

Better Business Focus

March 2022

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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Dr Lynda Shaw

Neuroplasticity is trending but how does it affect business?



It was once thought that the human brain stopped developing at the end of adolescence, but our brains continue to grow and change all the way through adulthood.

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to learn, change and adapt according to life experiences. It is how our brain reorganises itself when we learn or memorise something new, or necessary, existing connections are strengthened, or fade in strength. In addition, cortical remapping, where every part of the body is connected to an area in the brain, is systematically adjusted on a constant basis.

HOW DOES NEUROPLASTICITY AFFECT BUSINESS?

When patterns and tasks become repetitive or the norm, we can start to make assumptions and become complacent which in turn can feed our unconscious bias. Stagnation can have a detrimental effect on working relationships, creativity, team spirit, decision making, mental health and productivity.

Conversely understanding and exercising neuroplasticity can optimise your brain's function allowing you to harness your full potential at work, enable you to

add new skills, make you more emotionally intelligent and a better communicator. Engaging in new activities ultimately strengthens connections in the brain and increases your neuroplasticity.

HOW TO INCREASE YOUR NEUROPLASTICITY AT WORK:-

1. **Keep learning** – The process of learning is what keeps your brain stimulated and promotes neuroplasticity. Learning for the brain is like exercise for the body. Think of something you would like to learn and make sure that there is intention and purpose behind this idea so that you will fully commit to it and enjoy!
2. **Training** - Taking part in relevant new training courses can help exercise your brain and aid development. Even an ice-breaker before a meeting starts will help brain plasticity, such as mnemonic drills like making the team write with their opposite hand.
3. **Cross Training/ Role Reversal** – Swapping job roles for a day makes you appreciate what tasks your colleagues are faced with and decisions they make, forces you to problem solve, encourages ongoing learning, breaks down prejudices and assumptions, and helps you see the value in what each other does.
4. **Share ideas** - At team meetings encourage all members to share ideas and where appropriate give positive comments and praise. Praise raises levels of serotonin (a feel-good neurotransmitter) to the recipient and often encourages them to be productive, have a greater desire to do well and learn more, thereby increasing neuroplasticity.
5. **Create new habits** – Learn new habits or do things out of the ordinary like running backwards for 20m. Long term habits establish deep neural pathways, which are behaviours that operate below conscious awareness, so the best way to break old habits is to bring them to conscious awareness and replace by trying new things that you wish to repeat. Even the process of learning a new word every day promotes positive



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brain rewiring through the creation of an array of auditory and visual neural pathways.

6. **Reduce stress** – Take time away from work and allow your brain to wind down. Neuroplasticity needs downtime too. Create some clear work-life boundaries and stick to them, such as not checking your emails once you've clocked off. Congratulate yourself and your team on a good day, celebrate the small wins.
7. **Sleep** – Sleep has a profound impact on your neurological performance since it is essentially food for the brain. As our bodies are resting, our brains stay highly active processing emotions, memories and replenishing our minds for the next day. Having enough good quality sleep is essential for our brains to establish new neural pathways. Neuroplasticity is particularly increased during REM sleep and is associated with better learning and task performance.
8. **Exercise** – Exercise enhances brain health by stimulating the growth of new connections between cells and strengthening existing connections in cortical areas of the brain, as well as increases oxygen, blood flow and cell growth in the brain.

magnesium which are especially beneficial. Enjoy a touch of dark chocolate, and nuts and seeds for snacks.

10. **Try mindfulness exercises** – Mindfulness activities like meditation and gratitude promote neuroplasticity and the formation of new neural pathways in the brain. It is also beneficial to practice mindfulness in business, as it encourages users to approach challenges with a sense of calm and understanding.

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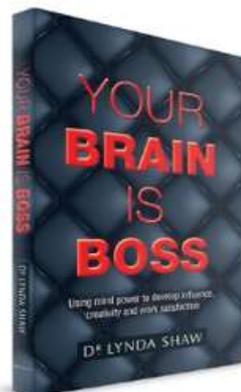
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Dr Lynda Shaw is cognitive neuroscientist and chartered psychologist, a Forbes contributor, an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, a Fellow of the Professional Speakers Association as well 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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iPhoneLife

How to tell if a wireless charger is Qi certified & why it matters

Keep your iPhone safe! Learn to tell a fake Qi charger from a real one.

What does Qi mean for wireless chargers? Well, Qi (pronounced "chee") is a certification standard for safe wireless charging maintained by the Wireless Power Consortium. Only products that have passed the WPC's rigorous testing can call themselves Qi-certified. We'll show you how to tell if a charger is Qi-certified in three easy ways.

1. Look for the **Qi logo**. Only Qi-certified chargers can display this icon.



2. Check the packaging for either the **Qi logo** or a description stating that the charger is **Qi certified**.
3. Search the product name on the Wireless Power Consortium's **Qi-certification database**.

If you're wondering, any iPhone 8 or newer will charge wirelessly with Qi-certified wireless chargers. Now you know how to make sure you're charging your device safely with a well-tested charger! While you're at it, you may be interested to learn more about **best iPhone charging practices** to keep your battery in top condition.

Web: <https://www.iphonelife.com/>



Picture Source: <https://search.creativecommons.org/photos/797e646a-944d-4b1c-88f6-214f9ca164ba>

9. **Good diet** - Even though it is only a small organ in relation to other organs, your brain consumes 25% of the energy from everything you eat. Having a healthy and varied diet is a fundamental for a healthy active brain so ensure you eat enough omega 3, vitamin D and

Bob Apollo

Coaching - the critical sales management skill?



Successful sales managers must master a range of important skills. They need to make sure that they recruit the right people and help them to realise their potential, encourage their teams to follow and contribute to the organisation's learned best practices, ensure that opportunities are well-qualified, that pipelines are well managed and that forecasts are consistently accurate. I'm sure you can think of more.

But perhaps the overriding skill - if sales managers are to get the very best out of every member of their sales organisation - is their ability to coach, and their willingness to commit the amount of time required in the coaching process. I addressed some of these concepts in an earlier article "Establishing the Foundations of a Coaching Culture" in issue 7.3 of the journal, and I now want to expand on some of the themes introduced there.

In particular, I want to focus on three areas:

- Devoting the appropriate amount of time to coaching
- Acquiring the skills necessary to be an effective coach
- Developing the mindset needed to be an effective coach

What coaching is and isn't

Perhaps it's best if I start by defining what I mean by coaching. Coaching is not about telling salespeople what to do or (even worse, from a long-term performance perspective) taking



over the salesperson's responsibilities - for example, stepping in and "closing" an opportunity instead of enabling the salesperson to win the opportunity for themselves.

These sort of interventions, whilst they might have a short-term positive impact on performance, do nothing to develop the long-term revenue-generating potential of the salesperson whose responsibilities have just been over-ridden. They are also exactly the sort of distraction that prevents sales managers from investing the time they need to in high-quality coaching.

Coaching, from my perspective, is primarily about helping the salesperson to think clearly about the situations they are likely to encounter in their role, transferring practical experience to them, and equipping, enabling and encouraging them to take decisive and effective action. It's also about helping salespeople to learn from their own lived experiences and those of their colleagues.

It's my conclusion - and maybe yours as well - that the value of coaching is particularly high in complex B2B sales environments

where the salesperson has to master a significant number of variables.

Coaching is not training. Effective sales training is an important and necessary investment for any ambitious sales organisation, but if the principles taught are not followed through in practice, the time and money spent will have been wasted. Managers have a critical role in enabling their salespeople to apply the principles they have been taught in practical, real-life situations on an ongoing basis.

Training without coaching is a wasted investment. But I'd also suggest that coaching in the absence of the reinforcing frameworks that well-designed sales training programmes offer is also likely to be ineffective.

Finding enough time to coach

Research by the **Objective Management Group** and others has demonstrated the clear positive correlation between the amount of time sales managers invest in coaching and the results they are able to achieve through and with their salespeople.

The most successful managers are - on average - investing between a

Picture Source: <https://search.creativecommons.org/photos/cb45a876-a6ca-4d36-b3ed-ba10530aab97>

quarter and a third of their time in coaching their salespeople. Unfortunately, the reported average time spent on coaching across the sales management community as a whole is significantly less than this, and in too many situations falls down into single digits. Some never coach at all.

Sometimes managers need to coach on-demand - often in response to a particular time-critical issue or opportunity. But the most effective managers also insist on regular cadences and set aside and schedule specific regular times for coaching.

You might think that allocating between a quarter and a third of your time to coaching is too much, given the conflicting demands on a sales manager's time. But if - as I believe - coaching represents your highest impact opportunity to improve your team's performance, you may want to take a considered look at all those other demands on your time.

How much do those other activities contribute to achieving your revenue goals, and how many of those tasks and meetings could be simplified or eliminated in order to free up the necessary time. As a sales manager, you'll probably want your boss's support in eliminating value-sapping activities in order to free you up to concentrate on what really matters.

Acquiring coaching skills

Experience clearly helps. But far too many companies - including those that are actually investing wisely in a programme of training for their salespeople - fail to train and equip their managers in the key disciplines of effective sales management. This is a particular problem for newly appointed sales managers.

If you're a sales manager - particularly if you're a newly appointed manager or an experienced manager that recognises that they have room for improvement in this area - you should first explore whether your organisation currently runs

courses that teach sales coaching skills.

If not, and if you cannot persuade your company to start running these courses internally, you should explore the growing number of "coaching for managers" courses being offered by enlightened sales training companies. If you can persuade your company to pay, all the better, but even if you can't, you should consider it one of most effective investments you could make in developing your skills as a sales manager.

Having the right mindset

I've explained that I believe sales coaching is primarily about helping each of your salespeople to think clearly about the situations they are likely to encounter in their role, transferring practical experience to them, and equipping, enabling and encouraging them to take decisive and effective action.

This is as much about mindset as it is about skillset. As well as believing in the power of coaching, you also need to see it as an exercise in getting your salespeople to think more effectively, to identify and weigh up their available options, and their confidence to act upon their conclusions.

And this, in return requires that you help them to evaluate situations with ruthless self-honesty, that they recognise and eliminate untested assumptions and that they take steps to fill in the inevitable gaps in their knowledge.

It means allowing them to learn not from you but also from their peers and from their sometimes-hard-won experiences. Above all, in my view, it involves inculcating a respect for critical thinking and for dealing with situations as they really are rather than as they hope they should be.

Despite the temptation to step in and "save the day", you must avoid being prescriptive. If you want them to learn, you need to lead your salespeople towards the solution rather than giving them

the solution as you see it. If they appear to be going astray, you need to nudge them back on to the right path rather than setting them on a rigid predetermined track.

Learning from them

My final observation is that coaching should not be seen as a one-way transfer of knowledge and experience. If you maintain an open mind, you are also likely to learn from the experience. You should encourage your salespeople to tap into the wisdom of their peers as well as seeking guidance from you.

And who knows - your salespeople may well end up causing you to think differently. Everybody benefits from coaching, including the coach themselves.

To find out more about the [International Journal of Sales Transformation](#), follow [this link](#).

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About the Author

Bob Apollo is a Fellow of the [Association of Professional Sales](#), a founding contributor to the [International Journal of Sales Transformation](#), an active member of the [Sales Experts Channel](#) and the [Sales Enablement Society](#), and the driving force behind [Inflexion-Point Strategy Partners](#), the leading proponents of outcome-centric selling.

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Dr. Yoram Solomon

How many people can you trust?

How many people can you really trust? Is there a limit to the number of people you can trust? In this episode, I will answer this with a definite YES. But to answer the question “how many?” I would have to say, “it’s complicated.” In this episode, I will un-complicate things. I will explain what factors affect how many people you can trust and how much you can really trust them.

This episode is somewhat philosophical but would help you answer that question yourself. The answer will be based on several laws of trust, on the fact that trust is relative and dynamic, on what you have to lose, on time and intimacy, and, believe it or not, the size of your brain. **And, yes, I will give you numbers.**

How Much, and With What?

You can’t ask the question “how many people can I trust?” without acknowledging that trust is not binary but rather *continuous* (First Law of Trust). The question is, at what level do you need or want to trust people. You can trust more people with less or fewer people with more. You cannot trust everyone with your life, but you can trust many people with a \$20 bill. You can have a high level of trust in 5 people (for example) or a low level of trust in 200 people. More on that later.

You also need to acknowledge the Second Law of Trust, that trust is contextual. You may be willing to trust more people in one context (for example, serving you food in a restaurant) and fewer people in another context (airline pilot, surgeon, etc.).

What do I Have to Lose?

Deciding to trust someone starts with realizing what you have to lose if that trust is abused. My definition of trust is *The level to which you are willing to accept the potential negative consequences of giving control over something you have to another entity, expecting them to be able and do their best to avoid those consequences.*

You must start with determining how much *objective* risk you are in and the possible negative consequences from that risk if not handled in a trustworthy way. Then, translate that objective risk into *subjective* fear of that risk. Trust mitigates the subjective fear and not the objective risk. Consider the risk of lending someone a \$20 bill. What are the possible negative consequences? That you lose \$20. Objectively, this is true for everyone. But if all you have in the bank is \$100, the consequences are more severe to you than someone who has \$100 million in the bank. You will have a higher bar of trustworthiness before you lend someone \$20.

Who can I Trust?

You trust God, yourself, other people, and other things. The total level of trust you have is determined not by the number of people you know but by the level of fear you have that must be mitigated through trust (see the previous paragraph). In this case, the more you trust God, the less you have to trust yourself or others. The less you trust others, the more you might have to trust yourself, etc. It’s a zero-sum game.

Trust and the Size of Our Brain

Robin Dunbar, a British Anthropologist and evolutionary psychologist, performed studies that correlated the volume of a neocortex of different species to their social group size and found that a human can only have 150 “casual friends” in that group. Beyond that number, your friends are no longer friends per se, but rather acquaintances and less. But that’s a topic for another discussion. If this “friend” on Facebook request came from someone you know very well, or already consider a friend or family member in the real world (one of those 150 “close” friends), assuming you want to connect with them on Facebook, then you simply accept that request.

Time & Intimacy

Trustworthiness is built upon two groups of components: *who you are* (your competence, the personality compatibility with me, and the symmetry of our circumstances) and *what you do* (during an interaction). What you do during an interaction begins with your positivity. If a person’s contribution to interaction is consistently negative, there will be no trust (and probably no further interactions). So, you must start with positive contributions to interactions. Time (the length and frequency of interactions) and intimacy (email on the lowest end and one-on-one, in-person at the highest end) accelerate building trust.

However, you are limited by the amount of time and level of intimacy you can dedicate to multiple relationships. As a result, you will accelerate trust-building only with a few people.

So, how many people can you trust?

I reviewed many articles about the ideal size of the team. Oddly enough, none of them considered trust as a determining factor. The common wisdom showed numbers between 5 and 12, and one article stated that the best number is 4.6, which is not feasible. From my personal experience, I suggest that the optimal size for a high-trust, high-performance team would be 5.

This is why elite military units operate in small teams of 4 or 5. An army division would have about 1,500 soldiers. You wouldn't know all of them, and therefore you can't trust all of them. A battalion has some 500 troops; a company has 150; a platoon has 50; a squad has 15. The smaller the military unit is, the more likely you spend more time with them, and the more you trust them.

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About the Author

Dr. Yoram Solomon is the author of *The Book of Trust* and host of *The Trust Show Podcast*, committed to help companies and individuals build trust and become trustworthy. He published 14 books, 22 patents, more than 300 articles, and was one of the creators of Wi-Fi and USB 3.0. Named one of the Top 40 Innovation Bloggers and one of the Top 20 Global Thought Leaders on Corporate Culture. Yoram is a professional member of the National Speakers Association, and was a TEDx speaker and host. He is an adjunct professor at Southern Methodist University. His trust-building model is based on years of original research and service at the IDF 35th Airborne Brigade.

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Sunil Bali

Steve Jobs on fear.....

Although we're only born with two fears – the fear of falling and the fear of loud noises – research shows that the number of things we fear increase as we get older.

Whether its touching a spider, making a speech or asking for a date, societal conditioning makes us fear rejection and failure.

Every time he was faced with a big choice, Steve Jobs asked himself, "What would I do if this was the last day of my life?"

He met his wife, Laurene like that.

Jobs was giving a university address and Laurene was sitting in the audience. He fell for her and wanted to take Laurene out for dinner that very night, but was afraid that she would say no and kidded himself that he had to attend a business meeting. On his way back to his car, Jobs asked himself "What would I do if this was the last day of my life?" He ran back to the auditorium, found Laurene and took her out to dinner.

They remained together until he died.

At his funeral, Jobs ensured that everyone in attendance received a copy of Paramahansa Yogananda's *The Autobiography of a Yogi*.

One of the key pillars of this book is the concept of detached engagement which in essence means,
 - forget about what might happen,
 - focus solely on the task at hand, and
 - emerge the other side of your fear having done what you wanted.

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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.

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Jane Gunn

Business leaders' ability to deal with conflict is declining with unprecedented pressures



Our ability to healthily deal with tensions and disagreements between colleagues, competitors, adversaries and antagonists, whether that be at a business, social or even global political level, is declining because of the unprecedented pressures we are under, according to new President of The Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb) and internationally renowned mediator and conflict specialist, Jane Gunn.

“Each day critical decisions are being made that determine how organisations are going to survive and thrive in the months ahead and the stakes couldn't be higher right now with the pandemic, racial inequality, global tension escalation, climate change, rising costs, financial instability and more, causing us to face an external and internal sense of conflict, constant fear, pressure and uncertainty. Add to that in the workplace there is an increase in employee-employer disputes, tension between age groups, difficulties of adapting to hybrid working and the Great Resignation to name a few key influencers.

“A fear-based approach means our ability to mediate or deal with tension is reduced. We are often guided by patterns of behaviour from past experiences and situations which can cloud our thought process and our ability to

think from someone else's viewpoint or to try and understand why they feel that way. Our need to feel safe means we are simply sticking with what we know and looking for ways to confirm our own reality rather than the truth.

“So the question is what can we as individuals do to understand and transform these potential conflicts and is there a deeper meaning and message to be learnt? Certainly conflict is not always a negative thing. There are two obvious positives, that more people are choosing to speak up and leaders are being given an opportunity to find solutions and support their staff in an informal way if the tension is caught early.

“The answer lies though in choosing a revolutionary path over a revolutionary approach by recovering our lost skills and developing principles of mediation to tackle challenging situations. Being fully and independently informed, weighing up all the evidence without coercion, applying our own values and criteria whilst considering all potential consequences and then making a decision based on all of the above is the best way to tackle challenging situations.”

We can see this in top conflict resolvers who do the following:-

- 1) Acknowledge everyone's perspectives. We interpret everything we see, hear or experience in business according to our pre-existing view of the world and our instinctive reaction to difference and conflict is to defend our ideas and beliefs. Good conflict resolvers want to learn about, understand and acknowledge everyone's perspectives in order to get to the bottom of the problem.
- 2) Don't jump the gun. Our instinctive reaction to conflict is to see it as a threat and to either fight, flee, freeze or appease it. Good conflict resolvers take some time to consciously decide what the best response would be.
- 3) Aren't concerned with 'winning'. By putting ourselves in other's shoes this allows us to see that their needs and interests, fears and concerns are every bit as important as our own and that finding ways to acknowledge and meet these is far more important than 'winning'.
- 4) Focus on the future and not the past. The focus of most conflicts and disputes is the past. People often spend too much time going back over scenarios trying to allocate blame or fault. However, good conflict resolvers focus on a time in the future when the

conflict or dispute no longer exists and plan the steps necessary to achieve the best outcome.

- 5) Respectful of others' views. They understand that fear is at the heart of most business conflicts and know to give respect, care and attention to others irrespective of the disagreement at hand.
- 6) Consider the needs of others. Conflict resolution should be empowering rather than overpowering. A good conflict resolver empowers others by making them feel acknowledged and so able to recognise the needs, fears and concerns of others as well as themselves.
- 7) Deep listeners. They show understanding by listening deeply without interruption. They know to reflect back to avoid misunderstanding the issues and give their interpretation of the conflict to communicate effectively and create a sense of being truly heard.

Celebrate the differences.

Conflict highlights the differences between us. Good conflict resolvers look beyond any differences and rather than trying to persuade people to change their minds, attitudes or behaviour, they are ready to change themselves and are prepared to collaborate to find value.

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About the Author:

Mediator, speaker and author, Jane Gunn is a former corporate lawyer. She specializes in transforming business relationships and has helped numerous companies to move from deadlock situations to opening new streams of revenue and a vibrant corporate culture.

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This article was sent to us by Kai Communications

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Braden Kelley

Teaching old fish new tricks

Check out the video:



Gradually, we are finding out that humans aren't as special as we like to believe.

We've learned that trees can communicate via root systems, research is progressing into plant sentience and yes apparently, goldfish can be taught to drive.

Now that you've seen this video, you can now see that the assumption that fish can't navigate vehicles through physical space – is incorrect.

What other assumptions do we make about goldfish and other living creatures that might be incorrect.

How might we set up experiments to test these assumptions?

What are some of your favorite short videos to put people in the right mindset to challenge orthodoxies and question assumptions?

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About the Author

Braden Kelley is an experienced **innovation speaker**, trainer, and digital transformation specialist. He is the author of **Charting Change** and of **Stoking Your Innovation Bonfire**, the creator of the **Change Planning Toolkit™** and creator of **MisterInnovation.com**. He writes and speaks frequently on the topics of continuous innovation, digital transformation, and organizational change.

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We used to assume that the world was flat.

We used to assume that the sun orbited around the earth.

We used to assume that it was impossible to go faster than the speed of sound.

These assumptions were all challenged and proved to be wrong, fundamentally extending the boundaries of potential innovation and exploration in the decades that followed.

Challenging orthodoxies or questioning your assumptions is one of the key techniques to use with your innovation teams to uncover new insights to form the seeds of future innovation.

This isn't always easy to do, and in workshops it can be a challenge to put people in the right frame of mind for questioning assumptions and challenging orthodoxies.

I find that having a stable of short videos can help in setting the stage for the very important innovation work.

Now, let's have a look at one of my new favorite assumption-challenging videos...

Who says you can't teach old fish new tricks?

Yes, I said fish, not dog – which challenges an orthodoxy in and of itself.

I was intrigued to hear recently that scientists in Israel have managed to teach goldfish how to drive a car.

Don't believe me?



Cultural quotient or cultural intelligence (CQ) is increasingly being seen as of far more value than IQ (intelligence quotient), and of equal importance in business to its counterpart emotional intelligence (EQ), because of its proven exponential positive impact on improved teamwork, performance, cooperation and communication.

CQ assesses far beyond simple cultural sensitivity and awareness and is a globally recognised measure of how good we are at understanding cultural differences including, but not limited to, nationality, ethnicity, culture, location, gender and age. CQ helps us understand the decisions people and organisations make and how they are influenced by their beliefs, attitudes, and values.

Thom Dennis, CEO of culture integration and change specialists, Serenity in Leadership, and a CQ Certified Facilitator, believes that CQ is more important than IQ, and building a team rich in CQ is the future for all successful organisations. "Culturally intelligent organisations establish better trust, tolerance and understanding, both internally and externally. They are more capable of working well across cultures because they understand the impact of cultural background in terms of both an individual's and group's behaviour which is essential for good business. These businesses will enjoy the benefits of both better

Thom Dennis

Is CQ® the new IQ?

productivity, diversity, negotiation skills, recruitment and performance, as well as reduced talent loss, bias and conflict.

"At an individual level if you have strong cultural intelligence, you are likely to engage and blend successfully in any environment or social setting, communicate more effectively, quickly develop rapport and connect with others, lead diverse teams effectively, appreciate diverse points of view and adapt easily. Cultural nuances are better understood because these individuals have the skills, knowledge, agility and experience to deal with, and respect any differences that to someone else might be perceived or acted upon as if it is a barrier.

"CQ is increasingly important as businesses harness the benefits of global work through technological and communication advances. Whilst some will argue the increase in online meetings during the pandemic has been draining, it has also opened the door to many as travelling for face-to-face business is often no longer seen as essential. Global online meetings have instead become easier to arrange which further elevates the importance of inclusive cultures."

Ang and Van Dyne developed the four main capabilities that describe CQ:-

1. CQ Drive or Motivation measures your interest and confidence in multicultural interactions.
2. CQ Knowledge or Cognition looks at your understanding of the similarities and differences

between cultures, rather than for example personality differences.

3. CQ Strategy or Metacognition is how you plan and deal with multicultural interactions to build better relationships.
4. CQ Action or Behaviour is your agility to reflect and adapt when working in a multicultural environment.

CQ can be worked on and developed on both an individual and organisational level and can be measured based on 10 key and mappable cultural values including Low vs. High Uncertainty Avoidance, Cooperative vs. Competitive, Linear vs. Non-Linear and Being vs. Doing.

Thom Dennis continues: "When an organisation decides to improve their CQ, issues can then be addressed through intentional, innovative recruitment and learning strategies, and engaging, research-based profiling, workshops, courses, coaching and digital tools. Having a culturally intelligent workforce is not only hugely beneficial but fundamental to business in this day and age."

So how can we begin to develop our own cultural intelligence? Here are some of Thom Dennis's tips.

1. **Demonstrate self-awareness and awareness for others.** Reflect on how your own cultural background and experiences have shaped your perspective, as well as how other people's behaviours are influenced by their culture and experiences. Look for similarities and differences in these. Be cognisant that not everyone thinks in the same way. One size does not fit all.

2. **Establish common ground.**

Discover a common ground that helps you to connect with others. This leads to a greater understanding of who they are and is a great way to form mutual bonds as it fosters trust and respect and can lift communication barriers.

3. **Enter situations without preconceptions.** Keep an objective perspective in multi-cultural situations. Refrain from being judgemental.

4. **Show curiosity and acceptance for other cultures.** Do this by asking questions and trying to understand situations from another's perspective to help with your learning. Share a little about yourself too.

5. **Be aware of your own bias.** Develop a sense of awareness about your own biases and practise strategies for overcoming these. Bias prevents us being informed.

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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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Urko Wood

A beautiful illustration about what customers want

Watch this [beautiful video](#) to see how different the product is from the functional, emotional and social jobs this man wants to get done. If you are selling your product or service without understanding the jobs people are trying to get done, then you are very vulnerable to competition.

- Do you want to stop chasing hunches and start acting on facts?
- Would you like to stop saying, "I think there's an opportunity here" and start saying "I know there's an opportunity here."
- Are you tired of clogging your new product pipeline with a lot of mediocre ideas and endlessly iterating?
- Ready to leapfrog the competition?

Get focused on what matters to your target customers most. Schedule a free discovery call with me [here](#) to see how we can help you turn innovation and growth into a repeatable business process.

Reveal needs. Create value. Drive growth.

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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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Most business leaders are looking for ways to create unique value for their target customers to differentiate and grow. But how do you create unique value in a repeatable manner? Is it even possible?

Yes, it is possible, but you must understand what a customer "need" really is and how to discover your target customers' important unsatisfied needs. These are your opportunities for innovation and growth and they exist in every market.

If you are not proactively finding and addressing your target customers' important unsatisfied needs, then you are inevitably wasting time and resources addressing their unimportant and/or already well-satisfied needs.

Customer "needs" are the functional, emotional, and social jobs they are trying to get done with your product and/or service, and the criteria they use to measure success. Customer needs are totally separate and distinct from the product or service solutions people hire or buy to get their jobs done. Do you know what functional, emotional, and social jobs your target customers are trying to get done and how they measure success? There is nothing more important for the continuing success of your organization than knowing this.



Professor Colin Coulson-Thomas

Turning rhetoric into reality in a VUCA world recommendations



A VUCA world is said to be characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. If we live in a VUCA world, it is one that we have collectively created. There is growing consensus, clarity and certainty regarding the environmental consequences of human activity. The negative impacts are unambiguous. The evidence is explicit and all around us.

Unsustainable growth, development, lifestyles and business activities are damaging the environment, reducing biodiversity, depleting natural capital and contributing to global warming and climate change. Boards need to urgently identify, recognise, assess and address the negative externalities of corporate activities and operations.

Responsible boards avoid proposals that are unsustainable or would consume natural resources likely to be required by future generations to cope with the higher adaptation costs, losses and damages they are likely to face from climate change. Developments that might trigger tipping points and result in escalating and unstoppable harm should be avoided.

Boards should pay particular attention to activities within their supply and value chains. For many companies, this may be where the bulk of negative externalities might arise. Boards should also

commission financial reports and accounts, and request investment proposals, that take the negative impacts of corporate activities and operations into account.

An increasingly wide range of people, organisations and communities around the world are being impacted by multiple existential threats. They have a common interest in the development and adoption of affordable, sustainable and more inclusive solutions to shared challenges and unlocking and benefitting from related opportunities.

Boards should be open to cooperation and collaboration with likeminded, complementary and compatible interests. They should identify and pursue shared goals, whether these involve mitigation and adaptation measures, or travelling together on transition and transformation journeys to more inclusive and sustainable business, operating and organisational models.

Stakeholders increasingly voice ESG concerns, embrace ESG considerations and are influenced by ESG criteria. ESG credentials can attract talent and encourage longer-term investment and stakeholder support. All items on the boardroom and investment agenda and all corporate and investor activities and their impacts should be viewed through an ESG lens.

Board and investment stewardship and oversight should be responsible and reflect ESG considerations and policy. ESG criteria should apply to all corporate and investment proposals. They should underpin corporate and investment purpose, vision, values, goals and objectives, and the strategies, policies and behaviours to achieve them.

Boards, investors and other interested parties should be aware of the consequences of corporate activities, alert to developments in the business environment affecting them, and sensitive to changing stakeholder views about them. Directors should proactively take steps to ensure corporate activities have more beneficial and less damaging impacts.

Closer engagement with stakeholders may enable opportunities to be identified for less environmentally detrimental and resource intensive ways of delivering value. Greater awareness of their ESG concerns and changing aspirations and priorities might inspire the creation of healthier and more inclusive, sustainable and fulfilling lifestyle options.

As well as focusing on the reduction of harmful activities and ending unsustainable operations, boards and investors should proactively seek positive opportunities and collective initiatives to create, enable

and support operations, activities and ways of working and learning and urban and rural living that are desirable as well as sustainable.

While pursuing ambitious environmental and social goals and objectives, boards should be open, receptive and flexible in relation to new opportunities, emerging possibilities and changing stakeholder aspirations, concerns and priorities. They should inspire, enable and support responsible innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship.

Boards, investors and other stakeholders should work together to ensure their purposes and priorities, their roles and reporting, and regulatory and governance frameworks, encourage and support transition to a more responsible and inclusive form of stakeholder and collaborative capitalism.

Creating more responsible, inclusive and sustainable corporate futures and lifestyles may require significant, if not radical, changes of priorities. It might also need a switch of focus from current activities to outcomes that concerned stakeholders increasingly require and seek.

ESG strategies are about opportunity and responsible innovation, enterprise and capitalism. Boards should encourage the offering of new options and choices for stakeholders and wider communities to live and operate more sustainably and in harmony with the natural world.

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About the Author

Prof Colin Coulson-Thomas holds a portfolio of leadership roles and is IOD India's Director-General, UK and Europe and President of the Institute of Management Services. He has advised directors and boards in over 40 countries.

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Mike Shipulski

If you can be one thing, be effective

If you're asked to improve your team, ask them how they can be more effective and do that.

Regardless of the question, the answer is effectiveness.

This article originally appeared on: [If you can be one thing, be effective.](#)

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About the Author:

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

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If you're asked to be faster, choose to be more effective. There's nothing slower than being fast at something that doesn't matter.

If you're given a goal to be more productive, instead, improve effectiveness. There's nothing less productive than making the wrong thing.

If you're measured on efficiency, focus on effectiveness. Customers don't care about your efficiency when you ship them the wrong product.

If you're asked to improve quality, that's good because quality is an important element of effectiveness.

If you're asked to demonstrate more activity, focus on progress, which is activity done in an effective way.



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Amy Morin

7 ways mental strength will make you succeed

Everyone possesses mental strength to some degree. But no matter how much mental strength you have, there's always room for improvement.

The stronger you become, the more likely you are to reach your goals, live according to your values, experience the most joy, and contribute to society in a meaningful way.

Here are seven ways that developing more mental strength will help you live your best life:

1. Mental strength is key to managing your emotions.

Life is full of emotional highs and lows. And your ability to navigate this emotional rollercoaster in a healthy way is key to living your best life.

Healthy emotion regulation skills can help you deal with life's inevitable ups and downs like a champion. Rather than avoid pain, you'll be willing to work through tough issues that cause you to feel anxious, sad, or embarrassed. Bigger mental muscle will ensure you know how to calm yourself down, cheer yourself up, or face your fears.

2. Mental strength pushes you to persevere.

Motivation comes and goes. But bigger mental muscle will help you keep moving long after your desire to press on has disappeared.

It allows you to dig deep when you're tired or when you lack ambition. It helps you talk back to your brain when your brain tries to convince you to quit. Growing stronger ensures you'll persist even when you don't feel like it.

3. Mental strength silences self-doubt.

Whether you aim to double your business revenue, or you want to complete a triathlon, self-doubt will creep in at one time or another.

But when you grow mentally stronger, you'll recognize that you can't believe everything you think. Your brain lies sometimes. And while mental strength doesn't eliminate all self-doubt, it can help you ignore unproductive self-talk.

4. Mental strength gives you courage.

It takes courage to step outside of your comfort zone and face your fears head-on. After all, there's no guarantee that the risks you'll take will turn out the way you want.

Fortunately, you can build mental muscles so big that you'll have the confidence to know you can handle failure. Trusting you can handle whatever life throws your way is key to challenging yourself to do hard things.

5. Mental strength helps you ignore unhelpful advice.

Valuing other people's opinions too much will have a detrimental effect on your life. When you care what others think, you'll be tempted to please people, or you might waste energy trying to prove someone wrong.

Building bigger mental muscle will help you tune out unhelpful advice and unproductive criticism. Mental strength helps you make the best decisions based on your own values regardless of anyone else's opinion.

6. Mental strength helps you learn from mistakes.

Big egos make excuses for mistakes. Big mental muscles, on the other hand, only look for explanations. And when you're willing to look for explanations about why you messed up, you can learn from your mistakes.

Humbly accepting responsibility for your actions can turn a misstep into an opportunity for growth. And this growth can be key to helping you succeed.

7. Mental strength helps you bounce back from failure.

Failure stirs up a lot of uncomfortable emotions, like disappointment and embarrassment. And this discomfort can cause a lot of people to give up on their goals after they fail.

Building more mental muscle will help you bounce back from failure better than before. This is how many successful people rise to the top — they know failure is part of the journey to success.

Build More Mental Strength

Mental muscles require exercise to grow stronger — just like physical muscles. Do a few mental push-ups every day by challenging yourself to do hard things or by facing your fears one small step at a time. Eventually, you'll build the mental strength you need to reach your greatest potential.

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About the Author

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

Her expertise in mental strength has attracted international attention. Her bestselling book, **13 Things Mentally Strong People Don't Do**, is being translated into more than 20 languages.

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David Finkel

Don't hire an independent contractor without asking these 4 questions

As a small to medium business owner, you have no doubt struggled to find quality talent for your company at one point or another. Today's competitive market makes it even more challenging and there aren't enough job candidates to fill all the open positions. Which is why, for many, hiring an independent contractor might be an idea worth exploring.

Hiring independent contractors will open up the talent pool to a more experienced, business minded group of candidates and will allow you to control costs and overhead as you scale. But if you are new to the concept, there are a few things that you should know before hiring in this manner.

So, today I wanted to share with you four things to think about when hiring your first independent contractor.

1. Should You Pay for Results or By the Hour?

For those used to a "traditional" workforce you are likely familiar with the "by the hour" model of compensation. But for many jobs and projects, paying for results not only help you take a fixed expense and make it variable, but if your independent contractors work remotely, it builds in a simple control to make sure they are accountable. You can pay them a set amount to complete a specific project; or pay them per sale, per client issue closed, or per event they manage.

If you can't pay for results, still consider paying a flat fee versus hourly. This eliminates the "overtime" issue and allows you

to know *exactly* what your team costs will be month by month.

2. Are you Paying Them Enough To Cover Their Costs?

Hiring a W-2 employee, often comes with certain "perks" like benefits and office supplies and equipment. Since your independent contractor doesn't have access to these things, you want to make sure to pay them enough so that they can purchase their own benefits, technology and supplies. They will also be responsible for their own basic overhead, like phone and internet.

In the event that they need "tools" to start up working for you (e.g. a laptop) you might consider giving them a startup bonus, that way they have the money to buy their own equipment.

3. Are They Incorporated?

Not only will this save them several thousand dollars on their taxes if they structure as an S-Corp or LLC taxed as an S-Corp (they can pay themselves a reasonable salary and take the rest of what you pay them as a dividend which is not subject to FICA), but it will also greatly reduce your risk of them ever being reclassified as "employees" by the IRS.

4. Did You Get A Contract?

Unlike a W-2 employee, there are certain things that need to happen before onboarding a new independent contractor, mainly getting the relationship in writing. Your contract needs to lay out exactly what they are responsible for, the standards to which that work will be done, and the exact nature of the relationship. You also want to lay out who controls things like phone numbers, fax

numbers and email addresses so that you have access at all times.

In today's world this is easy for your I.T. department to set up. The phones and fax numbers can be done through a web-based system or service, and the email accounts will be through your company email server. I also suggest that you make it clear to them that the company will also monitor and back up all company email, and that they should use the company email only for company purposes.

With these four tips you can make sure that your bases are covered when bringing on a new independent contractor for your business.

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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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Janet Sernack

Disrupt yourself, your team and your organization

Moving into a new year is always a time for retreating and reflecting to accelerate growth and harvest new ideas from our feelings, thoughts, and learnings gleaned from the last two years of disruption, extreme uncertainty, and instability.

Whether you are actively seeking to disrupt yourself, your team, and your organization to effect sustainable success this year, or not, we all have the opportunity to adapt, innovate and grow from the range of challenging events that impacted us in the past 24 months. This is why it might be useful to see these disruptive events as positive, powerful, and impactful forces for creating new cracks in your own, or your team or organizational soil – to sow some imaginative, creative, and inventive seeds for effecting positive change in an unstable world.

To see them germinate the desired changes you want for yourself, your team, and organization and deliver them, to survive and thrive in 2022.

We are all being challenged by disruption

Our status quo and concepts of business-as-usual have all been significantly disrupted, resulting in a range and series of deep neurological shocks, that have shaken many of us, our teams, and our organizations, to our very cores. Some of us adapted to a sense of urgency and exploited the opportunity to reinvent, iterate, or pivot our teams and organizations, towards co-creating individual and intentional “new normals” and just “got on” with it. Some of us have continually

denied, defended, and avoided making changes, where many of us have sunk deeply into our fears and anxieties, falsely believing that our lives, and our work, would eventually go back to “normal”.

This is because a significant number of our habitual, largely unconscious mental models and emotional states, were disrupted, largely by events beyond our individual and collective control. Causing many of us to experience “**cognitive dissonance**” (a situation involving conflicting attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors that produce feelings of mental discomfort leading to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors to reduce the discomfort and restore balance) from the chaos, discomfort, confusion, and conflict.

Which saw many of us, disconnect cognitively and emotionally, from the current disruptive reality, where some of us secretly hoped that “it will all go away” manifesting and festering fundamentally and unconsciously, as inherent neurological immobility, (freeze, fight, flight) resulting in many areas as resistance to change.

Why disrupt yourself, your team, and organization?

Yet disruptive change is inevitable, the speed and pace of exponential change cannot be stopped, the range of complex and wicked global and local problems that need to be solved collectively, aren’t going away.

Job security and full-time employment, as hybrid and virtual work, and technology accelerate, are becoming “things of the past” as the workplace continues to

destabilize through digitization, AI, and automation.

Whilst the war for talent also accelerates as the great resignation sets in and people make powerful, empowered life balance decisions and are on the move globally.

Taking the first steps to disrupt yourself, your team, and organization

In this time of **extreme uncertainty**, we have a unique moment in time, to disrupt ourselves, teams, and organizations by:

1. Hitting our individual, collective mental, and emotional pause buttons, to retreat from our business-as-usual activities, and take time out to reflect upon paying attention and qualifying:
 - How specifically have I/we been disrupted?
 - How have our people, teams, and customers been disrupted?
 - What are some of the major collective impacts on our organization’s current status and how might these impact our future growth potential and overall sustainability?
 - How connected are we to an exponential world, how can we ensure that our feelings, thoughts, and actions, connect with what is really happening to us, our teams, and our customers?
 - What causes disconnection and how might we manage it to be more mentally tough and emotionally agile in an extremely uncertain future?
 - What really matters to us, our teams, organizations, and customers – what do our

- people, teams, and customers really want from us?
- What are some of the key elements of our organizational strategy to enact our purpose and deliver our mission?
2. Generating safe, evocative, provocative, and creative conversations, that evoke deep listening and deep questioning, about how to individually and collectively reconnect, revitalize, rejuvenate and reenergize people, teams and organizations to survive and thrive through asking:
- How can we engage and harness our people and teams' energies in ways that mobilize their **collective intelligence** to evoke new mindset shifts and new ways of thinking and acting?
 - What are some of the key mindsets and traits we need to disrupt, shift, and cultivate to be successful to adapt and grow through disruption?
 - What skills do our leaders and teams need to learn to think and act differently to shift the organizations culture to deliver our strategy?
 - How might we shift our teams and organizations to be agile, and **redesign our organizations for both stability and speed**?
 - What does it mean to us, our teams, and organizations to be creative, inventive, and innovative – How might we shift our teams and organizations to be more creative, inventive, and innovative?
 - What are the new behavioral norms that will support and enable us to execute agile and innovative changes?
 - How might becoming agile and innovative help our people, teams co-create a healthy, high-performing, and sustainable organizational culture?
 - How might becoming **agile and innovative** add value to the quality of people's lives and help our customers flourish?
3. Becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable by developing our peoples, teams, and our organizational **"discomfort resilience"** and **dance of the**

edge of your comfort zones through:

- Creating safe environments where people and teams are allowed to experiment, have permission, and are trusted to practice, make mistakes as they move through difficult emotions, and take little bets in low stake situations.
- Intentionally breaking organizational routines and habits, to create space in people's brains for new neural pathways to be developed.
- Enabling people and teams to become mindful of their triggers, to interrupt their automatic reactions.
- Equipping people and teams to thoughtfully and intentionally respond to situations, that make them uncomfortable and risk-averse, by knowing how to think differently.
- Bringing more play into the way people work, encourages people to be imaginative, inquisitive, curious, and improvisational, to seek different ways of thinking and acting, that really make a difference in how work gets done.
- Support people and teams to learn by doing, and failing fast, without the fear of blame, shame, and retribution, despite it being risky to do that.

Why not disrupt yourself, your team, and organization?

The future is going to be full of disruptive events and circumstances that will impact is our families, communities, team, and organizations, and the conditions of extreme uncertainty and disruption are not going to go away. In fact, they are fundamental to what might be described as our collective "new normal" and it's up to you to disrupt yourself, your team, and organization, to **lead, adapt and grow**, to survive and thrive through it.

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 May 2022. 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.**

Contact us now at <mailto:janet@imagination.com.au> to find out how we can partner with you to learn, adapt, and grow your business, team and organization through disruption.

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About the Author:

Janet Sernack is the Founder & CEO of ImagineNation™ a niche Melbourne based innovation consulting company. That teaches trains and coaches people and teams to step over their business as usual thresholds and open them up to a new world of conscious, creative and commercial possibilities.

Janet has 30 years of experience consulting and leading culture development, change management, leadership and innovation education interventions to some of Australasia's and Israel's top 100 companies.

Prior to launching her consulting, training and coaching career she was Marketing Development Manager for Grace Bros' department stores, 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 Chanel, Orotan and Seafolly.

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Greg Satell

How to build an ecosystem strategy



By 1980, IBM had hit an inflection point. It had already missed out on the **minicomputer revolution**. Now, with new, even smaller “microcomputers” evolving into a growing market, it was about to miss out again. So it set up a “skunk works” in Boca Raton, FL and, in less than a year, **launched the IBM PC**.

Today, at the **end of the digital revolution**, IBM is at a similar juncture. Yet its approach is the polar opposite than it took four decades ago. Rather than operating in secret, it is **building a collaborative network** to develop quantum computing. The reason: the technology is simply too complex for anyone to go it alone.

It's not just IBM either. A **recent report** by Accenture Strategy found that ecosystems are increasingly seen as a “cornerstone” of future growth. In fact, almost half of the executives it surveyed are actively seeking to participate in ecosystems to create new business models. Today, if you want to compete effectively, you need an ecosystem strategy.

Porter's Competitive Advantage

The dominant view of strategy in the 20th century was based on Michael Porter's ideas about **competitive advantage**. In essence, he argued that the key to long-term success was to dominate **the**

value chain by maximizing bargaining power among suppliers, customers, new market entrants and substitute goods.

Porter's ideas dominated thinking in corporate strategy for decades, yet they had a fatal flaw that wasn't always obvious. Thinking in terms of value chains is viable when technology is relatively static, but when the marketplace is rapidly evolving it can get you locked out of important ecosystems and greatly diminish your ability to compete.

IBM's history has shown a steady evolution from value chains to ecosystems. When it developed its **System 360 mainframe architecture** in the late 50s, the value chain was almost completely self-contained and vertically integrated. The PC was more of a hybrid strategy, in which it partnered with companies like Microsoft and Intel, but mostly kept them at arm's length.

Today, rather than looking to dominate value chains, the company seeks to **widen and deepen connections** with research partners, customers and startups. Importantly, it does this not out of any newfound altruism—it would probably prefer to dominate the value chain if it could—but because of hard business realities.

The truth is that markets today are much faster, more interconnected and more complex than they were when Porter formulated his ideas about competitive advantage. If you are always looking to maximize your bargaining power, you are likely to cut yourself off from important information and capabilities that you will need to effectively compete.

Understanding Ecosystem Dynamics

Value chains are linear, so the biggest and most powerful link in the chain tends to dominate. A major industry player like McDonald's or Walmart has significant bargaining power that impacts both customers and suppliers and helps to create barriers to entry for new market entrants and substitute goods.

Ecosystems are **nonlinear and complex**. So, power emanates from the center instead of at the top of a value chain. You move to the center by connecting out. So, while an industry giant may possess significant bargaining power, exercising that bargaining power can be problematic, because it can weaken links to other nodes in the ecosystem.

Consider the case of Ford, which in the 1920s built the almost completely vertically integrated **River Rouge plant** to dominate the value chain. Because the company had the ability to

produce just about every facet of its product itself (the plant even had its own steel mill), it had tremendous bargaining power.

However, as the industry matured, other companies began to specialize in particular components. Ford, unable to compete in so many directions, became integrated into the larger ecosystem. In fact, during the financial crisis in 2008, the company's CEO, Alan Mulally, said [this](#) in testimony to Congress:

In particular, the collapse of one or both of our domestic competitors would threaten Ford because we have 80 percent overlap in supplier networks and nearly 25 percent of Ford's top dealers also own GM and Chrysler franchises

In a value chain driven world, Ford would have welcomed the collapse of its competitors. In an ecosystem driven world, however, their collapse would do major damage to nodes that the company itself depended on. Clearly, the principles of competitive advantage have changed.

Convening Spaces

Ecosystems are essentially networks of networks, so a crucial component of any ecosystem strategy is to participate in convening spaces. Traditionally, these have been industry-based associations, such as the [National Retail Federation](#). Yet as the importance of ecosystems has increased, so have the number and types of convening spaces.

Some of these convening spaces focus on a particular technology, such as the [Internet of Things Consortium](#) or the [Partnership on AI](#). Others focus more widely around a particular domain, like the [Joint Center for Energy Storage Research](#) or the [Composite Materials Institute](#). These types of platforms should be considered essential for any ecosystem strategy.

For quantum computing, IBM has taken the more ambitious step of creating its own [Q Network](#) to collaborate with a wide array of

partners. Other companies create accelerators and VC funds to help them to connect with emerging startups. Google's [academic program](#) helps it connect to the world's best minds and gives it a leg up on recruiting up and coming talent.

The truth is that there is really no limit to the ways in which you can connect. What's important is not any particular platform or direction but understanding the importance of connection. In an ecosystem driven world, widening and deepening links is how you move to the center of networks and increase your power.

Preparing For A Future You Cannot See

Historically, the lines between industries were fairly clear-cut. Ford competed with GM and Chrysler. Later, foreign competition became more important, but the basic logic of the industry remained fairly stable: you produced cars and sold them to the public through a network of dealers.

Today, however, industry lines have blurred considerably. A company like Amazon competes with Walmart in retail, Microsoft, IBM and Google in cloud computing, and Netflix and Warner Media in entertainment. The company itself is much more than simply a bundle of operations competing in different value chains, but a platform for accessing a variety of ecosystems of talent, technology and information.

In much the same way, automobile manufacturers are making investments to [transform themselves into mobility companies](#). To do so, they are building ecosystems made up of technology giants, startups and others. They are not seeking to "maximize bargaining power," but rather to prepare for a future that hasn't taken shape yet.

The truth is that value chain based strategies are slow and rigid and the world has become fast and agile. You can't simply seek to build a better mousetrap, you need to relentlessly connect to

build a better ecosystem. Today, that's becoming less a matter of competitive strategy and more a basic requirement of survival.

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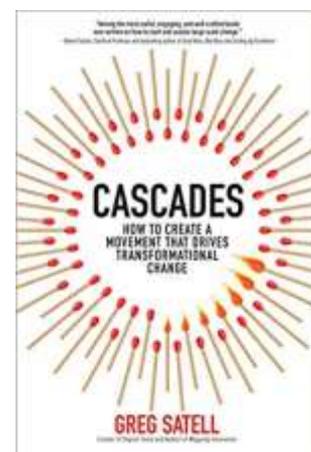
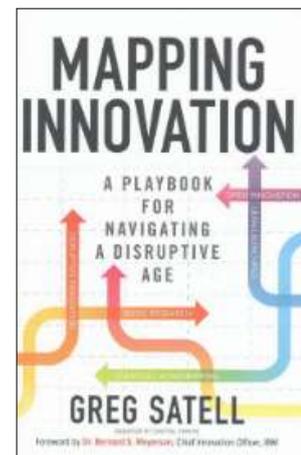
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Paul Sloane

Where do innovative ideas come from?



Cities around the world suffer from a common problem – a shortage of affordable, decent quality housing. Cutworks Studio, a design company based in Paris and Amsterdam has developed an approach called **PolyBlocs** – modularly constructed residential sites consisting of individual block rooms which can be stacked in different ways to create an array of sizes and shapes. The basic component is called a PolyRoom which is shaped like a shipping container. They provide multi-functional spaces with flexible configurations that include a range of window and door placement options. Other features include a bed which can be folded upwards, tables with built-in cupboards and compact bathrooms. The PolyRooms are designed to be stacked like Lego bricks.

This is an innovative but derivative idea. Where might it have come from? Let's imagine we were working in the design studio trying to brainstorm ways to create affordable urban housing. We could have started in a number of places to come up with this idea:

Analyse the problem. It takes a lot of time and so costs a lot of money to have workers on site constructing a new building in a city centre. How can we minimise the build time? Could

we build the building elsewhere and then quickly assemble it on site? How can we **minimise** the assembly time?

Go back in time. Let's think about **prefab buildings** – which have been around for a long time. In 1160 the Normans built a prefab castle! How can we update these old ideas to make them sustainable and suitable for modern needs?

Adapt a different kind of housing solution – mobile homes. Could we take the wheels off a mobile home and turn it into a stackable unit?

Start with a different industry. How does shipping make the best and most economical use of tight spaces? They use containers. Could we take the idea of a container and apply it to housing?

Let's play a game. What game involves fitting things together? Let's use Lego as a metaphor for building and see where that leads.

Rearrange the components or the process. We normally build a house sequentially starting with foundations and walls, then doors and windows and services, then finally fittings like beds and baths. Could we rearrange this sequence and put them together all at the same time?

There are many ways we could have approached this problem. A

well-facilitated brainstorm using a technique such as **SCAMPER** or **Similes** would probably have thrown up this idea along with many others. We need lots of innovative ideas to solve today's problems. The more different starting points we use, the more likely we are to generate winning ideas.

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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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Barry Urquhart

The next step – from why to why not



Belatedly, an increasing number of external professional business consultants, accountants included are appreciating the value for clients is not asking WHAT or HOW, but rather WHY?

There is a noticeable awakening among business owners that many answers to the question Why? are inadequate, lacking depth, understanding and strategic competitive value and advantage. The sources to those answers reside with client principals and traditional constituencies.

Training, experience and expertise in accountancy, human resources, organisation design, law are specific process-driven skill sets and are therefore insufficient for purpose.

Innovation, creativity, originality and disruption tend to be beyond the scope of many external spheres of influence.

Business workshop facilitators and moderators likewise are perceived to lack the capacity and drive to be catalysts for identifying, developing and articulating “stretch-goals” and quantum-change initiatives.

ASSERTIVE FORCE

Shaking up and dispelling states of comfort will typically not be achieved by external sources asking “easy” questions. The need

exists for contributors to pose “hard” questions enthusiastically and unapologetically.

These can be, and often are confronting, challenging and inclined to elicit personalised defensive responses.

Sometimes, to effect significant and sustainable change the structuring and delivery of “hard” questions exposes the fact that in these instances and times:

There is no place to hide
And so it is that a key fourth question is evolving, WHY NOT?

Fundamental is the presence of contentions, propositions and considerations, but never conclusions.

Conclusions rightly remain the province and responsibility of the client, owners and leaders. They cannot and should not delegate the authority of such to external catalysts and facilitators for change, innovation, creativity and, yes, transparency.

A sense of *discomfort* seems innate in such scenarios. That reflects the presence and reality of *cognitive dissonance*. That is, recognition of the gap – often substantial – between what is and what should (if not need) be.

CASE STUDY: START WITH COMPOSITION

Recent exposure to a local government Business Development Advisory Committee presentation was revealing. Indeed invaluable.

Public Notice placements had been published in the local media calling for submissions regarding participation on the committee. Really? Very selective.

Some select invitations were extended to identified people. Included in the list were several “usual suspects”.

Meetings were held. Ideas exchanged. Lists compiled.

And then ... tentative directions were issued to local government employees whose experience, training, expertise, authority levels and budgets were, well, limited, deficient and founded on inappropriate corporate culture values. There was little or no capacity to enforce, reward or penalise local property and business owners to undertake positive action.

The ideas may well have been profound, creative, original, appropriate and potentially financially rewarding.

Some committee members were identified as and nominated to be entrepreneurial. Most were senior employees and consultants known to local government executives.

It was quickly apparent that structural deficiencies and inadequacies existed. There appeared to be no shortage of issues. In all likelihood, the questions WHAT, HOW and WHY were addressed.

Posing a series of WHY NOT, questions was not well received. However, one can be persistent and resistant to reluctance and dismissal.

Contemplate, if you will, the validity, veracity, and potential inherent in the “following” questions:

WHY NOT ...

- Change the Advisory Committee to an Action Board
- Extend Board members list to include genuine local entrepreneurs who had the capacity to take on some of the ideas, accept the risks and invest outright or in collaboration with local property, business owners and residents.
- Provide an annual budget for investment, encouragement and facilitation.
- Issue specific briefs to specialist professionals to initiate, negotiate and facilitate nominated projects and proposals.
- Provide tolerance for possible, and probable failures, and in some instances financial write-offs.

And finally, WHY NOT overcome the stifling belief and contentions that local governments are primarily responsible for rubbish, roads and rates, and take on the entrepreneurial mantle of being effective, efficient and supportive catalysts and facilitators for change, development, creativity, innovation and, above all, disruption.

The same principles and challenges apply to commerce at large.

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About the Author:

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

Barry is author of six books, including the two largest selling publications on service excellence in Australasia. He is a regular commentator of consumer issues on ABC radio, is featured on a series of interview topics on “Today Tonight” and contributes articles to 47 magazines throughout the world.

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

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