. I am fully immersed in the story and enjoy the movie by fully engaging with the story, which means that I don't lack the ability to be fully present. I just need the right environment and the attitude to be able to do so. Also, when I am watching a movie in a cinema hall, I am not constantly checking my phone or reading something or doing anything else at all. The only focus is the movie running in front of me on the big screen. The theatrics and the fast pace of story being told also helps. What also helps is that we are using at

least three out of the five senses we have (sight, sound and touch – there is a reason the temperature of the theatre is kept at such a low level) and at most four senses (if you include a taste – the popcorn and cola) as well.

So, the first strategy to be followed is as below:

- Do only one thing – be present. Put the phone on silent mode. Put the book or notebook away.
- Engage as many senses as possible. In most cases, it will be sight and sound. Be creative and find out other ways to include other senses (maybe you can include a sense of touch or smell by introducing a room freshener or keeping something at hand, maybe a stress ball or a glass of hot water, tea or coffee.
- Control the environment if possible. Keep the temperature a bit colder or hotter than what you are comfortable with. Include some form of sensory inputs (as said above).
- There is a reason that most movies are around between 90 -100 mins long. That is probably the stretch of time that you can be fully immersed in the present. The movie needs to be extra-ordinarily moving if it is longer or you need a break around the 70-75 minute moment. So, don't plan for anything where you are expected to be fully present for more than 90 mins. If needed, take a 10-15 mins break. Go for a walk, ideally in the nature. Drink some water or tea or coffee. Take a bio break. Do something mundane before coming back to being fully present.

Strategy 2: Play a game of Improv:

There are times when we know that there is clear time limit to the time you have with your son or wife or anyone else at work. For example, I know that my son has to leave for his school in 15 mins or that I need to leave for office in the next 30 mins.

In scenarios like this, when I don't need to spend a long time being fully present in the moment and just need to do so for a short period of time, I will tell myself and thereby to my mind that I am playing a game of improv, which requires complete immersion in the moment so that I can respond to whatever stimuli I get in that moment. I will use the principles of improvisational theatre to help me be fully present in those moments that I have with my family (or for that matter, my customers, partners or colleagues).

This is a great strategy for impromptu meetings where you have not had the time to prepare the environment and yourself to be fully present.

Strategy 3: All is well

In the movie, 3 Idiots, the protagonist character shares a story, which I remember very vividly. The story goes something like this:

In a small society, there was a watchman who was hired to guard the society. Every night, he would walk all around the society and keep calling out "All Is Well" loudly. This used to give a lot of confidence of safety and security to the people living in the society and they would sleep in peace knowing fully well that they are being protected by the security guard. The loud chanting of "All is Well" helped them with their peace of mind. Then one day, there was a theft in the society. When they started making enquiries about the thief and spoke to the security guard, they found out that he was night blind and could not see a soul in the evening. He survived and allowed everyone to be at peace by his chant of "All is well".

Moral of the story is that our mind is a very complicated thing and can

get easily distracted and typically fears for the worst, in any given scenario (in general). So, in order to stay happy and at peace, we need to calm this thing by continuously telling it that "All is Well".

We need to trick our mind in thinking that all is well, rather than reason with it. And it turns out that it is easy to trick our minds, easier than tricking anyone else. This exact strategy can also be used to trick our minds in being fully present in the moment. At a regular interval, keep telling ourselves – "All is Well"

Strategy 4: Checking in with my Talisman

I really believe that our ancestors were way smarter than we are when it comes to life wisdom. They thought about life, living and dying well much more deeply than we ever do. So, I thought I can borrow one of the strategies from that our ancestors used to deploy a lot, that we discount quickly as nothing but a form of superstition.

I am talking about having my very personal talisman which will help me stay in the present moment. All the three strategies that I have listed above quickly help me root myself in the present moment but are not really great at keeping me rooted in the present. This is where my talisman comes into picture.

The key here is to fully believe that the talisman will give me the power to stay rooted in the moment. The power of the talisman is equal to the strength of my belief in the talisman. This is another way for us to hack our physiology to allow us to by-pass all the challenges that it throws our way to distract us from being present in the moment. The other thing that is critical here is to create a habit of checking in with my talisman on a regular basis throughout the day.

Just like you need to have dig a well much before you need drinking water, you need to have practiced with your talisman much before you really need it to work. So, I am planning to set up an alarm on my laptop or phone to

ping me once every 90 minutes. Every time the alarm goes off, I will check-in with my talisman and ground myself to the present moment.

The Talisman could be anything – ring in your finger, chain in your neck, a bracelet or a stress ball on your table or a picture frame of your family on your desk.

This is a five-step process:

Step 1: Touch and feel the presence of the talisman

Step 2: Take 5 deep breaths

Step 3: Name the feeling you are feeling (Happy, frustrated, sad, energetic, etc)

Step 4: Take 3 more deep breaths

Step 5: Ask the talisman to help you come back to the present moment

I know that this sounds extremely stupid thing to do, but I also believe that this is a good way to build the habit and trick my physiology at the same time.

The beauty is when I am with my family and my mind starts to get distracted, all I need to do is to touch and feel my talisman and the entire habit will kick off and I can come back to the present moment (assuming that I have built up this habit successfully).

In conclusion:

In all my research, I have found that the biggest enemy in our being fully present in the moment is US and our physiology. We are not built to be fully present in the moment. So, in order for us to fully experience the present moment, we need to find a practice that can help us circumvent our physiology first. The four strategies that I have listed here are my way of trying to do this.

Do you agree with my strategies? Do you have any strategy that you think works really well for you? Please do share them here so that I can learn you're your experience and experiment those strategies as well. After all, this has been the biggest differentiator between us humans and all the other species

around us. So, let's put that to use!

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About the Author

Mukesh is Director - Customer Advocacy for SAP. He has been working for companies in Sales, Marketing, Strategy, Business Development, partner recruitment and development. In every role, his central aim has been to keep his customer at the center of his universe and help them achieve their goals in every way that he could. Mukesh is passionate about learning and staying current on the technology curve. He loves to write and present his ideas and thoughts in the form of blogs, videos and podcasts.

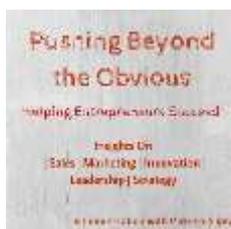
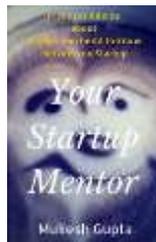
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Benjamin Ball

How to look good on camera: eight essential tips

In the last few weeks our clients have turned investor meetings into video conferences, cancelled overseas trips and have been running many more on-camera video conferences.

If you need to participate in online meetings, present on camera, or transform your next investor meeting into a video conference...

...then take this advice from the BBA team so that you look good on camera.

1. Simplify what you say

Even more than usual, when you present on camera, **you need to be clear and precise**. What you say will be better received if you further simplify what you say. That means using short phrases, bold ideas and more pauses – **and simplify your messages so they are easy to understand**. And be conversational rather than formal. Speak as if to one person.

2. Establish good eye contact

The camera is very personal. That means you need to **look directly at the lens**. Put your camera just above your eye line and imagine someone standing in the camera to whom you are talking. Keep eye contact right to the end of each sentence – don't look away.

3. Be animated

Energy and passion look good on camera. Limit your body movements, but show your energy through your voice and enthusiasm. Use your hands to emphasise a point, but not too much.

4. Smile & sparkle

Look like you love what you do. **Feel happy so you look happy** and comfortable. A smile and a twinkle in your eye tend to work well on camera.

5. Take care what you wear

Things to avoid: black, white, checks, stripes, tight patterns, big jewellery and anything that might interfere with your mike.

6. Check the detail

Before you go on screen, check whether you have hair out of place, a crooked tie, a smudge on your face. What's in the background? **The camera will accentuate any faults**. And make sure you have good sound. A high quality external microphone will make a big difference.

7. Arrange the lighting

Ideally, you want a light directly in front of you, and no bright lights behind you.

8. Practise

The **best on-camera presenters always rehearse – a lot**. If you are new to this, then **get in touch**. **Work with a coach to rehearse with a camera**. They will help you refine your eye contact, your body movement, your animation. Then you will make the impact you want to make.

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About the Author:

Ben advises business leaders how to present themselves in front of investors, clients and the media. Over the last 10 years he has built this company's systematic approach to pitch coaching and presentation training. He works with entrepreneurs, senior managers and leaders of major corporations. Clients he has advised include Permira, Statoil, Microsoft, Worldpay and Olswang as well as many private equity firms. Previously Ben was a corporate financier at dot com specialist Durlacher following senior roles at Pearson, Cable and Wireless and the BBC. He is a regular speaker at financial conferences including Super Return and GAIM.

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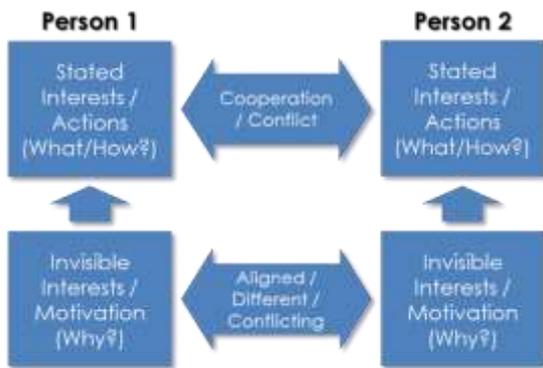
Yoram Solomon

Actions, motivations, and trust



(Excerpt from my upcoming book *The Book of Trust*):

One element of personal shared values is encompassed in the *why* we are taking action, and *what* action we choose to take. Imagine two people as in the image below.



Each is driven by motivations and interests that are not necessarily made visible to the other person. These are their “*Why*”. *Why* they are doing things. Those can be aligned between the two of them but could also be conflicting (relatively opposite to one another), or simply different (not the same, but not conflicting, either). Those invisible interests or motivations drive them to take action, or state interests publicly. Those actions can be in cooperation with one another or conflicting with one another. How does that affect trust between them? The following table will explain it.

The

	Cooperate	Conflict
Invisible Interests / Motivation / WHY	Maximum Trust Alignment at all levels, visible and invisible. We agree on what to do, but also on why we do it	High Trust Constant constructive disagreement. We agree on why we do things, but not on how or what to do
	Ad-Hoc Trust Agree on what needs to be done and how, but we do it for different reasons. We accept that we have different motivations	Low Trust Almost no interest in cooperating. We have different (albeit not conflicting) motivations for doing different things
	Low Ad-Hoc Trust Agree on what needs to be done and how, but highly suspicious of motivation and values. The agreement will not last past current issue	Maximum Distrust We don't agree on what to do or how, and we have conflicting motivation and values

highest level of trust will result when both people have their “above the fold” interests and actions, but also their motivations aligned. We agree not only *what* we do and *how* we do it, but also on *why* we do it. The second highest level would occur when our stated, public interests and actions are conflicting, but our underlying motivation and values are aligned. This would be when we hold constructive disagreements, where we argue the *what* and *how*, but we trust each other due to having aligned *why*. An interesting phenomenon happens when we agree on *what* or *how* we do things, but we don't agree on *why*. In other words, we have different motivations for doing the same thing. Even worse, we may

have *conflicting* motivations and values that still lead us to do the same thing. The level of trust would be low, and we will have an ad-hoc dependency on each other. We will work together because we believe we should take the same action, but we recognize that we do it for different, or even opposite reasons. As soon as this action is complete, our “partnership” may fall apart. Faster if it was based on conflicting motivation than on simply different, albeit not conflicting motivation.

If we prefer to take different actions due to different motivations, we almost get to the point in which we don't care. We will be experiencing a low level of trust, due to the combination of

different actions *and* different motivations. Obviously, the lowest level of trust will be experienced if we not only disagree on the actions to be taken, but we also have conflicting (not just different) motivations.

As you can see from this discussion, the underlying motivation plays a much bigger role in building and maintaining trust than the actions we take. As long as our motivations, our *why*, are aligned, we can hold a trusted constructive disagreement and make joint decisions. But if our motivations conflict, we will not trust each other. Even if we do agree on what needs to be done and how. It will only be a temporary agreement. Not trust.

But what could happen if we don't know what the other person's motivation and values are? The ones not readily visible to others?

If your actions and "above the fold" stated interests are aligned with another person (i.e., you want to achieve the same thing or do something the same way), you might miss the fact that the other person is doing it for a completely different reason, and even worse—for a completely opposite reason than yours. If you don't know that, you might be caught by surprise the next thing you do something together, or when something changes, and the other person's "true colours" come to light.

If your actions and "above the fold" stated interest are conflicting with the other person's (i.e., you want to achieve different/conflicting things or do them in a different/conflicting ways), you might miss the fact that the other person wants to do those things for exactly the same reasons you do, and the focus both of you put on the *what* and *how* causes you to lose focus on the *why* which, in this case, is common to both of you. You will be losing the opportunity to hold a constructive disagreement with someone you can trust because they share your values and motivations, except for the fact that you don't know about them.

		Stated Interests / Actions / WHAT & HOW	
		Cooperate	Conflict
Invisible Interests / Motivation / WHY	Aligned	Not a problem. We are aligned on actions <i>because</i> we are aligned on our motivation	We may be missing the opportunity to trust each other because we take different actions, even though we have the same motivation
	Different or Conflicting	As soon as we move to the next action, or something changes, we will find "the true face" of the other person, who has different or conflicting motivation	No problem. We are already <i>conflicted</i> on actions.

The conclusion is simple: values and motivations are typically hidden. To be able to trust another person you must know theirs, and to be trusted by them, with all the benefits from it, they must know yours.

"Above the fold" is a reference to the newspaper industry. When a newspaper is sold, it is folded in half. The top half is what's above the fold line, and therefore more visible to the viewer. It's the first thing that you see, even when the newspaper is lying on the ground.

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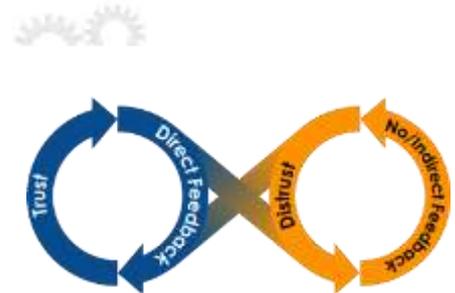
About the Author

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 11 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.

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Build trust in your team
 Be trusted by others
 Know who to trust

Tamara Ghandour

How to stay relevant in complex changing times



We're all familiar with the old phrase "what got me here, is not going to get me there", and this is even more important when things are moving so fast and changing so quickly. The things that got us to success yesterday, or even today, aren't working anymore, or they're not working as well as they used to be. A report by Mackenzie also predicts that for six out of ten jobs, 30% of their activities can now be done by technology.

Things are changing, and the way we do our jobs is changing. And across the globe, when I ask my clients what's keeping them up at night – the answer is always 'staying relevant'.

So, how can we stay relevant in these complex changing times?

See Changes as Opportunities

I was recently invited to speak at a conference within the accounting industry, and before I went on to speak, I had a little chat with one of the board members of the organizing association.

He said, "In five years, the accounting degree isn't even going to exist."

I, kind of jokingly, kind of seriously said back to him, "Well, then what

are we doing here? Let's just go have coffee."

And then he said something that really stuck with me. He said, "Oh no, Tamara. Here's the beauty of it. When things change, it opens up new opportunities."

That is a perfect example that just shifting your lens of how you see the changes that are happening can make a difference. Instead of looking at it as something being taken away from you, look at it in the light of something that completely changes how you do things. Consider the new opportunities you can create and the new challenges you can solve *because* of these changes.

With any change, there is opportunity. There are new challenges or frustrations that come up. Perhaps, technology or AI or even outsourcing is taking over a large portion of your job. But instead of looking at these changes in a negative light, think of them as freeing you up from doing the mundane tasks so you can focus on bringing new insights. Think of them as opportunities to do more strategic thinking with your clients. Think of them as chances to be more innovative and more human and create value in that way.

A small shift in your mindset to see *change as opportunity* can help you in how you approach new challenges and stay relevant.

Use Your Natural Assets and Strengths

Everyone has some natural assets and strengths, and they can be a critical part of helping us stay relevant in changing times. Now, these are not things in your job description, or specific tasks you excel at. They are innate skills and abilities that we all have, unique to us, that we can use in a variety of contexts.

Are you really good at networking?

Are you really good at connecting the dots?

Are you really good at seeing ten steps ahead of everybody else?

Are you really good at seeing the gaps in thinking that other people don't see?

Perhaps you're one of those people who are really good at seeing opportunities where others just see problems.

We all have these incredible strengths that we don't think about enough. In fact, these are the strengths that can give us an edge if we actually apply them.

Sometimes, all we have to do is take a minute to consider where our natural abilities lie, and how we can leverage them in new way and situations – and this can help us add tremendous value and stay relevant.

Tap into Your Unique Style of Innovation: Did you know that no two brains are wired the same way? How you think and how you innovate is totally unique to you, and that's your key to being indispensable. [To find out how you innovate, [take the free assessment!](#)]

Your unique Everyday Innovator style sets you apart from everyone else, and you can leverage that to stay relevant. For example, the Inquisitor could draw on their ability to ask challenging questions to get their clients, customers, and teams to think differently. The Risk-Taker could help their team and clients push forward to be bigger and bolder. If you're an Imaginative, you could help your clients and leaders see the opportunities in the gaps.

Whatever your Everyday Innovator style, you have something unique to bring to the table. Drawing from how you are wired naturally and how you instinctively innovate is what will help you become indispensable and stay relevant.

Here's the thing about relevancy: **It's really not an either/or game.** Approaching it from the perspective of "I'm relevant, or I'm not" is a very fixed mindset. Relevancy is really about shifting and adapting with the times. So, start thinking about change as something that you can harness and leverage, and not something to be afraid of.

At the end of the day, if you're approaching change with the right mindset, and are leveraging your natural strengths, abilities and innovation style, what change really does is open up new opportunities.

Watch vlog on staying relevant here:



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About the Author

Tamara Ghandour is the President of LaunchStreet and the creator of the Innovation Quotient Edge assessment, the only tool that helps people discover how they innovate best and add value. When leaders and teams dealing with massively changing marketplaces like healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality and education need to up their ability to innovate, they call LaunchStreet. Organizations like Disney, Red Robin, Hilton and Arrow Electronics look to LaunchStreet to help them make innovation everybody's business. Tamara's business innovation podcast, Inside LaunchStreet is continually rated as a top business podcast across the globe.

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What should I do if I think I have coronavirus?

Patients with mild symptoms - such as a new continuous cough or a high temperature above 37.8C should **self-isolate at home for at least seven days, according to the latest advice issued by Public Health England.**

People are being **advised not to ring NHS 111** to report their symptoms unless they are worried. They should also not go to their GP, or A&E.

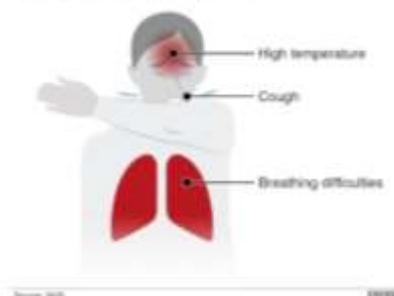
Details for Scotland are to **check NHS inform**, then ring your GP in office hours, or 111 out-of-hours. In Wales call NHS 111, and in Northern Ireland, **call your GP.**

If you have come into contact with somebody who may be infected, **you may be told to self-isolate.** Advice for people who **have travelled back to the UK from affected areas** and who may need to self-isolate, has been issued.

Other countries have introduced their own measures For example, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention **advises people showing symptoms to call their healthcare provider**, and those who are mildly ill to self-isolate.

The **World Health Organization has also issued advice** for the public.

Coronavirus: Key symptoms





Lorraine Pirihi

What would you tell your younger self?

When you're over 50, it's easy to look back in hindsight of what you should have done when you were younger.

I read an article by Mark Manson, a young man who turned 30 and wanted to harness the collective wisdom of his readers. He was surprised on just how consistent the advice was.

The same 5-6 pieces of advice came up over and over and over again in different forms across literally 100s of emails. It seems that there really are a few core pieces of advice that are particularly relevant to this decade of your life.

Here are the 10 Life Lessons to Excel in Your 30s. You may be well beyond your 30's now and wish you had acted more wisely earlier.

There's strong messages here for Babyboomer Business Owners.

1. START SAVING FOR RETIREMENT NOW, NOT LATER

Well if you're over 50 now and not taking this seriously, then you've probably 'missed the boat'.

2. START TAKING CARE OF YOUR HEALTH NOW, NOT LATER

In case you hadn't noticed, (or deliberately avoided it), your body is not like it was when you were 30. If you are still ignoring your health and fitness and haven't already experienced the ramifications, it's only a matter of time before your health fails.

3. DON'T SPEND TIME WITH PEOPLE WHO DON'T TREAT YOU WELL

Steer clear of the negative people. They can literally suck the life out of

you. This is where pro-actively taking care of yourself both physically and mentally will keep you energised, feeling confident and give you the strength to avoid these energy zappers.

4. BE GOOD TO THE PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT

You may have spent the last 20 or so years creating your empire. Hopefully you haven't neglected the most important people in your life. If you have, what action can you take right now to start building bridges?

5. YOU CAN'T HAVE EVERYTHING; FOCUS ON DOING A FEW THINGS REALLY WELL

Are you still doing this? You'll get far more done if you just focus on one thing at a time.

6. DON'T BE AFRAID OF TAKING RISKS, YOU CAN STILL CHANGE

When you're younger, you have plenty of time to recover if things don't work out. As a babyboomer business owner you do have to be more careful about the decisions you make and actions you take. However, that doesn't mean you have to do nothing! Because nothing changes if nothing changes.

7. YOU MUST CONTINUE TO GROW AND DEVELOP YOURSELF

No matter what age you are, you need to keep learning and growing. Times are changing, business is different now to when it was 'back in the day'. Learn about yourself, communicating, relationships and not just business! The more you develop yourself the better your business and life will be.

8. NOBODY (STILL) KNOWS WHAT THEY'RE DOING, GET USED TO IT

You never know it all. We all make mistakes. Go ahead and do something, after all what's the worst that can happen? Then ask yourself,

'Can I live with that?'

9. INVEST IN YOUR FAMILY; IT'S WORTH IT

Stop 'being busy' and avoiding the important stuff. At the end of the day when you wind-back from business or transition out, you want to make sure you've got your family intact. Unfortunately, many babyboomer business owners that I have coached have been stuck in unfulfilling relationships because they had neglected the most important area of their life.

10. BE KIND TO YOURSELF, RESPECT YOURSELF

Get a grip! Take time out daily. Go for a walk, exercise...do whatever is enjoyable to you. As a babyboomer business owner, you're the boss and you set the example. There's always plenty to do, but you should be your no.1 priority. Put some fun back into your life otherwise you will burn out.

THE FINAL WORD

I hope this article has been of benefit to you.

By the way if you're over 50, feeling 'tired, worn out and over it', let's have a quick chat and see how to get you unstuck and back on track. If you're ready to be more productive and profitable in both your business and life, call us today on 0411 145 166. The clock is ticking!

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About the Author

Lorraine is the Operations Manager at Inner Athlete (AUS).

Lorraine's passions and experience include health and fitness, business, personal development, education, employment and youth.

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Audra Oliver

Video call etiquette: 5 tips for looking professional over video



In today's digital age, **coming across professionally on a video call is important**. It's imperative to look and sound your best. Whether it's for an interview, sales call, business meeting or casual video chat, your visual impression matters.

How important is practising good video call etiquette in order to look your best? It's more important than you may think. A recent **study**, conducted by Forrester Consulting on behalf of Polycom, found that the use of **video conferencing is growing**. In fact, 74 percent of the IT decision makers surveyed say video conference calls have increased over the past two years. This increase—coupled with a rise in telecommuting—makes looking sharp on live video a professional requirement.

With that in mind, here are 5 things you can do to make sure you look your best on your next video call:

1. Ensure Proper Lighting

Having adequate light is just as important for video calls as it is for professional broadcasters and photo shoots. For instance, overhead lighting creates shadows under your eyes, so avoid sitting beneath it, if possible. For enhanced lighting, use natural or soft light sources. Putting two or

more light sources into play can really make a difference.

2. Choose the Right Background

The people you're interacting with will see whatever is behind you. Make sure your background is uncluttered and professional. Less is more. Remove unnecessary objects on your desk or wall that may detract from the video call. You may also want to invest in revamping the colour or images on the wall, so participants aren't distracted or reminded you're working from home.

3. Maintain Eye Contact

Look directly into the camera or at the face of the person you're interacting with. Resist looking at yourself in the small frame at the corner of your video call screen and avoid distractions elsewhere in the room. As a reminder to maintain eye contact, it may help to put something above your webcam – like a sticker or coloured note, for example.

4. Ensure High Audio Quality

Poor audio quality can quickly reduce the effectiveness of a video call, often leading to miscommunication. First, be articulate. Make sure you speak clearly, slowly. Next, avoid background noise like dogs barking, children playing, and by eliminating any TV or music in proximity. Finally, make sure you

have a reliable Wi-Fi connection, so your video conferencing service can operate at full strength and prevent jittery audio.

5. Dress Appropriately

Even if only your face and shoulders are in the frame, you should dress professionally from head to toe. Avoid patterns, stripes and plaids. Don't wear a hat. Put flattering, solid colours near your face and make sure to check your teeth, hair and makeup. Avoid jewellery that may be distracting or make disruptive sounds every time you move.

When it comes to video calling, first impressions do count. Following these 5 easy steps will help you cultivate a more polished, professional looking video presence. **For more information on VTSL's video conferencing services, click here.**

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Audra is a highly skilled marketing professional with over 12 years of experience, and proven approach.

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Tom Koulopoulos

How leaders can effectively manage in times of uncertainty

Leadership is about creating confidence in times of great uncertainty.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, my company, Delphi Group, conducted a broad survey of nearly 3,000 professionals that was intended to identify the impact of uncertainty and ways that businesses could mitigate its negative effects on workers. While the survey results aren't available online, as it was conducted over 20 years ago, I remember that one of the questions asked respondents to pick a single factor that most alleviated the negative effects of uncertainty.

The overwhelming majority chose trusted leadership over a variety of other choices, including access to information, capital, media/news, assurances of personal safety from the government, and even the ability to foresee future events.

This result is timeless. Uncertainty, in any form, takes an enormous toll on us; it robs us of control and confidence. People like predictability, and we weave it into the very fiber of our society and systems. The whole reason for contract law is to architect certainty into the socioeconomic fabric. We love sports because the rules are definitive and immutable. In the absence of certainty, we struggle to focus, we feel that we have no control, and we lose trust in people and systems that we otherwise do not question. In its worst case, uncertainty leads to creating a crisis narrative of existential proportions. Let's face it, humans are drawn to the drama of potentially apocalyptic scenarios.

We have been seeing, and likely will continue to see, much of that play out in the way financial markets are currently reacting to the uncertain trajectory of COVID-19 (the coronavirus), but the uncertainty is also beginning to take its toll on each

of us as individuals and certainly in our businesses.

You may think that your role as a leader has little to do with how that affects the people who work with and for you. If that's the case, then I'll humbly say that you're defining leadership in the wrong way. Your role as a leader is not to sugarcoat or sidestep the truth. It's also not to predict the future. Instead your role is to provide a protected space for those you are leading to feel confident that they will be cared for and best protected from the implications of uncertainty.

An Uncertain Scenario

So, how do you do that? I've found one technique to be extraordinarily effective in going beyond the dogma and providing people with a tool to navigate uncertainty with confidence. It's called scenario-based planning (SBP).

Scenario-based planning is one of the least-often used tools, and even when it is used it's rarely used correctly. SBP is an exercise in which you identify a variety of threat or opportunity scenarios and then play each one out. The intent of SBP is not to predict the future; it's not even to identify all possible futures. Instead, the most valuable part of SBP is that it develops an organizational muscle that inspires confidence in dealing with uncertainty.

There are myriad ways to conduct SBP, but the most important thing to keep in mind is that you need to clearly define the dimensions of the challenge. Then identify at least six ways that each dimension can manifest itself. In other words, if you run a coffee shop one dimension will be the loss of adequate inventory. But that can likely be broken down into the type of inventory (coffee/tea/milk/alternative drinks), the geography of the inventory (African/Latin American/domestic), the storage of the inventory (in-store/brewery/warehouse). So, visually, your

dimension (column) is Inventory and your categories (rows) are Type, Geography, and Storage. (A full SBP matrix should have about eight columns and six rows.)

Here's where SBP gets interesting.

Once you have built a full matrix of the problem dimensions and ways each dimension manifests itself, create randomized scenarios that cut across the matrix by picking one cell at random from each column. At first, these random combinations will seem nonsensical, but the point here is to build a capability to deal with even the most ridiculous outlier scenarios. I've seen this work in virtually every industry, from cybersecurity and insurance to automotive and cable TV.

What I've observed firsthand over decades of teaching SBP is that organizations that do SBP regularly are able to deal with uncertainty much better. They think more creatively, pivot faster, and instill confidence in their people.

Most important, they provide a way to take back some degree of control and confidence in what is usually a situation where people feel they've been robbed of both.

This article originally appeared on Innovation Excellence: <https://www.inc.com/thomas-koulopoulos/how-leaders-can-effectively-manage-in-times-of-uncertainty.html>

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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.

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Barry Urquhart

Trust yourself – Plan for it



Three categories exist for business strategic plans:

- Desk top
- Top drawer
- Bottom drawer

In the third instance, references to the document are sparse and typically arise at times of crisis. Ironically, use is therefore random and not at all planned. Top drawer strategic plans suffer from being out-of-sight. Therefore, they are often out-of-mind.

Desk top plans have a conspicuous presence. “Dog Eared” pages suggest repeated and regular referral, use and refinement.

Overall these distinct categories reflect more on the business owner and user rather than on the veracity of the content.

In recent times, Australians have been exposed to countless life lessons, numbered among which is the importance of planning.

There is little or no immunity to Covid-19 (coronavirus), catastrophic bushfires and widespread extended drought.

PLAN – POSITIVES

In times like those, others may blame, doubt or dismiss you. Self-belief, discipline and focus can, and typically do, overcome adversity, particularly when supported by a

documented plan.

Contingency initiatives are usually implied rather than detailed among the shorter-term tactics.

In the three categories detailed above, the urgency in addressing and redressing the key causes may well have elapsed for the time being. They will remain primary unresolved imperatives.

WORKING PLANS

Recovery is another matter. It is an immediate priority, with longer-term realities and consequences. Sustainability is one important measure.

The rush to cut costs, seek government assistance and implore widespread emotional and transactional support from the broader public is understandable. Each is reactionary and short-term, and will be largely ineffective.

Extensive rainfall will, and has, extinguished bushfires, stimulate pastures and regrowth. Vaccines will remediate the health considerations of the coronavirus. Very rapidly the 24-hour news cycle will have the media move on, change focus and report on new headlines.

It is typical in such circumstances that management teams are inclined to decide to “put aside

the strategic plan” and “to start doing things”. Poor choice! That is the very time that the strategic plans should be produced, analysed and be subjected to a forensic audit. Within its pages are the anchor points for culture, strategies, tactics and datum points for crisis management initiatives.

Therefore, detailed reviews, revision and refinements of strategic plans are required. Each of the strata will require analysis and, most probably, extension. Maintaining alignment between each will be important.

Too often, in times of “crisis”, short-term tactics are introduced, with little consideration of intermediate (objectives – 3-5 years), long-term (goals – 3-5 years and strategic- cultural (mission statements – 10-20 years) aspects.

Natural outcomes are road-blocks, a loss of competitive edge, compromised branding and reliance on price discounting.

LOSS OF MOMENTUM

Many of the effects of cash-flow interruptions and downturns are conspicuous and immediate. Impacts on momentum and critical

mass are less apparent in the shorter term, but profound over broader horizons.

Re-establishing and rekindling momentum require capital, resources and time. Expeditious turnarounds are typically pipe dreams, evidenced by spates, and accelerating rates of business closures and failures.

Under-resourced entities, geared to a reliance on consistent and growing positive cash-flows, are soon found to be exposed and wanting. Margins of error evaporate, lead-times are truncated.

Vacant premises and FOR LEASE signs are proof-positive of the cycle, and indicative of a lack of planning.

INTEGRATION, DEPENDENCY

The attainment and fulfilment of short-term targets should, indeed must, lead to contributions to the intermediate-term objectives.

Otherwise they raise questions on the purpose, the objectives, goals, mission and philosophy of the entity.

Objectives are fundamental benchmarks for marketing. They define absolute and relative market positioning, competitive standing and presence in the marketplace.

They contribute to and quantify the relevance of the entity, its brand name, products, services, supply chain and people.

In times of crisis, when the emphasis is on survival and cash-flow, these dimensions are assigned little consideration and emphasis.

And so it is, as others are losing their heads, those who have taken the time and allocated the resources to formulate, document and implement genuine integrated and structured strategic plans, typically enjoy the fruits of their labours and endeavours.

The philosophies and mission

usually are retained and respected. Complementary contingency plans are outlined and energised.

The foundations of self-belief, discipline and focus lie with the documented plans.

Inevitably, recovery is quicker, more successful and consistent with the overriding values of the entity.

Strategic plans. Hardly light reading. But important desktop references.

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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.

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