

Better Business Focus

February 2021

Expert inspiration for a Better Business



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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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Shawn Nason

Raising a glass to courage, simplicity, and conviction

No matter how you've been affected by all the disruptive events of the past year, I think you'll agree that we're no longer the people we were a year ago.

Yep, 2020 changed us individually and collectively by rattling us from our comfort zones and dragging us kicking and screaming into a world filled with challenges and uncertainties. A global pandemic forced us into learning new ways to live and work, while racial injustices and political divisiveness exposed our brokenness as a society.

Through it all, we were offered a big*ss mirror for looking at ourselves in ways we never have before. And, now we are different.

I'm not the person I was when I started 2020, and I'm thankful for that. Over the past year, big opportunities combined with anxiety and heartbreak have taken their toll on me, but they've also inspired me to think differently about myself and the world around me.

So, like many of you, I've been reflecting a bit on how I've changed and how I want to approach the year ahead. And, I have three words for you:

Courage,
Simplicity, and
Conviction.

Throughout 2021, I will be leaning into these words and finding ways for them to guide my life, my business, my relationships, and everything around me. Will you join me? It's time to cut through the bullsh*t as we embrace our

fears with courage, simplify our approach to living and working, and get real about putting our convictions into action.

No more letting fear drive our thoughts and behaviors! No more overcomplicating our lives with things we now know aren't important! No more sitting in the bleachers watching the action on the field instead of jumping in and making an impact with things that really matter!

I'll be sharing more about courage, simplicity, and conviction in the months ahead, including in my new book, *Kiss Your Dragons: Radical Relationships, Bold Heartsets, & Changing the World*, which launched on January 26. ([Click here](#) for details.)

In the meantime, please understand that putting these three words into action is something you have to figure out for yourself, but not something you can do alone. So, please reach out to me, MOFI, the Disruptor League, and the rest of your communities to help you as you turn the page into a new year.

I can't say I'm going to miss 2020, but I am thankful for it. I'm thankful for the opportunity to change, and I'm thankful for all of you who have blessed my life with important conversations, timely support, and even Zoom hugs over the past year.

Now, I hope that you'll join me in raising a glass to what's next, whatever that may be. I look forward to going on yet another journey with you in 2021!



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About the Author

Shawn Nason, founder of Man On Fire & Nason Group (MOFI, Disruptor League, TruthTellers, and The Pink Couch), lives his life with a commitment to make everyone he meets a part of his family. Armed with the gift of discernment, he has the uncanny ability to walk alongside people as they struggle to connect with their deepest passions and engage their most debilitating demons. He challenges the world around him to be fully present, get real, and knock down the barrier that separates the various compartments in their lives.

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Dr Lynda Shaw

How to cope with burnout

During these unprecedented times more and more people are feeling overwhelmed, with women in particular taking most of the brunt of working from home whilst simultaneously juggling the children who may or may not be at school. A recent survey in Canada* found that younger men and women aged between 20-35, and 55 years and over, are particularly susceptible to feelings of burnout. But anyone including teenagers can feel burnout.

Burnout can be caused by periods of additional anxiety or pressure, difficulty separating work and personal life, or a work/life balance that is out of kilter. Working too long hours, spreading yourself too thin, and especially at the moment, facing pressures of an uncertain job market meaning we may feel we have to do even more to stand out, will all contribute. Feeling burnout can influence every aspect of your life from your work to relationships to your physical and mental health and can leave you feeling like you have very little left to give.

THE NEUROSCIENCE

Think of stress like a set of scales; on one side are real or imagined pressures and on the other is how we cope with those pressures. If those scales tip because the pressure is more than we can cope with then we become overwhelmed in the longer term.

There are two biological pathways that mediate our stress response. The Sympathetic-Adrena-medullar (SAM) axis is the first pathway to respond and is very quick. The

sympathetic nervous system activates the adrenal medulla to release adrenaline and noradrenalin so our heart rate increases, blood pressure goes up and we get a boost of energy and, consequently, our 'fight or flight' response is activated. This is tolerable in the short term and we recover once the perceived threat has passed.

The second biological reaction to stress involves the Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) axis which is slower to respond and is triggered via signals from the hypothalamus and pituitary release of cortisol from the adrenal glands. We need the right amount of cortisol to survive and it enhances our brain's use of glucose as fuel or energy and also helps us repair tissue, but cortisol can become toxic if allowed to continue for long. Persistent and overreaction of these stress systems can be detrimental to our health.

We need the Parasympathetic Nervous System (rest and digest) to take over from the Sympathetic Nervous System (fight or flight) to feel calm, but still alert enough to function well. The Parasympathetic Nervous System takes over to calm everything down and our blood pressure, respiratory and heart rates slow.

HOW TO DEAL WITH BURNOUT IN THE FIRST INSTANCE

1. **KNOW WHEN THINGS ARE SEVERELY OUT OF BALANCE...** Accept that there are sometimes periods of short term stress, especially when you have to put in longer hours at work or have to deal with a certain situation, but it becomes detrimental when it is dominates your life over a longer period.
2. **IDENTIFY THE SIGNALS EARLY...** Signs of burnout include fatigue, irritability, sleepless nights despite feelings of exhaustion, anxiety and physiological changes in your body like raised blood pressure.
3. **TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL...** If you feel nervous about telling your work that you need a break or changes to be implemented, then talk to a close colleague, friend or family member first. Having a chat with someone who knows you well might offer you reassurance or another way at looking at things.
4. **PRIORITISE SLEEP** to improve your concentration, memory and decision making and your overall physical and mental health. Look closely at your 'sleep hygiene' and limit caffeine after midday, avoid screen time in the one to two hours before bedtime and have regular bed and getting up times.
5. **DISCONNECT TO RECHARGE...** To prevent chronic stress, you need to take some time to recharge and disconnect from work completely so when you take time out, make sure you really are off including holidays, your evenings and weekends. Block out some time for hobbies and seeing family and friends to help your physical, mental and emotional well-being. The brain is more efficient when it has produced a cocktail of 'feel-good' neurotransmitters so prioritising pleasant pursuits in your spare time means you will be far more productive during your working day.

GOING FORWARDS - HOW TO MAKE CHANGES AT WORK FOR THE BETTER

6. **EMPLOYERS MUST STEP UP...** A responsible and good employer won't let their employees get ground down or have a mentality of employee disposability because apart from protecting the welfare of their employees, avoiding burnout means better productivity, creativity and a low turnover of employees.
7. **THERE'S NO SHAME IN ASKING FOR HELP...** Admitting you need help at work (or any time) can be really hard as you may feel like your competency will be called into question. Maybe there aren't enough hours in the day to do what is being asked of you, or the work is simply beyond your scope and experience. If this is the case ask for a meeting with your boss and set out exactly what it is you need support with. Showing you need training in some areas can help to build trust, create networks and strengthen relationships between you and your team.
8. **COLLABORATE WITH WORKMATES TO SPREAD THE LOAD...** and keep your manager in the loop about what you are doing so they know you are being proactive. Being collaborative and working as a collective is an important skill, and if they are ever in your boat, they know they will be able to call on you too.
9. **ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES...** Create clear boundaries and stick to them, such as not checking your emails once you've clocked off and having agreed working hours. Turn off phone notifications you don't need and don't accept phone calls if it isn't a good time.
10. **PLAN YOUR DAY** ... Prioritise urgent tasks and be realistic about how long a

task or project could take and factor in breaks. Know your most productive time of day so you do the most important or tricky tasks when you are at your best. Don't try to multitask. Focus on one thing at a time and give it your full attention.

11. **AVOID DISTRACTIONS...** Interruptions, false starts and procrastination cloud our perception of how much time we actually spend productively. Avoid disruptions. Stress related brain fog is definitely a thing because when stressed, your brain struggles to process things as it normally would.
12. **SOMETIMES YOU JUST NEED TO TAKE TEN...** If you are feeling stressed, know when to take time out to allow your mind time to recover and recuperate. Try going outside for a short walk to allow your mind to reset. Build regular short breaks into your every day work.

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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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Sunil Bali

Simply irresistible...



The cultural critic and writer Maria Popova wrote, "Life is a continuous process of arrival, into who we really are. Life keeps presenting the lessons we need to learn, until we finally learn them and trust who we are."

It may be trite, but it's true: Imitation is limitation.

Authenticity on the other hand, whilst being an alien concept to most politicians, is like a light to a moth..... simply irresistible.

As the Zen saying goes, "A bird has no fear of the branch breaking, because its trust is not on the branch but in its own wings."

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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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Thom Dennis

Why we have always worn a mask at work (and how Covid-19 has further shaped them)



Wearing a mask has never been more important and is saving lives globally, but in business, at home and socially we already wear a number of masks according to the multiple roles that we play in modern day life, from lawyer to mother to wife to cleaner to runner. Positive future leadership calls for much greater levels of self-awareness. Exploration and understanding of the masks we wear in different circumstances offers many helpful insights.

Thom Dennis, CEO at Serenity in Leadership, explains why we always have worn a mask at work and how Covid-19 has changed our masks and us.

WHY WE ALL WEAR A MASK AT WORK AND ALWAYS HAVE

1. **Our language demonstrates how subliminally** we acknowledge this. We often use phrases such as 'saving, or losing face' or 'making a face', or 'putting on a brave face'. You can 'set your face against' someone or something and we 'face up' to challenges, or we 'face them down'. Some women 'put on their face' before leaving the house.
2. **We wear a mask to conform...** rather than recognise and celebrate our differences particularly in a very corporate environment



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- such as in law. The importance of diversity and equality can easily be forgotten if we are all trying to wear the same clothes, behave in the same way and wear the same mask.
3. **We wear masks to get ahead at work...** Having to fit in to get promotion and not be judged fully on our work is frustrating at best and soul destroying at worst. In particular many successful women who have got to the top of their profession will more than likely have had to hide some of their true character, identity, femininity and circumstances.
 4. **We wear masks to avoid rejection...** Some of us switch between masks to gain approval and minimise rejection from the group or other individuals. It is when the line between who we really are and the roles we play is blurred, or we are forced to play a role we don't want to, that problems may occur.
 5. **We wear masks when being challenged or in times of adversity** so that we feel stronger and achieve our goals. The more difficult the circumstances, the more likely we will grin and bear it rather than checking in with our feelings. Over a longer period, this requires a lot of energy and will sometimes force us to suppress who we are and can have a poor effect on mental health.
 6. **Masks make us seem one-dimensional...** Sometimes we see colleagues as simply the 'accountant', 'IT geek', 'maintenance man', or 'MD'. Typecasting makes us see others as merely a label, ignoring entirely the substance and dimensions of the individual.
 7. **Looking through our own lens ...** Making a quick judgement about someone at work may lead to poor snap decisions about who they really are. This is particularly destructive when we are talking about people who don't look or act like us. Rather than treat someone as you would wish to be treated, we should treat that person how they want to be treated. Challenge yourself to think deeper and remain open to getting to know them.

8. **Temporary masks can become permanent...** The more we wear a mask, the more they can permanently shape us. On the one hand this can mean we lose our sense of real self but conversely taking on a role that requires us to push ourselves a bit out of our comfort zone can sometimes be character and career building.
9. **In our research** we have found that people who are given a mask to wear and have been told the character of the mask, find it quite easy to act that character. The 1994 film "The Mask" is a graphic depiction in which timid bank clerk, Stanley Ipkiss played by Jim Carrey is too gentle, and is unable to handle confrontations in his life. He finds a mask which depicts Loki, the Norse god of mischief and when he puts it on, he becomes his inner cartoon self. Masks do have this effect of releasing people to act out a different, more authentic self.

HOW COVID HAS SHAPED OUR MASKS

We are protecting one another's lives by wearing a face covering mask. Some of us are choosing to show our personalities through our masks, but many aren't expressing themselves in this way and are wearing black or surgical masks. Feelings of constraint, concealment and claustrophobia are common complaints. For some, wearing masks can evoke feelings of anxiety and panic.



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People may feel trapped by the mask or feel more self-conscious.

Whilst ultimately wearing a face mask saves lives, it is important to recognise these and other difficulties to encourage compliance with wearing masks.

1. **Communication problems...** Only being able to see each other's eyes builds an additional social barrier and limits personal cues and facial expressions. We rely almost entirely on sound and eye communication, requiring us to speak louder. This affects tonality in the workplace with loud speech sometimes being received as unintentionally aggressive or rude. This is all in addition to the fact that we can't touch people or get too close to them.
2. **So what happens when we meet someone now?** What unconscious decisions are we making as we try to make sense of what we are seeing. Our brains are constantly trying to understand by relating the information we receive in the moment with previous experiences. It's difficult to relate to someone when there nothing to relate them to.
3. **Working from home means blurred lines...** The majority of business workers used to wake up and go into work every morning. Now some of us work in a back room, kitchen or home study. Switching into our work role at home can be tricky because we are likely to need to multitask more, such as help with the children, and we've lost the gap in which we used to switch between our roles – now we simply walk from one room to another. Blurred lines often increase stress levels.

4. **Working from home** has left those whose mask has provided some protection at work such as a uniform like a suit or a doctor's white coat, feeling vulnerable. Wearing pyjama bottoms whilst attending a Zoom meeting can change a mindset significantly.
5. **Agility...** One exciting development is a lot of businesses have risen to the challenges, shifted quickly, made the best out of the situation and focused well on their priorities. This includes seeing what their people's strengths (and weaknesses) are and being more understanding of their personal circumstances and life roles.

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About the Author

Thom Dennis is CEO of Serenity in Leadership. He is a facilitator, speaker, consultant, change agent and educator. For the last 29 years, he has led companies dedicated to coaching executives and teams through personal and organisational change, defining strategy, working through M&As and improving communication.

With Serenity in Leadership, Thom is focusing his depth and breadth of experience to help organisations move into the 20s and all the changes that are developing. He is intent on resolving issues of inclusion to help people whoever they are, whatever background they have come from, shine and thrive, and their organisations with them.

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David Burkus

What makes a great remote worker?

Most leaders probably didn't head into the great work-from-home experiment of 2020 assuming we'd need to know anything about hiring people remotely. In fact, most leaders struggled with the opposite issues when the initial economic downturn began. But now, as organizations stand nine months out from the beginning of the pandemic and continue adjusting to the "work from anywhere" world we're now living in, more and more leaders are finding they have to make hiring decisions about candidates they've never met—to work on teams that will rarely meet in person.

In addition to the normal methods we use to screen job candidates, and the tactics we use to judge whether those candidates are a fit for the organization, those same leaders have found that hiring remote workers and setting them up for success, requires candidates are evaluated for more than just their knowledge, skills, abilities, and past experience.

In this article, we'll review the three biggest questions that leaders need to answer when evaluating potential new hires. Beyond just "Can they do the job?" these questions answer the even bigger question of "Can they do the job remotely?"

Are they collaborators?

The first question we need to answer when evaluating potential new teammates is "Are they collaborators?" You might think that collaboration isn't all that important in remote team, but the truth is collaboration is actually more important. Talent flows

from teams. Individual performance is almost always most influenced by the team a performer is on, as well as the resources and information provided by the organization. And just because your people are working remotely, doesn't mean they're working alone. They will still need access to those same resources and the ability to collaborate with the team to get work done. And the remote, asynchronous nature of these teams means they'll need to find a cadence to their collaboration even more quickly.

We can assess whether someone is a good collaborator in a variety of ways. We want to invite as many people on the current team into the interview process as we can. If you're going to be working with the new hire, then you should probably have a say in who gets hired. Many teams and organizations go even further and invite the potential candidates to work with the team on a trial basis—like an internship but for more than just university students. If you can't go that far, then you can at least ask questions about how they collaborated on past teams, such as what it was like to work with a team that collaborated well and maybe even one that collaborated poorly, as well as what the differences are. If you're assessing collaboration through questions, remember that there are not "right" answers to these questions—just answers that indicate whether a potential new hire has the same collaboration style as the existing team.

Are they communicators?

The second question we need to answer when evaluating potential new teammates is "Are they communicators?" Or rather, are they great communicators—

because everyone communicates and, even on a remote team, you cannot not communicate. Communication is oxygen of any relationship, especially someone's relationship with a team. Your ability to collaborate and coordinate work will depend on your ability to communicate with everyone on the team—including any new hires. And that doesn't just mean communicate synchronously like on an audio or video call—it also means written communication in long and short form.

And if we're looking to assess someone's communication ability across a variety of mediums than we need to conduct the selection process over a variety of mediums. Not every interview should be a video call. Some will need to be audio only and some might even be through text chat. It's also worth noting that the need to assess communication brings new importance to an old relic of the hiring process: the cover letter. A cover letter attached to a resume or CV is literally an example of how well a candidate can express herself clearly and concisely and make an argument—the argument for why she should be hired. Clear writing is clear thinking. And you want to make sure you find a new teammate with both. But just as with collaboration, it doesn't matter if a candidate is skilled in the rules of grammar, as much as it matters that her communication style matches the existing team.

Are they self-motivated?

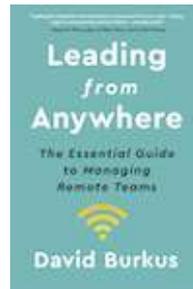
The last question we need to answer when evaluating potential new teammates is "Are they self-motivated?" And this might seem like it's the most important question and hence should have been first. But remote work isn't just work done alone—it's work

done alone *together*. Still, being self-motivated is a necessary quality because of that alone part. We want to know how well potential new teammates can get themselves up and focused on work without the threat of a boss waiting by their cubicles to see if they arrived on time. They don't need to stay focused and engaged from 9-5 on Monday through Friday—there's a freedom and flexibility to remote work. But that freedom can easily be a liability unless employees are self-motivated.

Fortunately, there are several places we can examine job candidates' levels of self-motivation beyond just asking the easily-gamed question "are you self-motivated?" Past work experience is a major indicator. If they worked remotely before (especially before we all got forced to work remotely) and they performed well (or at least performed for the same company for multiple years), then that's an indicator that they have the skills to stay motivated alone. But also, if their work history includes time as a freelancer or solopreneur. Just because that didn't work out and now they're looking to be employees doesn't mean they weren't self-motivated. But it does provide a space to ask questions about how they get themselves working when they worked by themselves. If their work history includes neither of those things, we can still ask about hobbies or other activities they're engaged in. If they're training for an Ironman triathlon by themselves, that's a pretty strong indicator that they are self-motivated even if they've never worked remotely before.

If you take the answers to these three questions together—and especially if you compare candidates answers to how your existing team would answer—then you can get a pretty good picture of how well someone will fit on your remote team. And you'll know not just whether they are a great remote worker. You'll know whether or not they are your new remote teammate.

If you want to learn even more about the future of remote work and how to lead your team from wherever you are, check out my new book *Leading From Anywhere*.



This article originally appeared on: <https://davidburkus.com/2021/01/what-makes-a-great-remote-worker/>

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About the Author

One of the world's leading business thinkers, David Burkus' forward-thinking ideas and bestselling books are helping leaders and teams do their best work ever.

He is the best-selling author of four books about business and leadership. His books have won multiple awards and have been translated into dozens of languages. His insights on leadership and teamwork have been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Harvard Business Review*, *USAToday*, *Fast Company*, the *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, *CNN*, the *BBC*, *NPR*, and *CBS This Morning*. Since 2017, Burkus has been ranked as one of the world's top business thought leaders by Thinkers50. As a sought-after international speaker, his TED Talk has been viewed over 2 million times. He's worked with leaders from organizations across all industries including Google, Stryker, Fidelity, Viacom, and even the US Naval Academy.

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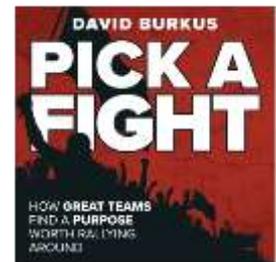
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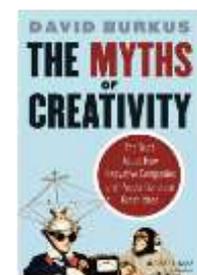
Pick A Fight: How Great Teams Find A Purpose Worth Rallying Around Why are some people and teams more motivated, more innovative, and more successful than others?



Friend of a Friend: Understanding the Hidden Networks That Can Transform Your Life and Your Career What if the advice we've all heard about networking was wrong?



Under New Management: How Leading Organizations Are Upending Business as Usual Dr. David Burkus is a highly regarded and increasingly influential business school professor who challenges many of the long-established principles of business management.



The Myths of Creativity: The Truth About How Innovative Companies and People Generate Great Ideas We tend to think of creativity in terms reminiscent of the ancient muses: divinely-inspired, unpredictable, and bestowed upon a lucky few.



David Finkel

The best business partnerships are built on trust – and a solid contract

Starting a new business can be exciting and terrifying at the same time. There are so many variables to consider, and a million things on your to-do list. And for many business owners, they aren't doing it alone. They have a business partner (or two...or three) that they choose to take the entrepreneurship journey with. At face value, it seems like a great idea. You have several people to divide up the workload, help make major decisions and structure the company for growth and profit.

But what happens when a business partnership goes sour? What happens when someone wants out or has a family emergency?

Thinking about these hard questions prior to forming a business partnership is sort of like getting a pre-nup before you get married. You are deeply in love, and can't imagine anything getting in the way of your happiness. But when or if it does, you are going to be happy that you took the time to work through these issues ahead of time when the lines of communication were still open.

So, today I wanted to share with you what I refer to as the "5 D's of Business Partnerships." These are the five worst case scenarios that every business partnership should talk through and get into writing prior to joining together for a business venture.

1. Death: What happens if one of the partners of the partnership dies? No one wants to think about this, but I have seen many businesses struggle to survive after a death in the business, so it's a

really important one to address and get into writing. Usually this is handled by a buy-sell clause that is funded with a life insurance policy.

- 2. Disagreements:** In the beginning you are all on the same wavelength. You believe in the mission and direction of the company and are hyper focused on bringing it into reality. But what happens if you and your partner reach an impasse? What happens when there is an irreconcilable difference on a fundamentally important issue? How will you handle it? Will one of you have the final say? Or will you instead resort to a carefully thought through buy-sell agreement?
- 3. Debt:** Debt is another taboo topic that many business owners dance around and avoid discussing. In a partnership, it's important that you not only discuss the topic but lay out a plan for what happens if one or more partner becomes financially insolvent and declares bankruptcy. Will you have to take on that partner's creditors as your new partners? Usually in the case of bankruptcy the economic interest of the insolvent partner will revert back to the other partners, or at the very least, be strictly limited to the economic interest and not any voting or controlling rights. This protects members of the partnership.
- 4. Divorce:** 50% of marriages end in divorce, so there is a high likelihood that this topic will come up in your partnership. Let's say you're a partner with Sally. But she and her husband Jim get a divorce and in the settlement Jim gets

half of Sally's interest in your partnership. Do you really want to be forced to take Jim into your partnership? You need to decide up front how you want to handle this contingency.

- 5. Disability:** The final "D" on the list of must discuss topics is disability. What happens if one of the partners is hurt and is no longer able to contribute time and talent to the partnership, how will this affect their ownership interest and the way profits are split? Get this in writing early on to prevent any issues down the road.

Discussing these topics is difficult for many business owners, but will save you a ton of pain, heartache and legal fees down the road.

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About the Author

David Finkel is co-author of, *SCALE: 7 Proven Principles to Grow Your Business and Get Your Life Back* (written with Priceline.com co-founder Jeff Hoffman), and one of the nation's most respected business thinkers. A *Wall Street Journal* and *Business Week* bestselling author of 11 business books, David's weekly business owner e-letter is read by 100,000 business owners around the world. David is the CEO of **Maui Mastermind**, one of the nation's premier business coaching companies. Over the past 20 years, David and the other Maui coaches have personally scaled and sold over \$2 billion of businesses.

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Amy Vetter

3 ways to effectively manage remote teams



We've all heard the saying, "Out of sight, out of mind." In an age of ever-increasing remote work, however, we may change that phrase to say, "Out of sight, top of mind."

As we rapidly transition to a work-from-home reality, one which experts expect to last well beyond our response to the coronavirus pandemic, it can be hard to separate ourselves from our work. Without an office to leave, it's all too easy to never turn off. At a time when people are dealing with lots of internal pressure, one of the attributes to avoid as a **leader** is to become a micromanager. If you want to effectively lead a remote team, you've got to be willing to let go.

CORONAVIRUS IMPACT: ADDITIONAL COVERAGE

1. [Internal lessons from coronavirus](#)
2. [Accounting's calendar crumbs](#)
3. [The post-COVID-19 business model requires proactive planning](#)

A lot of times, that's easier said than done. Remote work, which inevitably means less interaction between team members, can make leaders and managers overcompensate for the distance. "When a traditionally in-office workplace goes remote, company managers often feel powerless and disconnected with their employees," [notes](#) Hush Blankets CEO Lior Ohayon, "and these feelings sometimes cause them to micromanage."

While the impulse makes perfect sense, succumbing to it won't benefit anyone. Especially in a world where many team members are already juggling family life, work and the stress of an unprecedented year, the last thing they need is breathing down their neck via both email and Slack.

With that in mind, I want to discuss a few strategies that will allow leaders to interact and engage with their team members productively.

1. Schedule regular check-ins

Rather than springing surprise meetings on folks or constantly badgering them via online chat, take the time to put regular, structured check-ins on the calendars of your team. These meetings should exist in many forms: team chats, project updates, one-on-ones, etc. The nature, length and frequency of these meetings will vary depending on the size and nature of your company, but I would recommend making them as regular as possible and doing your best to not postpone or cancel them.

Regular meetings offer team members the chance to feel heard, report progress, ask questions and address concerns. They offer management the chance to get updates, monitor projects, and assess timeliness and quality of work. They also provide the peace of mind that comes from knowing where everything's at. If you create a good structure, you won't feel the need to constantly pop in for updates.

2. Use collaborative tools

In a cloud-based work environment, there are plenty of tools that can keep you apprised of happenings without needing to reach out to an actual person. Almost every cloud-based platform — from [project management systems](#) to online accounting software to Google Docs — comes equipped with easy-to-use collaborative features. Why send an email to a team member at 7p.m. when you can hop online and get the information for yourself or schedule the email to go out the next morning so you aren't bothering anyone during after-hours?

Micromanagement often happens as a result of an impulse, a pang from a leader, rather than a long-term plan to constantly monitor people. Tools that allow for easy collaboration and transparency are a great way to relieve the momentary stress of wondering what's happening with X project or going on with Y client. Putting rules of engagement in place, so you set appropriate guidelines for utilizing these tools and when to use them, can relieve a lot of stress.

It's important, though, to not make these tools a kind of micromanagement in their own right. Give people instructions on how to use them, and check in yourself from time to time, but don't be a set of eyes constantly peering at the work of others. Doing so will only create feelings of negativity toward the [tech](#) you

need to make remote work viable.

3. Don't micromanage yourself

Understanding how to work from home in a healthy and productive way includes not applying undue pressure on yourself. If you were already prone to being a work-all-the-timer, you're probably doubly so now. Unfortunately, overexertion on work isn't good for performance, quality of work or mental health. Consider setting boundaries for yourself if you also want to respect the boundaries of others.

If you want to avoid fatigue, burnout and disenchantment (and who doesn't?), learn to harmonize the professional and personal aspects of your life. Nobody can do that if they are spending every waking hour worrying about their team's and their own work.

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About the Author

Amy Vetter is an accomplished entrepreneur, business executive, national speaker, CPA, and yoga practitioner. She is also the author of *Business, Balance & Bliss: How the B³ Method Can Transform Your Career and Life* available in June 2017. As a third-generation woman entrepreneur, Amy has launched and sold multiple businesses including yoga studios, an accounting practice, and other business ventures. Amy has also held corporate leadership roles overseeing customer, sales, education, and marketing functions. Throughout her 20-plus years in business, Amy has learned valuable insights on how to achieve work-life harmony and live a more purposeful life.

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Urko Wood

Innovation sets the stage for creativity

One reason people mistakenly think that innovation is inherently risky is because they confuse it with creativity. Innovation and creativity are different. Your innovation process should do all the preparatory work required to enable your solution experts to focus on the right things and consistently deliver results.

For an innovation process to consistently deliver results, it must start with discovering the target customers' unmet needs. Most companies don't know how to do this because they don't have agreement about what a customer "need" really is. We have found that, for the purpose of innovation, a customer need is best defined as the functional, emotional and social jobs customers are trying to get done, and the criteria they use to measure success.

But it's not enough to only discover the customers' needs. We must also determine which needs are unmet, i.e., important and unsatisfied. The more important and less satisfied a need is, the greater the opportunity for innovation and growth it presents. Trying to add value to an unimportant need or to an already well-satisfied need is to misallocate resources. Only important unsatisfied needs are worthy of pursuit. And only after you have identified and ranked the customers' unmet needs are you ready to generate solution ideas that will reliably address your customers' unmet needs.

Your innovation process should set the stage for creativity by identifying and ranking the customers' unmet needs and then bringing them into the room with your solution experts. Then creativity will inevitably happen.

Connections will be made between the customers' unmet needs and your solution capabilities. And regardless of how you address the customers' unmet needs, the customers' unmet needs will be addressed. So, where's the risk? It's been removed by identifying and ranking the customers' unmet needs before attempting to generate solution ideas. Knowing where to focus makes all the difference in the world.

Admittedly, there is always some risk that your solution idea won't effectively address the customers' unmet needs any better than current solutions. Yet, we know from numerous studies that the vast majority of new business and product failures occur because they fail to address an important unsatisfied customer need, not because the company couldn't build a better solution (see [Nail It Then Scale It](#), by Furr and Ahlstrom, p.26). To create a compelling new offering, find a compelling unmet need.

Reveal growth. Create needs. Drive growth. We can show you how.

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About the Author:

Urko Wood founded *Reveal Growth Consultants* in 2012 to help companies turn innovation and growth into a repeatable business process. He has created a free PDF explaining how over 400 of the Fortune 1000 have done so called [Rethinking Innovation: How the Jobs-to-Be-Done Approach Delivers Dramatically Better Results](#).

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August J. Aquila

What 12 things keeps MPs awake at night?

1. One-firm. The question that still haunts firms today is purpose. In other words, does the firm exist to serve the desires of the partners, or is the firm itself greater than any individual or group of partners. Are we one or many? Do we strive for the greater good and focus on client needs or do we focus on the interest of individual partners?
 2. How do we maximize profits? What are the new pricing models firms are employing today as they move more into a client accounting service model? How do we add real value to our services? Value that clients are willing to pay extra for.
 3. Keeping clients loyal. Clients today have more mobility than ever before. They can easily shop for better prices and services. Firm marketing programs have been very effective in attracting new clients many firms find themselves in a buyer's markets where price competition is fierce.
 4. Effective compensation systems. MPs still struggle to find good compensation systems for their firms that has goal setting and performance evaluation tied to firm values.
 5. Succession planning. A major impediment at most firms to effect succession planning is client hoarding. Since many

compensation schemes are tied mainly to production, senior partners are reluctant to give up clients. Historically, firms have not been good at developing the next level of leaders.

6. To merger or not to merger? A look at the top 100 – 200 firms today looks nothing like it did 10 years ago. Merger mania has been a sign of the times for some years now. Merging is a major decision for any size firm.
7. How do I find the time to lead the firm? MPs today are being stretch in too many directions and they don't have enough internal support to do what they need to do. Successful leaders seem to be far and few between.

And now with the pandemic, managing partners are wondering:

8. How do we train our people to communicate remotely?
9. How can we help our clients navigate through government legislation and incentives?
10. What will our staffing needs be for 2021?
11. How does the firm make sure that it takes care of the mental health issues caused by the virus?
12. What will the long-term effect of the virus be on the firm and its people?

Managing a practice was never an easy thing to do. Just herding the partners to work together was a giant task. To be sure, there are no easy solutions to any of the

above issues. Nevertheless, managing partners need to address the issues and work on solutions that improve the firm – financially and operationally.

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About the Author

August Aquila is the founder and CEO of AQUILA Global Advisors, LLC and is a key thought leader for professional service firms (PSFs). He has worked with various types of PSFs in the US, Canada, India and England.

His articles have appeared in MP (Managing Partner), Journal of Accountancy, CA Magazine, Accounting Today, Of Counsel and other major publications.

Recent books include How to Become the Firm of Choice, What Makes a Great Partnership, Client at the Core: Marketing and Managing Today's Professional Services Firm; Performance Is Everything – The Why, What and How of Designing Compensation Plans; Compensation as a Strategic Asset: The New Paradigm; What Successful Managing Partner Do and Engaging Partners in the Firm's Future. August holds an MBA from DePaul University (Chicago) and a PhD from Indiana University (Bloomington).

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Pete Foley

Business Growth & Innovation after Covid-19

Covid-19 is of course a massive human tragedy. There is the obvious cost in human life and health, and also an economic cost that will no doubt echo for years to come. But as painful as recent changes in our world have been for so many, they also provide a unique opportunity for agile businesses and entrepreneurs. But what will it take to be one of the winners who thrive and grow in a post Covid-19 world? Below I've tried to capture some insights from Behavioral Design that may help.

Consumer behavior is largely, although not exclusively, driven by habits and/or low engagement decisions. If we deeply considered every purchase we make, a trip to the supermarket would take the best part of a day, and it would take us several hours to order in most restaurants. Much like an experienced driver on a regular commute, habits and decision short-cuts enable an auto-pilot that navigates our lives without getting bogged down over-thinking familiar asks and choices. This is the System 1 thinking described by Daniel Kahneman in his Nobel Prize winning work. But Covid-19 has eliminated or disrupted many of these fast-thinking options. Habits have been shattered, and many familiar choices have either disappeared, or have taken on unprecedented risk. People have also learned new skills, or started to develop new behaviors. This massive disruption is occurring in parallel to significant social change, realignment of global trade and supply chains, and the emergence of whole new businesses such as sustainable energy, new foods, and legalized cannabinoids. This leaves

people open to adopt new behaviors, and so presents perhaps a once in a lifetime opportunity for disruptive new products and services.

No One Size Fits All. Of course, after the dust settles, some things will eventually spring back to where they were, while others will change forever.

There's no simple, single equation for success, but if we want to ride those change waves, there are a couple of insights that I believe can help us.

1. Attention— If people don't notice innovations, they won't try them. In the post Covid-19 world, people are going to be experiencing a lot of change and disruption. They may be unusually open to change, but will also have a lot on their plate, and so have very limited cognitive bandwidth available to attend to 'new stuff'. So, new products and services must stand out from the crowd (and be intuitive - see below) to have any chance of success.

Fortunately we understand a lot about the science of attention, and how to grab it in a variety of ways. We can use simple principles borrowed from visual and perceptual science to make our offerings visually stand out, or leverage insights from Memory Science, Framing, Affecting Priming, and Social Psychology to maximize the effectiveness of marketing, word of mouth and/or endorsement.

2. Match Motivation. We need to match consumer goals. This sounds obvious, but it can be deceptively difficult. Consumers themselves often don't know what they want. This is partly because we are all victims of context, and what we want now is not necessarily what we'll want in the future. Daniel Kahneman sums

this up as 'we don't know our future selves very well;'. As an example, today it's hard to imagine viral safety not being a major concern.

But while that may not totally go away, a couple of years from now, it will have faded dramatically. I'll go out on a limb and predict that we'll be back in crowded nightclubs, bars, restaurants, sports stadiums, and quite possibly shaking hands surprisingly soon after Covid-19 has been conquered.

Many of the changes we've seen this year may have longevity, especially those around remote work and retail, but a surprising amount will snap back once the virus has been vanquished.

Another, much discussed challenge lies in finding 'unarticulated needs'. It's certainly true that consumers often cannot imagine new technology, or articulate radical or disruptive ideas. But it's really important to differentiate between a true unarticulated need, often characterized as surprisingly obvious in hindsight, and attempting to create a need as an outlet for our cool new idea.

With largely functional needs, we can often identify meaningful unarticulated needs via some variant of a 'jobs to be done' analysis, process mapping, or looking at bigger picture to simplify tasks. We can also use analogy to tap into new trends and provide relevant innovation that consumers will easily understand. For example, Air BnB is the Uber of the Hotel industry, Mobile Homehealth services are the Grubhub of healthcare. Because the concepts are already well understood, the analogical variant is also intuitive. Analogy is also particularly useful for innovating leisure or sensory experiences that go beyond functionality. For example, exploring how to bring a

spa, luxury dining or even vacation experience into the home creates a range of potential attributes that we would not get from a functional analysis, or anthropological study.

3. Create Wow! When an innovation asks people to change their behaviors, it requires both risk and effort from them. This fights our natural default to cling to proven, often habitual behaviors, in spite of, and even because of the change all around us. In many situations, and assuming an innovative product is available and noticeable, trial comes down to how big the benefit is perceived to be, offset against the amount of thinking and risk it demands. If risk outweighs perceived benefit, behavioral inertia will block trial. One way to overcome this is to make the benefit enormous.

But really, really huge benefits are, realistically, few and far between. An alternative for more modest innovations is to make the risk and effort so small that it's a no brainer. But a third, and I think more powerful option, is to do a little of both, and leverage a Wow cognitive structure. This takes a concept people already know, but reapplies it a new way, similar to the analogy described above. The result is a surprisingly obvious benefit consumers can intuitively work it out for themselves. This leverages their existing knowledge, but incorporates new information as an easily, often unconsciously solved little puzzle. This requires a relatively small cognitive effort, but triggers a dopamine release in the brain that both rewards trial and reinforces repeat purchase.

There are many ways to do this, whether it is integrating new functions into an existing tool (smart-phones), automation (ABS, smart braking), democratizing a previously exclusive proposition (home gourmet, teeth whitening, Nespresso), reapplying an existing innovation in a new space (the Uber/AirBnB example above), or reapplying an existing behavior or function in a new way (iPad swipe function, spray sunscreen). To more systematically create WOW, we can apply knowledge representation principles and analogy from cognitive psychology,

or embodied cognition to help us find conceptual blends that are largely intuitive to consumers.

4. Design for Emotional and Rational Appeal. Consumers' decisions are driven by a mixture of emotion and logic. To tie back to Kahneman's work for the third and final time, fast, largely unconscious or System I decisions are driven by gut feelings and emotions. Our slower, thoughtful evaluations comprise a much larger, rational, logical, evaluative component. Emotions will typically influence initial appeal and engagement. But very few people will purchase a new and untried product or service without some evaluation. That doesn't mean we need a thousand words in fine print on the back of the package (I've seen that happen), but we do need enough information to support initial, emotionally driven interest and hence close a purchase decision. We can borrow from Behavioral Economics to create the type of fluent and alignable comparisons that will authentically support a purchase, while staying within reasonable cognitive bandwidth for a typical shopper.

5. Design for Agility. Very few innovations get it completely right first time, and the more innovative our creation is, the weaker our models usually are, and so the worse our predictive skills. The culture in many large companies is to internally sell an illusion of success, and then use escalation of commitment to optimize in market. When I worked at P&G, virtually every new initiative was pitched as perfect. Forecasts, finances, projects, net present values, even marketing spend all assumed that we had got the product, concept, supply chain, and package right first time, and that our forecasts were accurate. The only trouble with that was that I cannot remember a single initiative that didn't require some degree of fine-tuning after launch, and many required a lot. This was not because P&G was bad at innovation, but the culture and decision making processes were tailored to flush out and avoid ambiguity, and you get what you reward. In reality it's almost impossible to anticipate every possibility in a new market, but if a high degree of certainty is a

requirement for internal stage gates, then we promote an illusion of certainty within the organization.

In a large company, escalation of commitment usually means that once we've launched we then find resources to fix unexpected issues as they arise. But this is very inefficient, as all too often, the potential for agility is squeezed out of an initiative in the pursuit of cost efficiency prior to launch, based on false certainty. If I've learned anything is that it's far better to assume we won't get it right first time. Even large-scale consumer research rarely if ever uncovers all of the potential wrinkles. Whether we test market, or design agility into manufacturing, supply chain, or marketing, a small investment in flexibility up front can often pay dividends as reality unfolds.

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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 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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Paul Sloane

Seven verbs which define great leaders of Innovation



Leaders of innovation have a bias for action. They get on with things. No matter how well the business is doing they are not content to settle for what has been achieved so far; they are restless to try new initiatives. These seven verbs describe some of their key actions.

1. Focus. They focus on the long term, on the strategic objectives and vision of the business. They are well aware of short-term pressures, but they do not get consumed by them. They are committed to the long-term survival and success of the organization. They focus on the needs of customers and employees.

2. Listen. They are smart and self-confident but modest enough to know that they do not have all the answers. They are keen to learn. They ask great questions and challenge employees, customers and outsiders. Then they listen.

3. Tell. Great leaders communicate by asking questions, by listening, by discussing and by telling. They tell people about the vision for the business. They tell people what a great job they are doing. They tell them that it is OK to fail. And they tell stories about people who display the values and behaviours they want to see. They are usually great story tellers.

4. Empower. They trust their best employees to come up with great ideas and to implement them. They

delegate and supervise. They grow new leaders by empowering people to try new things and to develop skills and experience. Talented people are motivated and inspired by leaders who trust and empower them.

5. Experiment. They do not trust in models, theories or spreadsheets. They trust empirical results. They believe in getting out there and trying new things. They encourage people to experiment and try new concepts by building prototypes and testing ideas in the marketplace.

6. Welcome. Innovative leaders welcome risk – it is part of the game. They welcome and celebrate success. Funnily enough they also welcome failure; they treat it as a learning experience. They welcome technology and new ways of working. They welcome people – whether old friends or strangers. Above all they are open-minded and welcoming to fresh ideas.

7. Decide. These innovators are open to discuss and consider different options. Then they move swiftly to a decision. They might have only half the information that they would like to have but they are prepared to move forward and commit to a course of action. Often the chosen option proves wrong. In this case the leader of innovation is big enough to say, 'I admit I got that one wrong.' They quickly move to correct things and set a new course. Many leaders and managers utter

fine words about how important innovation is, how important their people are and how they have great plans for the future. But ultimately leaders are judged by their deeds and not by their words. The successful leaders of innovation are those who take deliberate calculated actions to drive the business forward.

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About the Author

Paul Sloane is an author and expert on lateral thinking in business. He has delivered hundreds of talks to executive audiences around the world. His talks are different because they challenge your thinking head-on. He is a skilled facilitator and course leader who helps top level teams achieve breakthrough results in their meetings. He helps companies overcome the problems they have making innovation happen. He can improve creativity and lateral thinking for leaders with leadership and innovation master classes. This results in a more agile culture, more ideas and successful innovation.

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Tom Koulopoulos

Tony Robbins says this one trait is what it takes to succeed



A Trait that Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Richard Branson Share.

Understanding the key to success is just the start of understanding what motivates you and those around you.

There is no one road to success. Each person's path is different based on his or her individual context and circumstances. Trying to reduce success to a singular formula is something we do to entertain and lull ourselves into believing the myth that following a prescribed set of rules is all it takes. It's actually just the opposite. If there's one thing about success that I've learned, it's that you need to be courageous, and at times foolish, enough to break rules that most people would prefer to follow.

But breaking rules involves risk: the risk of being punished, the risk of being outcast, the risk of losing relationships, the risk of failure, financial risk, risking your health and wellbeing. In fact, breaking rules can have a multitude of downside consequences. Which is why there is one trait shared by all successful people. Tony Robbins nailed it in a recent interview when he said,

"When people ask what it takes to succeed, the one answer I give them is 'hunger.'"



Picture Source: <https://creativecommons.org/>

Ah, but wait, if hunger is all you need to be successful then doesn't that contradict what I just said about there being no one way to achieve success? No, because hunger is not the driver. In fact, according to one prominent psychologist, it's actually the outcome of 16 separate desires, the combination of which is unique to every person. And I do mean unique because those 16 drivers result in more than two trillion unique profiles for what can motivate success.

We'll come back to that and the research behind it in a minute, but let's first talk about hunger.

What Exactly Are You Hungry For?

Hunger cannot be faked. You're either hungry or you're not.

When your belly is full your brain is complacent. In fact, we are biologically wired to operate in a reduced state of creativity, innovation, and risk when we are satiated. Why expend energy when you don't have to?

On the other hand, when you truly hunger for something, when your stomach or your soul feels

ravenous state you set aside any concerns about appearing foolish, you discard the overwhelming odds against you, you get amazingly innovative, and you'll bet everything you have to get whatever it is that will feed that hunger.

This is where it gets really interesting.

The reason success is so unique to each of us is that we don't all hunger for the same things, in the same order of priorities. As a result we make a critical mistake; we assume that what drives us also drives others. By projecting our own hunger onto others, or by trying to adopt someone else's hunger, we buy into the fallacy that everyone is motivated by the same combination of desires. Nothing could be further from the truth and more destructive to finding your own path to success or helping to motivate others on your team to find theirs.

So, are there really two trillion different types of hunger?

Two Trillion Ways To Succeed

Steven Reiss, a professor of psychology at Ohio State University has developed a theory of motivation based on studying the behaviours of 6000 people. His conclusion was that there are 16 basic desires which drive our behaviour and create the sort of hunger that we're talking about. Each of those desires can be ranked on a 0-5 scale to create a Reiss Profile.

There are over two trillion unique profiles and only one applies to you and reflects the things that you most need to get out of life. Notice I said "need" and not "want." Because the best way to look at the unique combination of 16 desires that drive your hunger is to think about them as the things that you would most regret not having done or achieved in your life.

Understanding your unique profile and what drives you, as well as what drives others, is absolutely essential in motivating yourself and those you work with. Your profile defines your view of success.

While I can't give you your profile in this context (The actual test is fairly involved, licensed, and interpreted in a way that's similar to a Myers-Briggs), you can get an initial and very cursory sense for your drivers by reviewing the Reiss list below and picking the top three desires that drive and define your unique view of success. (You can also get a somewhat better assessment at the end of Reiss' book *The 16 Basic Desires That Motivate Our Actions and Define Our Personalities*).

It's tough to prioritize these desires because they all exist to some extent in all of us but be honest with yourself and pick the three that drive you the most. These are the ones that you are willing to break the rules for. Then order them in terms of priority.

The best way to do this is to pair the desires off and for each two ask yourself, "If I had to, which of these two would I trade for the other?" For example, Order and

Saving are a tough one for me because I want both, but, as much as I hate to admit it, if I had to pick one it would be Saving. I have a very hard time letting go!

The key is to answer with what you actually desire versus what you think you should desire. Give it a try. The results may surprise you.

Here are Reiss' 16 desires (There's no significance in the order):

- **Power** is the desire to influence others.
- **Independence** is the desire for self-reliance.
- **Curiosity** is the desire for knowledge.
- **Acceptance** is the desire for inclusion.
- **Order** is the desire for organization.
- **Saving** is the desire to collect things.
- **Honor** is the desire to be loyal to one's parents and heritage.
- **Idealism** is the desire for social justice.
- **Social Contact** is the desire for companionship.
- **Family** is the desire to raise one's own children.
- **Status** is the desire for social standing.
- **Vengeance** is the desire to get even.
- **Romance** is the desire for sex and beauty.
- **Eating** is the desire to consume food.
- **Physical Activity** is the desire for exercise of muscles.
- **Tranquility** is the desire for emotional calm.

Now that you've identified the three desires that drive you the most, the ones that are the source of your hunger, you might be tempted to stop and think about why these are so critical to your success. That's a wonderful exercise in self-awareness, but it is pretty useless. These desires are so deeply rooted in your psyche that it will take nothing short of the emotional equivalent of a direct nuclear hit to dislodge them. I'm not saying that you shouldn't re-evaluate what drives you, but it's exceptionally rare

that these drivers change after very early in a person's formative years.

Clearly some of these desires also cut both ways. Vengeance, for example, doesn't come across as a very noble desire. And yet, in a competitive scenario, you can easily see how it might play a pivotal role in motivating someone to be ruthlessly creative.

So, now ask yourself if what you are doing on a day-to-day basis is feeding those desires. The degree to which you do that is what gives your life meaning.

What's most important in understanding your unique desires is accepting the obligation you have to yourself to do everything you can to align your life with them. The more you do that the more fulfilled and meaningful your life will feel. People who are truly successful pay close attention to these core desires and do whatever they can to satisfy them. Simply put, they don't ignore their hunger.

This is your unique path to success, it's what drives you and what fulfils you, it's what most feeds your hunger. Not everyone will understand it, in fact, chances are two trillion to one that that they won't.

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About the Author

Tom Koulopoulos is the author of **13** books and founder of the **Delphi Group**, a **30-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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Janet Sernack

Strategic and Systemic Alignment – why they really matter

In my early days at Compass Learning, I designed and delivered a wide range of top team strategic alignment and development programs. Where the focus was on enabling and empowering team members to metaphorically “sing from the same song sheet” – by agreeing to and articulating a common purpose, clarifying roles and goals and driving mutual accountability. Also, by establishing, the most effective communication, decision making, and problem-solving processes, all of which were designed to cultivate trusted relationships. The outcomes included increased cohesion, collaboration, and agility, making them resilient and sustainable as **high performing and fast-moving** effective teams – who responded quickly to change, often in the face of disruption and adversity.

Since I evolved Compass Learning, more than six years ago, into **ImagineNation™** where our focus is on enabling people and organization to **be, think and act differently** to adapt and grow through disruption. I realized that strategic alignment is more important than ever, especially in a globalized, connected and VUCA world. Where leaders, teams, and organizations, who are seeking to thrive and survive in the playing fields of the future, must collectively and cohesively learn to “sing from a new and different song sheet”.

Aligning strategically and systemically

This new song sheets agency involves humming tunes about

customer-centricity, adaptiveness, collaboration, and innovation, as the most effective ways of improving organizational performance and growth.

Where the outcome is a strategically and systemically aligned, resilient and sustainable organization.

This involves aligning systemically all elements of a business – the market strategy, leadership team, operating environment and culture. As well as the way the company itself is organized, led and managed so it can adapt, connect, evolve and create value, and great results, through innovation and disruption.

All these critical elements need to be aligned, in such a way as to best support the fulfilment of its long-term purpose for change, adaptation, growth or innovation.

Especially in a competitive and globalized world, where speed and agility matter most!

How do you know whether you are aligned, or not?

Taking a balcony perspective, authors Jonathan Trevor and Barry Varcoe, in a recent HBR article <https://hbr.org/2016/05/a-simple-way-to-test-your-companys-strategic-alignment> present a simple model illustrated below:

Where does your organization sit?

- **Very best chance of winning:** Companies that score highly on both scales stand the very best chance of winning in their competitive field.

The Best Companies Are the Best Aligned

Strategy, purpose, and organizational capabilities must be in sync.



- **Best of intentions, but incapable:** Companies that score highly on the purpose and strategy alignment scale, but low on the strategy and organization scale, are more or less incapable of implementing their strategy as intended.
- **Boldly going nowhere:** Businesses that have strong alignment between their strategy and organization, but weak alignment between strategy and purpose are classed as “boldly going nowhere.”
- **Not long for this world:** Companies that score low on both scales are in crisis, even if it isn’t immediately obvious.

How might you then answer these four questions?

Take a moment to pause, retreat and reflect – how you might respond to the following five questions about your level of strategic alignment to your long-term purpose vision for change, adaptation, growth or innovation:

1. **How well is your business strategy supporting the fulfilment of your company’s purpose?**

2. **How is your leadership team aligned and enabled to effectively deliver the business strategy?**
3. **How well is your organization overall, especially your culture, supporting the achievement of your business strategy?**
4. **How aligned is your strategy with your overall organizational capability?**
5. **How resilient and sustainable is your organization in the face of exponential change and disruption?**

Simplifying strategic alignment

At **ImagineNation™** we searched the world to discover **better ways of helping our clients** understand the importance of strategic alignment to help them build a more resilient and sustainable organization. To enable them to shift from taking the short term “fix it” approaches, aptly described as “innovation theatre” to move toward understanding and resolving the deeper root causes.

In a recent HBR article <https://hbr.org/2019/10/why-companies-do-innovation-theater-instead-of-actual-innovation>, Steve Blank reinforces this perspective: “Today, as large organizations are facing continuous disruption, they’ve recognized that their existing strategy and organizational structures aren’t nimble enough to access and mobilize the innovative talent and technology they need to meet these challenges. These organizations know they need to change, but often the result has been a form of organizational whack-a-mole – a futile attempt at trying to swat at problems as they pop-up without understanding their root cause.

Ultimately, companies and government agencies need to stop doing this or they will fail.”

He reinforces the need for simplifying strategic alignment, supporting organizational redesign, which our research and experience, at

ImagineNation™ requires:

- Exploring differing methodologies to qualify and

quantify, the impact of strategic alignment, on performance. Identifying both the tangible gains and losses across the strategic, systemic, leadership, culture and capability domains.

- Making the vital and crucial strategic alignment links between strategy and mindsets, both individual and collective. To inform strategic decision making, in order to drive organization-wide, intelligent actions.
- Identifying and managing the crucial relationship between mindsets and culture. Realizing that mindset shifts enable business transformations that enhance organizational capability that results in an adaptive, customer-centric, resilient and sustainable
- Supported by systemic, organization-wide innovation learning and daily activities, and process reforms.

Taking the first steps – adopting a process to fix this

Boards, CEO’S and leadership teams have the opportunity to ensure that “innovation theatrics” are dropped, and that they take responsibility for **leading people and organizations forward in the imagination and digital ages.**

By taking charge of their strategic alignment and building an **Innovation Doctrine** – encompassing a staged, strategic and systemic approach to **retool to win in the next decade.**

That is kickstarted by applying a validated, business-based assessment process and system – designed to strengthen alignment between leaders, strategy, processes, systems, and culture across functions, leadership levels, locations and regions within the organization.

The Organizational Growth Indicator

We recommend using a multifactorial and customizable model (**OGI®**) to assess your organization’s ability to grow through innovation and change and:

1. Assess both the strengths and the constraints occurring in your

organizational system that impact your ability to affect value creation and organizational growth.

2. Measure the current state of your leaders, people’s, teams’ ability to adapt connect, evolve and create value through innovation and disruption.
3. Develop a description of your Culture Type and assess your organization’s cultural “Readiness” for change – your organization’s ability to shift and transform adaptively.
4. Codify the organization’s Collective Cultural Mindset and link it to Performance Metrics – revenue growth, profitability and other KPI’s (Key Performance Indicators) important to the organization.
5. Truly assess and measure the impact (ROI) of past, current and future Training and Organisational Development Initiatives implemented to improve the organization’s innovative and transformative capabilities.

The last word – it’s all of them, all at once

Reinforcing that developing strategic alignment is more important than ever, in building an adaptive, customer-centric, collaborative and innovative resilient and sustainable organization.

To both **prepare people for a future they cannot control or predict**, in a **disruptive world**, and enable them to also flourish and grow in the playing fields of the future.

It takes courage, conviction, and commitment, and if you are not convinced yet, take heed of Steve Blanks warning to us all:

“The type of disruption most companies and government agencies are facing is a once-in-every-few-centuries event. Disruption today is more than just changes in technology, or channel, or competitors – it’s all of them, all at once. And these forces are completely reshaping both commerce and defence.”

Find out about **The Coach for Innovators Certified Program**, a collaborative, intimate and deep

personalized innovation coaching and learning program, supported by a global group of peers over 8-weeks, starting January 28, 2020. It is a blended learning program that will give you a deep understanding of the language, principles, and applications of a human-centered approach to innovation, within your unique context. [Find out more.](#)

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About the Author

Janet is the Founder, CEO & Chief Katalyst of ImagineNation™ a generative and provocative global enterprise innovation consulting, education and coaching company that enables people to be, think and act differently. She has 29 years of experience consulting and leading culture development, change management, leadership and innovation education programs to some of Australasia's and Israel's top 100 companies in the retail, service, IT, telecommunications, financial services, building and manufacturing sectors.

Prior to launching her consulting, training and coaching career she was Marketing Development Manager for the 42 Grace Bros' department stores, which are now, part of the Myer Group. She then launched Australia's first design management consultancy and worked with some of the world's leading fashion and lifestyle brands including Oroton, Chanel and Seafolly.

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Martin Pollins

Save time by using shortcuts on your Keyboard



CTRL+P OPEN A PRINT WINDOW TO PRINT THE PAGE YOU ARE VIEWING.

CTRL+R RELOAD PAGE IN BROWSER OR RIGHT ALIGN TEXT IN A WORD PROCESSOR.

CTRL+S SAVE THE DOCUMENT OR FILE.

CTRL+T CREATE A NEW TAB IN AN INTERNET BROWSER OR ADJUST TABS IN WORD PROCESSORS.

CTRL+U UNDERLINE SELECTED TEXT.

CTRL+V PASTE ANY TEXT OR ANOTHER OBJECT THAT WAS LAST COPIED.

CTRL+W CLOSE OPEN TAB IN A BROWSER OR CLOSE A DOCUMENT IN WORD.

CTRL+X CUT SELECTED TEXT OR ANOTHER OBJECT THAT HAS BEEN HIGHLIGHTED.

CTRL+Y THESE KEYS WILL REDO ANY UNDO ACTION.

CTRL+K INSERT A HYPERLINK

CTRL+END MOVES CURSOR TO THE END OF A DOCUMENT INSTEAD OF END OF THE LINE.

CTRL+Z PRESSING THESE TWO KEYS WILL UNDO THE LAST ACTION.

CTRL+ESC OPEN THE WINDOWS START MENU.

CTRL+TAB SWITCH BETWEEN OPEN TABS IN BROWSERS OR OTHER TABBED PROGRAMS.

CTRL+⇧+TAB WILL GO BACKWARDS (RIGHT TO LEFT).

CTRL+⇧+Z REDO

CTRL+[DECREASE FONT SIZE

CTRL+] INCREASE FONT SIZE

CTRL+= TOGGLE FONT SUBSCRIPT

CTRL+⇧+= TOGGLE FONT SUPERScript

AND PERHAPS THE MOST USEFUL ONES OF ALL:

CTRL+⇧+C COPIES THE FORMAT AND COLOUR OF TEXT YOU HAVE HIGHLIGHTED.

CTRL+⇧+V PASTES (REPLICATES) THE FORMAT, AND COLOUR OF TEXT YOU HAVE HIGHLIGHTED, AS ABOVE.

WIN +⇧+S TAKES A SCREEN CLIP

Please let me know if you would like help on other shortcuts: mpollins@bizezia.com

Greg Satell

How Amazon Innovates



In 2014, Stephenie Landry was finishing up her one-year stint as Technical Advisor to Jeff Wilke, who oversees Amazon's worldwide consumer business, which is a mentor program that allows high potential executives to shadow a senior leader and learn first-hand. Her next assignment would define her career.

At most companies, an up-and-comer like Stephenie might be given a division to run or work on a big acquisition deal. Amazon, however, is a different kind of place. Landry wrote a memo outlining plans for a new service she'd been thinking about, Prime Now, which today offers one-hour delivery to customers in over 50 cities across 9 countries.

It's no secret that Amazon is one of the world's most innovative companies. Starting out as a niche service selling books online, it's now not only a dominant retailer, but has pioneered new categories such as cloud computing and smart speakers. The key to its success is not any one process, but how it integrates a customer obsession deep within its culture and practice.

Starting With The Customer And Working Back

At the heart of how Amazon innovates is its six-page memo, which is required at the start of

every new initiative. What makes it effective isn't so much the structure of the document itself, but how it is used to embed a fanatical focus on the customer from the day one. It's something that Amazon employees have impressed upon them early in their careers.

So, the first step in developing Prime Now was to write a press release. Landry's document was not only a description of the service, but how hypothetical customers would react to it. How did the service affect them? What surprised them about it? What concerns did they want addressed? The exercise forced her to internalize how Amazon customers would think and feel about Prime Now from the very start.

Next she wrote a series of FAQ's anticipating concerns for both customers and for various stakeholders within the firm, like the CFO, operations people and the leadership of the Prime program. So Landry had to imagine what questions each would have, how any issues would be resolved and then explain things in clear, concise language.

All of this happens before the first meeting is held, a single line of code is written or an early prototype is built, because the company strongly believes that until you internalize the



customer's perspective, nothing else really matters. That's key to how the company operates.

A Deeply Embedded Writing Culture

It's no accident that the first step to develop a new product at Amazon is a memo rather than, say, a PowerPoint deck or a kick-off meeting. As Fareed Zakaria once put it, "Thinking and writing are inextricably intertwined. When I begin to write, I realize that my 'thoughts' are usually a jumble of half-baked, incoherent impulses strung together with gaping logical holes between them".

So, the company focuses on building writing skills early in an executive's career. "Writing is a key part of our culture," Landry told me. "I started writing press releases for smaller features and projects. One of my first was actually about packaging for diamond rings. Over years of practice and coaching, I got better at it." Being able to write a good memo is also a key factor in advancement at Amazon. If you want to rise, you need to write and write well.

She also stressed to me the importance of brevity. "Keeping things concise and to the point forces you to think things through in a way that you wouldn't otherwise. You can't hide behind complexity, you actually have to

work through it,” Landry said. Or, as another Amazon leader put it, “Perfection is achieved when there is nothing left to remove.”

Moreover, writing a memo isn’t a solo effort, but a collaborative process. Typically, executives spend a week or more and sharing the document with colleagues, getting feedback, honing and tweaking it until every conceivable facet is deeply thought through.

Reinventing The Office Meeting

Another unique facet of Amazon’s culture is how meetings are run. In recent years, a common complaint throughout the corporate world is how the number of meetings has become so oppressive that it’s hard to get any work done. Research from MIT shows that executives spend an average of nearly 23 hours a week in meetings, up from less than 10 hours in 1960.

At Amazon, however, the six-page memo cuts down on the number of meetings that are called. If you have to spend a week writing a memo, you don’t just start sending out invites whenever the fancy strikes you. Similarly, the company’s practice of limiting attendance to roughly the number of people that can share two pizzas also promotes restraint.

Each meeting starts out with a 30-60 minute reading period in which everybody digests the memo. From there, all attendees are asked to share gut reactions — senior leaders typically speak last — and then delve into what might be missing, ask probing questions and drill down into any potential issues that may arise.

Subsequent meetings follow the same pattern to review the financials, hone the concept and review mock-ups as the team further refines ideas and assumptions. It’s usually not one big piece of feedback that you get,” Landry stressed. “It is really all about the smaller questions, they help you get to a level of detail that really brings the idea to life.”

All of this may seem terribly cumbersome to fast moving executives accustomed to zinging in and out of meetings all day, but you often need to go slow to move fast. In the case of Prime Now, the service took just 111 days to go from an idea on a piece of paper to a product launch in one zip code in Manhattan and expanded quickly from there.

Coevolving Culture And Practice

Every company innovates differently. Apple has a fanatical focus on design. IBM’s commitment to deep scientific research has enabled it to stay on the cutting edge and compete long after most of its competitors have fallen by the wayside. Google integrates a number of innovation strategies into a seamless whole.

What works for one company would likely not work for another, a fact that Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos highlighted in a recent letter to shareholders. “We never claim that our approach is the right one — just that it’s ours — and over the last two decades, we’ve collected a large group of like-minded people. Folks who find our approach energizing and meaningful,” he wrote.

The truth is that there is no one “true” path to innovation because innovation, at its core, is about solving problems and every enterprise chooses different problems to solve. While IBM might be happy to have its scientists work for decades on some arcane technology and Google gladly allows its employees to pursue pet projects, those things probably wouldn’t fly at Amazon.

However, the one thing that all great innovators have in common is that culture and practice are deeply intertwined. That’s what makes them so hard to copy. Anybody can write a six-page memo or start meetings with a reading period. It’s not those specific practices, but the commitment to the values they reflect, that has driven Amazon’s incredible success.

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About the Author

Greg Satell is an international keynote speaker, adviser and bestselling author of *Cascades: How to Create a Movement that Drives Transformational Change*. His previous effort, *Mapping Innovation*, was selected as one of the best business books of 2017.

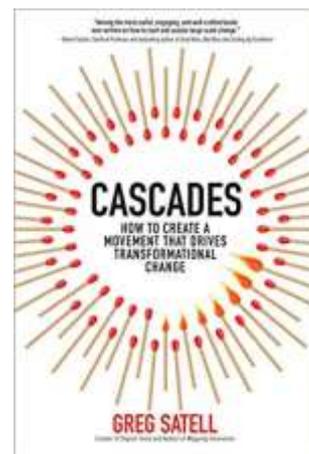
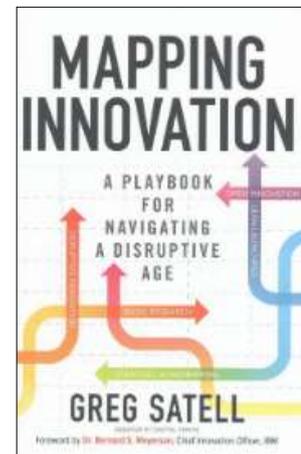
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Benjamin Hardy

Turn your alarm clock into a positive trigger

You can wake up first thing in the morning with excitement. You can hear that alarm, get up, and your mind is already sharp. But in order to do so, you need to do a few things first. This article will show you how:

PUT YOUR ALARM ACROSS THE ROOM

This is environment design. You need to set up the situation to make the desired result happen. It's also a forcing function — the fact that the alarm is across the room or in some different room *literally forces* you out of bed to turn it off.



Picture Source:

<https://search.creativecommons.org/photos/bc88f1ce-dddf->

I know there's a lot of talk about circadian rhythms and not disrupting sleep cycles — but I don't buy it. Instead, I buy the fact that you can wake up and get energized if you want to and believe you need to. And if you sleep over 7 hours per night, you're doing great.

RE-SET YOUR ROUTINE BASED ON YOUR CURRENT GOALS

Every routine gets stale overtime. The point of a routine is to trigger a flow state so you can create massive progress. However, what got you here won't get you there. Just because one routine or "process" helped you in the past doesn't mean it will help you now.

For example, I recently started running first thing in the morning. For over 3 years, I woke up, drove to the gym, journaled outside the gym while my pre-workout set in, worked out, then wrote articles. That routine helped me go from broke grad student to professional author and successful entrepreneur. But that routine and the effects of it don't resonate with who I am now, or who I want to become in the future. What got me here won't get me there.

HAVE VERY SPECIFIC GOALS

If you don't have specific goals, you are unlikely to turn your alarm clock into a positive emotional trigger. In fact, without clear goals, you will have a hard time creating motivation, happiness, hope, or a flow state. You need very specific and time-bound goals.

Psychologists are now coming to believe that "consciousness" is really about projecting or imagining different "futures." Human beings are drawn toward the future. But if you don't take ownership over your own future, then you can't have motivation or confidence. Owning your future, and watching yourself create the life you want is how you build confidence. It's how you find joy in life. It's how you change your external world to match your internal desires.

GAMIFY YOUR GOALS

Gamification is a psychological tool to create motivation. You gamify something by "turning it into a game." All high-performers turn their craft into a game. The best marketing companies turn their campaigns into games. You see this when there are special rewards for doing various things.

Given that my current goal is getting into marathon shape and getting from 176 pounds to 165 pounds, I've gamified it. I told my kids that if I get down to 165 pounds by January 1st, that I'll give each of them \$100. Initially, I was going to "owe" them \$100 if I didn't hit my goal, but it didn't make sense for them to be rooting against me. If I don't hit the goal, I've got to buy my wife something she'd never get for herself up to \$600.

Gamification means you've turned it into a game. You've turned it into a "quest." Games and quests have different levels and challenges. There is a finish-line. My finish line is the Marathon I've already signed up and paid for.

Games aren't hidden, but

public. You're not hiding anything. I use the Strava app every day to track and report my progress. If you're not tracking and reporting your progress daily, then you don't have real goals. Real goals require real accountability. If you're serious about something, you'll want all of the accountability and support you can get. You'll embed several "forcing functions" to ensure you succeed, because you're not Superman. You can self-sabotage. So rather than being inconsistent, you've designed your environment and situation to ensure you succeed.

SET YOURSELF UP THE NIGHT BEFORE

It takes me 17 minutes to wake up, get myself ready, hydrate, and start running if I *haven't* set myself up the night before. It takes 4 minutes from the moment my alarm goes off to me running if I *have* set myself up the night before.

Setting yourself up the night before does many important things psychologically. It tells yourself you're serious about this and committed. It creates positive anticipation, which is a powerful psychological trigger. It also removes decision fatigue, because when your alarm goes-off, you've already made the decision the night before.

In my case — all I have to do when I've set myself up is walk to the closet, throw on the clothes that are already set-out, grab the drink that is right next to the clothes, and throw on the headphones right next to the drink, and go. Boom, boom, boom. This process of getting up, following-through, and immediately getting going builds the confidence and deepens the flow-state.

THE FASTER YOU START YOUR FIRST ACTIVITY, THE BETTER

The philosopher Cato said, "He who hesitates is lost." If you wake up first thing in the morning and drag around a little bit, your brain will remain fuzzy longer than it needs to.

How you spend the first few moments of your morning sends a powerful signal to your subconscious about how the rest of the day will go. If you wake up and immediately get going on a task, your brain will activate very quickly.

The longer it takes to get started on your first task, the harder it will be to get into flow. Wake up and get started on whatever first activity is most important for *your* own morning routine.

CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Changing your environment heightens your mental awareness

and triggers flow. Going outside or into a different room wakes you up. You can also design triggers for entering various environments.

Have Weekly Goals

Try to squeeze as much juice out of each week as you can. Creating productive weeks will change your life. You do this by designing your week and your days to be successful.

Rate your days 0/10 to 10/10. In order to get a 10/10, you don't need to be perfect, but you do need to have started and ended strong. You need to have avoided your most common self-sabotage. You need to have completed or made progress on your most important goals. And definitely, been present in the key areas of your life.

POWER MOVES (BONUS)

When you orient your life toward your desired future self, and when you set your mornings up for success — you'll start to immediately get clarity for what needs to improve in your life. Since I started running in the morning, I've already made some important changes I've been procrastinating. For example, there were two business decisions I've been letting sit on the back-burner. Leaving things unfinished on the "back-burner" is how you dull your mind and kill your confidence. Being in a state of proactive and powerful decision is how you create results.

This week, I sent 2 texts I've been procrastinating that will save me almost \$30,000! I was scared to send those texts. But once I sent them, it was like I overcame a personal mountain. My standards are improving. I'm overcoming bad habits. I'm committing to the identity of my future self.

You can do the same. What are some powerful moves you could make that you've been scared of? What's been on the "back-burner"?

CONCLUSION

Turn your alarm clock into a trigger. That trigger can immediately create feelings of excitement. You can wake up

excited. You can wake up with energy. You can wake up set-up for success. Within 5 minutes, you can already be doing something amazing with your day. Wake up and get going. This is how you create a highly productive and powerful day.

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About the Author

Benjamin is an organizational psychologist and bestselling author of *Willpower Doesn't Work*. His work is viewed by millions of people monthly and featured on *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *CNBC*, *Cheddar*, *Big Think*, and many others. He is a regular contributor at *Inc.* and *Psychology Today*.

From 2015 to 2019, his email list grew to nearly 400,000 people (without paid advertising) by blogging on *Medium.com*.

Co-ordinates

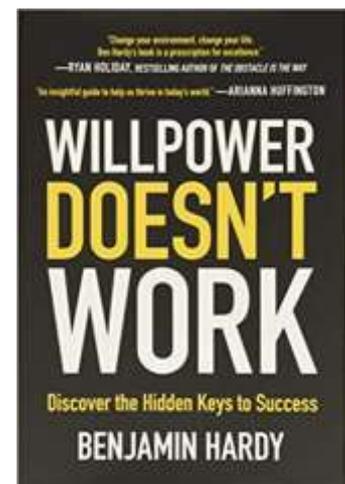
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Andy Bounds

The six simplest ways to make your communications miles better



I like this Tip.

Because it shows you the six simplest ways to:

- Make your comms miles better
- In the shortest possible time

So maximum impact for minimum effort. Always good.

Here they are:

1. Start

Always have an engaging title and introductory 1-2 sentences. Win your audience then, and they tend to stay 'won'. Lose them then, and you might never get them back.

2. End

Always finish with a Call To Action. This ensures that people actually do something. So:

- End meetings with 'actions arising' not 'AOB'
- Make your presentations' final slide 'Next steps', not 'Thank you'
- Finish emails with 'Please can you (do X)'. Not 'If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call'

3. Agree upfront

Wherever possible, when preparing a communication for someone, agree with them what content they want you to include. That way, you write less. It's all relevant. You both like it more.

It's miles quicker to prepare. Most importantly: it tends to work.

4. Easy on the eye

Remember that people hate clutter. And they love white space. So remove as many words as possible from your slides. Shorten paragraphs. Things like that.

5. Shorter

Wherever possible, shorten your comms. Remove anything that isn't core. If it's background, bang it in an appendix.

6. Read aloud

The only way to know if you're writing in English – and not 'Corporate' – is to read your comms to yourself out loud. Your ears quickly filter out bits that just sound like Corporate Stuff. Your eyes don't. (Why? Because they're so used to seeing 'Corporate' from everyone else, they don't see it when you do it!)

So they're the six. I know you know all/most of them.

But do you do them?

Every single time?

If not, this'll help...

Action Point

Review your most recent communication – the one you've just done. Check you nailed each of the six.

If any could have been better, in your next communication... make them better!

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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'.

Are you following me on [twitter?](#)

To receive my weekly tips on how to communicate more effectively, [click here](#)

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

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Jeff Eilertsen

Leading with service during the Covid-19 Pandemic

As the Coronavirus spreads, it brings new and unique challenges to organizations in every industry in all parts of the world. People are working in a time of tremendous uncertainty and stress.

If you're a leader in this unfolding drama, there is no clear view of the direction or duration of the crisis. The health of people near you may be threatened. Government restrictions and actions shift daily. The future of your workforce is unpredictable. Staff are increasingly working from home. And customers are asking for new flexibility or demanding service you are not able to offer.

It's hard to imagine a time requiring stronger leadership than now. We watch as other government and corporate leaders grapple with how to put structure around their response, make decisions from behind the curve, and communicate to inspire and control.

This calls for a unique blend of service and care for others. We must keep the enterprise afloat while digging deep into our own humanity. Care for our families, friends and loved ones is first and foremost. But we also must provide new types of service for our colleagues, partners and customers.

The concept of leadership as service is not new. The current situation calls it forth with urgency. Pandemics naturally pull people apart. Fear can overwhelm our best intentions. "Social distancing" is necessary but potentially isolating. Author David

Brooks writes: "dread overwhelms the normal bonds of human affection."

The Seven Rules of Service Leadership is a guide for leaders driving service culture change. However, you can use it equally effectively during this crisis, as a guide for responding to the culture changing around you.

I. DECLARE SERVICE A TOP PRIORITY

A declaration is more than a communication. It is a clear and unwavering commitment, strongly articulated. Now is the time to declare care and service for your people and your customers as the top priority. Sustaining business during this pandemic is important, but the long-term welfare of people is most critical.

As an example, Google's CEO Sundar Pichai sent a [company-wide memo titled "Taking Care of Each Other."](#)

He stated: "It's important that we contribute to fulfill our mission and be helpful to people in these uncertain times...Google has an important role to play right now...You've heard me talk about helpfulness in the context of moments big and small, this is one of those big moments."

2. BE A GREAT ROLE MODEL

How leaders role model in times of crisis has enormous impact on the trust and behavior of the people they lead. What you do and say makes a difference. Demonstrating confidence, compassion, clarity and concern can keep a team productive and emotionally secure.

Watch the Prime Minister of Singapore role model care and calm in this message to the

country: <https://youtu.be/KaoVg6ejgRQ>

3. PROMOTE A COMMON SERVICE LANGUAGE

Having a consistent language about the service you extend during times of unexpected change or crisis helps people understand your direction, feel safe and trust your priorities.

Your [service language](#) may need to change in two ways. One is shifting from the language of your business to adopting a more compassionate language focused on the care and well-being of people.

Football manager Jurgen Klopp's message to disappointed fans read: "Today football matches really aren't important at all...we don't want games suspended, but if doing so helps one individual stay healthy, we do it no questions asked...If it's a choice between football and the good of society, it's no contest."

Your language of service may also need to adjust to what customers suddenly value most. Airlines have shifted from the language of inspirational experience — promoting pampered luxury — to a service language of education about enhanced cleaning and disinfection measures used for your protection.

Likewise, a local brew pub shifted their social media photos of happy customers drinking beer, eating ribs and playing games to a photo of a sparkling clean taproom with the caption: "we pride ourselves on keeping our brewery pristine" and offering new take out options.

4. MEASURE WHAT REALLY MATTERS

While standard business measures may continue, temporary measures to [ensure focus on](#)

declared priorities are needed while weathering the virus.

A major bank announced temporarily waiving monthly payments for customers facing financial distress due to the virus, trading short-term profit for long-term loyalty.

A sales organization adjusted internal targets considering the changing economy to keep staff motivated and focused.

And in a past crisis, one organization measured and recognized the number of new ideas generated by staff to help them emerge from the crisis successfully.

5. ENABLE AND EMPOWER YOUR TEAM

High control tactics may be necessary when responding to emergency situations. But where can you empower teams now to help you innovate and succeed? One social club's security team quickly worked to change the entry process, eliminating the need for members and staff to pass membership and towel cards back and forth by hand, which spreads germs.

And the training teams from many organizations are rapidly innovating to convert standard in-person events to online formats, testing new platforms and content design along the way.

6. REMOVE THE ROADBLOCKS TO SERVICE

Quick action may be needed to remove barriers to service now required. Systems and policies can be reviewed to find changes to meet the new concerns of clients and staff.

For example, many airlines have waived fees for travellers making last minute changes. Hotel chains are loosening cancellation policies and retaining points or membership status that otherwise may have expired.

Early on, some companies relaxed work-at-home policies, providing flexibility to stay healthy and care for families. (This has now

become mandatory for many workers.)

7. SUSTAIN FOCUS AND ENTHUSIASM (AND RESILIENCE)

Leaders must maintain the energy of teams. This may be combating fatigue as teams contend with a much higher volume of customer issues. Or it may be boosting morale for staff who suddenly have few customers, little work or are isolated at home.

One leader went from huddling with her team once per week to twice a day. She holds a 9am and a 5pm virtual meeting to update status, brainstorm solutions, recognize efforts and bolster spirits. This small change has big payback in team motivation.

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About the Author

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