Better Business Focus

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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.

This month's contents

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Paul Sloane

Five lateral thinking hacks

…..that you can make you a smarter problem solver

Edward de Bono was a thinker and writer whose recent passing is a great loss. He coined the phrase lateral thinking in contrast to the conventional, routine thinking that we use every day. Lateral means coming at the problem from the side rather than head-on. It involves crafty approaches and is also known as thinking outside the box. Lateral thinking is a skill we can all develop to become more creative, innovative problem solvers. I teach lateral methods for business leaders and here are five practical methods that anyone can use in almost any walk of life.

1. Ask 'What if the opposite were true?' Lateral thinking starts by challenging assumptions and dominant ideas. A good way to do this is to consider all the conventions that apply in any situation and asking this provocative question. Just imagine that you worked for Encyclopaedia Britannica (EB) in the 1990s. This successful business was built on a number of fundamental assumptions e.g. that highly paid subject matter experts and professional editors were needed to curate content, and that customers were happy to pay significant money to have ready access to authoritative information.

Would anyone in the business have considered that the opposite might be true – that you could build an encyclopaedia using volunteers and it would be free? Yet that is what Wikipedia did and this lateral idea made printed encyclopaedias obsolete.

2. Adapt an idea from elsewhere. The Mum deodorant company took on Helen Barnett Diserens as a designer in the late 1940s. She was asked to develop a new way to apply a deodorant. She adapted an idea from another field and copied the idea of the ballpoint pen to create a new roll-on underarm deodorant which was marketed under the name of Ban Roll-On.

It is very likely that the problem you face today has been faced by other people in other fields. Why not try adapting one of their solutions? The brainstorming method called Similes involves identifying other walks of life which might have similar problems and then seeing if any of their approaches can be converted to suit your challenge.

3. Think like an outsider – or bring one in. Another principle of lateral thinking is displacement.

You have to find a way to displace yourself out of your normal mindset and into another one. Jorge Odon is an Argentinian car mechanic who invented a simple device which could save millions of lives of mothers and babies. He adapted an idea from a video he saw about how to extract a cork from an empty wine bottle. The trick is to insert a plastic bag into the bottle, inflate the bag around the cork and then pull it out. He thought he could use the same principle that extracted the cork from the bottle to extract a baby during a difficult childbirth.

He developed the idea which is now used around the world. The key point is that he did not approach the problem of childbirth with the mindset of a clinician but of a car mechanic.

He saw it as a mechanical engineering challenge rather than a medical challenge.

There are many techniques you can use to displace your

thinking. One is to bring in an outsider. Discuss your issue with a teacher, a musician, a writer, a priest, a child or a criminal!

4. Use a random input. When something unexpected happens don't get annoyed, get curious. In the early 1940s a Swiss engineer, George de Mestral, went for a walk with his dog in the Jura mountains. When he came home, he saw that his trousers and the dog's fur contained many tiny seed burrs. He examined the burrs under a microscope and saw that they had tiny hooks which caught in the trouser fabric. He went on to develop a new way to fasten materials – Velcro. The word comes from the French words Velour and Crochet – a Velvet Hook.

You can deliberately introduce the random by opening a dictionary and taking the first word you see or by reading the daily random article on the first page of Wikipedia. These inputs give you a different starting point. Your brain will try to find a link and often succeed.

You can deliberately introduce the random by opening a dictionary and taking the first word you see or by reading the daily random article on the first page of Wikipedia. These inputs give you a different starting point. Your brain will try to find a link and often succeed.

5. Try a weird combination. Marrying ideas has been around a long time. What is the greatest invention of all? A strong contender is Johannes Gutenberg's printing press. Before Gutenberg, all books had been laboriously copied out by hand or stamped out with woodblocks.

Around 1450 in Strasbourg, Gutenberg combined two ideas to invent a method of printing with moveable type. He coupled the flexibility of a coin punch with the power of a wine press. His

invention enabled the production of books and the spread of knowledge and ideas throughout the Western World. In terms of revolutionizing communication only the invention of the Internet comes close.

Someone put a trolley and a suitcase together and got a suitcase with wheels. Someone put an igloo with a hotel and got an ice palace. Someone put a bell and a clock together and got an alarm clock. Someone put a coin punch and a wine press together and we got books. What can you put with your thing to make something new and creative?

Incidentally, weird combinations also pay off as collaborations. Pavarotti performed with the rock band U2, Mercedes collaborated with watch maker Swatch to design the smart car. Who could you work with to create an unusual combination of different skills and experiences?

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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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Mike Shipulski

Small teams are mighty

When you want new thinking or rapid progress, create a small team. When you have a small team, they manage the handoffs on their own and help each other.

Small teams hold themselves accountable.

With small teams, one member's problem becomes everyone's problem in record time.

Small teams can't work on more than one project at a time because it's a small team.

And when a small team works on a single project, progress is rapid.

Small teams use their judgment because they have to.

The judgment of small teams is good because they use it often.

On small teams, team members are loyal to each other and set clear expectations.

Small teams coordinate and phase the work as needed.

With small teams, waiting is reduced because the team members see it immediately.

When something breaks, small teams fix it quickly because the breakage is apparent to all.

The tight connections of a small team are magic.

Small teams are fun.

Small teams are effective.

And small teams are powered by trust.

This article originally appeared on: Small Teams are Mighty (shipulski.com)

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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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Thom Dennis

Ten ways to secure employee retention amidst the great resignation

Whilst staying at a company for five, 10 or 20 years used to be perfectly normal protocol, since 2021 The Great Resignation has highlighted what has quietly been happening for the last decade; valuable employees are dictating what will keep them in their role because they are astutely aware of their own value and employers are struggling to keep hold of the best talent and recruit the top candidates.

Research* (Nov 2021) from recruitment firm Randstad found that almost a quarter (24%) of employees in the UK say they plan to move jobs within the next three to six months. In the US the figure is double that.

Thom Dennis, CEO at Serenity in Leadership argues the cost of loss of talent is often overlooked before it is too late. "When an employee hands in their notice, it often costs a business more than that employee's salary to recruit because of the expense of finding and training a replacement. Add to that figure the loss in productivity, the effect on team morale, the need to train someone up or delegate to other colleagues and it is obvious why it is paramount that leaders find ways to prevent valued employees from seeking pastures new. If employees are offered long term

development opportunities, are paid well and enjoy working with their colleagues, then their employers are about halfway there, but there is a lot more needed to retain the best talent."

Thom Dennis explains the best ways businesses can improve their employee retention.

1) **Pay competitively.** A decade ago securing a higher salary was the most alluring factor when it came to changing your job and that is still the case, but it is not just disposable income coming into play, salaries are increasingly a mark of how valued employees feel for the work they do.

2) **Discretionary powers to offer flexibility**. Whilst location used to be important when choosing a job, flexible working hours and a hybrid working model as a result of the pandemic mean location is of less importance depending on how often employees are expected to come to work. Middle managers need to be empowered with discretionary powers to fulfil new demands for better working hours and greater flexibility.

3) **Company values.** Keep values and objectives of

employees and the business aligned. Poor levels of trust lead to fear and uncertainty, two powerful catalysts for employees to seek work elsewhere.

4) **Create clear progression paths.** Some employees thrive on a vertical career ladder, but our needs and priorities evolve in different directions over time, so managers need to develop clear plans for an individual's growth. Don't wait for annual review dates if your employee is already beating your expectations and deserves a career advancement opportunity. Show you value their contributions in a timely fashion. Don't wait for them to have packed their bags. Stay aligned and up to date with employees' needs and wants long term. Nail the onboarding process and meet with new starters frequently so you are aware of their concerns and can act on them quickly, especially if they are working from home.

5) **ED&I.** We know that psychological and physical safety, feeling comfortable and being able to be authentically yourself within the workplace is incredibly important. In addition, strong policies against harassment, disrespect or bullying, lead to

heightened productivity, and greater loyalty and employee retention. Employees want a culture that offers them respect, value, purpose, real equity in both recruitment and also promotion and a sense of belonging.

6) **Inspirational leaders.** Strong, inspirational management and mentoring are paramount in maintaining focus, productivity, motivation and happiness amongst employees. Poor management results in employee exodus.

7) **Prioritise training and team building.** Independent and collaborative learning are both essential for career progression and to strengthen working relationships. The common practice of cutting training when budgets are tight leads to disaffection and a reason to leave and go somewhere where employees feel valued; it's often a false economy. Celebrating wins together, building team dynamics and even hot-desking can be good for team building. Covid allowing, take time out as a team.

8) **Work/life balance.** A culture that allows burnout and overworking will never retain employees. Ensure workloads and demands are not too restricting for a healthy work-life balance. If employees feel too much pressure or their mental health suffers, they will likely become ill and therefore less productive, and they will search for less stressful alternatives.

9) **Reward longevity at work.** Letting employees choose a gift from a catalogue after five years of work hardly spells "we value you". On the other hand, offering higher pension contributions, shares, flexibility, more holidays and an increased salary for longer-standing employees speaks volumes.

10) **Ask for honest feedback from those leaving** to find out what they appreciated and where there is room for improvement. Evaluate all answers and see if there are any running themes and set targets to improve these. There could be a pattern linked to workload, lack of inclusion, limited career growth or poor management. Respect poor reviews on Glassdoor because even if you don't believe them, prospective employees may. It is important to ask for feedback from all leavers so the business can learn and if there are negative feelings it might help defuse the situation.

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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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Sue Barrett

Reminder: Everybody lives by selling something

Within a business, this means that everybody needs to be an ambassador for our organisation. There needs to be recognition that everyone is in one of two roles: 1) actively involved in selling, or 2) supporting someone who is. Without sales, there's no business.

Selling is a human domain
Selling isn't the domain of salespeople, it is a human domain. For those of us who have talents and capabilities we want to take to market we need to harness the competencies of human-centred, ethical selling practices. Without this essential set of life skills, we cannot realise our own potential.

Selling is the vehicle that allows opportunity to flourish and people to prosper and almost anyone can learn how to master the skills of ethical selling. Knowing how to sell is empowering, it gives people choice, opportunity, jobs.

A business with a robust, ethical, human-centred sales operation is prosperous and creates more jobs, and that in turn creates prosperous communities.

Remember, everybody lives by selling something.

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About the Author
Sue is the Founder & Managing Director of Barrett Consulting Group (est. 1995). She has written and published 21 books and 500+ articles to date on the world of 21st Century selling including topics on sales philosophy/culture/ethics, sales leadership, sales coaching, sales training, selling skills, sales mindset and resilience, neuroscience in selling, etc. Sue works as a business adviser, sales coach & trainer, speaker, and facilitator.

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Dr Lynda Shaw

How positive thinking impacts our performance

Research has shown that we are around 31% more productive when we are positive than when we are stressed. 70% of our thoughts are negative and many of us still suffer from anxiety and burnout as a result of the pandemic, so how can we use positivity in the workplace, especially at a time like this, to improve our performance, engagement and motivation?

Business neuroscientist and cognitive psychologist Dr Lynda Shaw explains: "We know that positive thoughts can induce self-healing, reduce depression, fear, pain and enhance the immune system and can affect our mood, productivity and motivation, whereas negative thoughts can have the opposite effect. We also know that long term stress is bad for us. The release of cortisol to raise our glucose level and adrenalin that causes our blood vessels to constrict helps us in a fight or flight situation but becomes toxic if turned on in the long term. What's interesting therefore, is that it may have taken a pandemic for us to truly realise how important our worker's happiness is and how greatly it impacts their brains and performance."

What happens when we feel positive?
Positive thoughts stimulate the dopamine reward system in the brain, which improves our mood and motivation. Serotonin is another neurotransmitter that is released when we feel upbeat, and it regulates our sleep, appetite and emotions. So when we feel good, we sleep well, eat properly, emotionally cope far better and have greater levels of concentration and motivation.

Neuropeptides, which are tiny molecules of parts of proteins, switch on emotion and emotion switches on neuropeptides like endorphins which are a natural painkiller. Oxytocin another neuropeptide lowers blood pressure, stress and inflammation and vasopressin and nitric oxide increase circulation, which supports a healthy heart. Neuropeptides are also involved in hormone regulation, assist with storing memories and support the immune system which means that they reach further than the brain and into the body.

"Psychology studies have also shown that by actively being more positive and helping others we actually lengthen our lives and feel a lot better in the process. When we focus outside ourselves our problems are often put into perspective and we can feel less overwhelmed and keep our focus wide. When we seek to be of service to others or are working as part of a team, we feel less isolated and more valued and validated."

Living in the moment
When we suffer from Rear View Mirror Syndrome which is where at a subconscious level we constantly relive and recreate our past, we often suffer from anxiety, low confidence and a lack of spontaneity and don't challenge ourselves. Dr Shaw says: "If we live life with pleasure and in the moment and enjoy our work, not only does this positively impact our mental and physical health, but we are also the most effective and efficient we can be."

Self-fulfilling prophecy
Our self-fulfilling prophecy is where our belief or expectation of an event is powerful enough to influence whether it happens or not through our subsequent actions. There are both positive and negative self-fulfilling prophecies. "If your goal is to pass a chartered exam or deliver a project and you are determined to achieve this through hard work and perseverance, you will be motivated to almost ensure that it happens."

Visualising your future
With more of us following the footsteps of what top athletes have done for decades, in the utilisation of visualisation to improve their performance in sport, Dr Shaw believes this is a useful technique in the workplace. "Taking a few moments to visualise a better future or a successful presentation can be an empowering tool which can help the mind focus and body relax."

Having downtime
Making sleep a top priority, fully winding down after a day at work and taking your holidays can have a very powerful effect on the brain. Overworking makes our neurons more excitable and alert which leads to trouble sleeping, mood swings, and poor memory, focus and confusion. More serious mental health problems can also occur like depression and anxiety. Looking after ourselves sharpens our minds, makes us feel happier, boosts creativity and productivity, and keeps us agile and focused.

Social support is the greatest indicator of happiness during periods of high stress
Having the support of your manager and colleagues can be the difference between coping or not during periods of high stress. We are pack animals and need to feel part of a team which is another reason why equality and inclusion are so important and impactful on our happiness and productivity."

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About the Author
Dr Lynda Shaw is a 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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Urko Wood

This false belief is killing innovation

Most people think innovation is inherently risky and messy. That's understandable when you consider that about 50-90% of new products fail. And yet, studies have repeatedly shown that the primary reason for high failure rates is misunderstanding the customers' needs. Some experts claim that 90% of all new businesses fail because they couldn't get anyone to buy, i.e., misunderstanding customers' needs. That suggests that high failure rates are not due to innovation itself being inherently risky and messy. Rather, the way most organizations are going about understanding their target customers' needs is risky and messy.

I have seen this hundreds of times and it still pains me because it doesn't have to be that way; this is a fixable problem. In fact, virtually any organization that knows what type of customer information to obtain, how to get it, and how to use it, can flip the script, change the game, and achieve dramatically better results. The jobs-to-be-done innovation approach solves this problem. It also complements and enhances all other downstream innovation processes such as Design Thinking, Stage-Gate, Lean, and Agile.

If you want to create compelling new value for your target customers, identify their compelling unmet needs.

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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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David Finkel

The key to keeping your business up and running when you are short staffed

Finding yourself short staffed right now? You're not alone. Millions of business owners across the country are struggling to keep their businesses running while dealing with a large number of call-outs from their staff. While this certainly makes business more difficult, there is something that you can start doing right now that will ease the burden on your team over the next few months and make it much easier to handle staff call-outs in the future.

Unlocking Staff Knowledge

Traditional teams work by having each staff member's own particular tasks or knowledge centers. Your bookkeeper, for example, may handle your accounts payable and receivable, and issue the payroll checks. And while normally, this model works just fine, it can become a bit of a hurdle should your bookkeeper call out sick the day payroll is due. You are then left scrambling to either figure out the task yourself or try to get a hold of the sick team member to find out the needed information.

But there is a better way. What if you had a folder on a shared drive that contained every single task that your bookkeeper does over the course of a month, along with written documentation and videos outlining the steps necessary to do each task. Imagine being able to then hand those documents over to another team member knowing that they had everything they needed to complete payroll in time. Now imagine that you could do this for every single position within the company, including yours. Suddenly

someone calling out sick isn't such a stressful situation.

Getting Started

I call this collection of tasks and documentation a UBS or Ultimate Business System. Your UBS is a living, breathing collection of best practices, contained in a user-friendly, searchable structure that your team can easily access, update, refine, and add onto as they perform their job functions. We typically keep ours in a shared filing system like Dropbox or Sharepoint.

Getting a system up and running isn't going to happen overnight, but it will happen over time. Begin by explaining the process to your team and ask them to start UBS'ing things as they do them over the course of the next few months. When a new task or process pops up, it should become a standard practice to UBS it as the process is created.

Some examples of areas you would want to create UBS's would include:

- Sales/Lead Conversion/Strategy
- Marketing/Lead Generation/Strategy
- Operations/Production/Fulfillment/Purchasing
- Finance/Reporting/Collections/Accounts Payable
- HR/Hiring/Onboarding/Benefits/Compliance/Exit Processes

Your UBS should grow with your business. As you hire new team members, have them create documentation for tasks and processes that may have been overlooked the first few passes. As they are undergoing training,

try recording the training sessions and keeping them on file to be used for future onboarding sessions. This will not only help you create a consistent onboarding process for everyone but will help you remember items that might be overlooked two or three hires 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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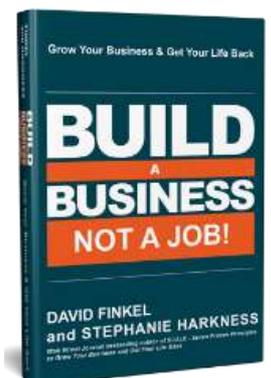
Jane Gunn

The art of deep listening to resolve conflict

A lack of effective listening between colleagues is one of the main causes of workplace conflicts, a problem that has been on the increase during the pandemic. Before we have even stepped into the room, we are likely to have our own agenda which disrupts our ability to truly listen and resolve issues. But what can be done about it to improve communication and resolve conflict, and why does it matter?

Poor listening and communication are at the root of many relationship breakdowns, conflicts and disputes and lead to talent loss, poor productivity, low morale, missing deadlines, failure to complete on projects, loss of sales and a breakdown in trust and relationships. In business truly listening to employees, colleagues and stakeholders means seriously entertaining their ideas, thoughts and feelings, whilst simultaneously putting your own ideas and instinctive responses on hold.

Why The Pandemic Made Listening Harder
Being asked to work from home and attend frequent online meetings has meant that we have less access to verbal and non-verbal cues, body language, lipreading and facial emotional reading. Turn-taking is difficult in these sorts of meetings. If listening and speaking are harder, then people have less opportunity to express themselves. In addition, we may be distracted by other things going on at home and our mood and mental health may have been suffering. A lost ability to socialise at work means that meetings are often now solely functional. Furthermore, whilst

wearing them may be required, masks have increased communication and listening problems too.

Why Listening Matters
When we communicate, we are subconsciously conducting a test for trust and respect. The test is continuous, it happens from moment to moment and is based on what people see, hear or feel. What they want to know more than anything else is 'Do I matter?' and 'Am I heard?'

We also pay most attention to the things that directly concern us or are relevant to our own situation, our own needs, interests, fears and concerns, which means we can often listen from our own point of view rather than the speakers. The message that a person or organisation intends to give is frequently not the message that the other receives. Even when we feel we are expressing ourselves with great clarity, if either or both sides don't truly listen to what is being said or don't share the same meaning in the message there will be failures in communication. Not feeling heard can affect work relationships which can result in deep resentment, frustration and conflict.

Tips of how to use deep listening to resolve conflict.
1) **Understand that every conflict has two components: emotional and rational.** When a person experiences high emotion in response to a situation or an exchange with another person, the rational, thinking part of the brain will not come into play until they have dealt with the emotional

hijacking of the brain. It is physically impossible for someone to switch to logical thinking when their amygdala has created an emotional fight or flight response.

2) **Acknowledge a person's emotional state with an empathetic response.** In instances where an emotional response is taking place, the first step to resolving the situation involves expressing empathy. You do this by saying something like 'It sounds like you are feeling very frustrated', or 'I can see that you are upset by this'.

3) **Be curious about what it is that is bothering them.** If you are aware of and respectful of the other person's needs, interests, fears and concerns then that is a great opening for good communication. Equally, understand that the surface level of conflict is usually just that and there may be deeper issues involved; you may be missing subtle cues or underlying messages. Try not to interrupt or jump to conclusions.

4) **Stand in the other person's shoes.** Even if only for a brief moment in time, try to see the world as the other person sees it, rather than how you see it. If you can do this then the person that you are communicating with will begin to have trust in you.

5) **Show you are listening.** Make eye contact, be present, don't multitask at the same time, turn your phone and the tv off, and pay attention to what the other person is saying rather than thinking

about your own response. Speaking to someone who gives the impression that they are not listening will only escalate the situation further.

6) **Reflect back**. Unless we take the important step of reflecting back to the speaker what we thought we heard and checking that our interpretation is correct, then we have no real way of knowing that we have understood accurately. Don't tell them what they are feeling but summarise the important bits by using phrases like 'I think you are saying'…' and 'If I heard you correctly…'

7) **You don't need to have all the answers.** Sometimes people just want to offload or vent and they don't want fixing. It is ok to not always know what to say. The important thing is to be present and there for them and to have created a safe space for them to tell you how they are feeling.

8) **Tell them your reaction if relevant**. Give the speaker some information about your response to their message. Don't attack on what has been said but add some value to the conversation, describing your reaction rather than criticising the speaker.

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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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Sunil Bali
Sitting with a pretty girl…..

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

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

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

Lovers really do make a fool of time.

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

Most of us wear chronometers (watches). But what if we wore kairometers instead which tapped into our heart, our gut and our soul, so we took the right action at the right time.

To eat only when we're hungry, to rest whenever we're tired, and to take the action that our intuition is nudging us to take.

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

So make sure you do the light thing.

Moving minds - Transforming performance

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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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Andy Bounds

Stand out from the crowd – using ANTS

Here are four ways to help you stand out from the crowd (useful in interviews, meetings, sales… anywhere, really):

#1 AFTERs
Focus on why you'll make the other person's life better AFTER you've done your work.

Why? Because they're more interested in how you can improve *their future*, than they are in hearing all about *your past.*

So, will you help them have an easier life? Achieve their goals? Look good to the boss? What's the value-add you're providing?

(An added bonus: most people sell themselves by talking about themselves and their past. So you stand out by doing the opposite)

#2 Newness
What have you got that's new or different? What are your new ideas, experiences, processes?

These are great differentiators. After all, if they're new, that means other people haven't seen them before.

#3 Teaching
Teach people something they didn't know. Ideally, you want them to look at you and say "I'd never thought of it like that" or "I never knew that".

Teaching's great. It adds value to them. And it also means you're different to previous people they've seen, since you've taught them a new thing.

So, do some research. Find things they didn't know they didn't know. And then focus on those.

#4 Stories
Final one: the best way to prove that you can deliver AFTER 'X' is to tell a story where you've delivered AFTER 'X' for someone else.

So, prepare your best story 'proof point' – "You want to export into Belgium? I can help you – I've done it before. In fact, I helped one company gain 15% of the Belgian market. What happened was…"

And of course, nobody can copy your stories – they are your stories.

(Btw, an easy way to remember all four: the initial letters spell ANTS).

You don't have to do all four of ANTS, of course.

But, to stand out, you'll have to do more than none.

Action Point
In your next interview, sales meeting, opportunity to impress…

… Use **ANTS** to help you stand out as different to – and better than – their other alternatives. And also watch these!

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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?

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Short of time? Here are my Quick Wins

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Debra Murphy

Grammar mistakes can ruin your content marketing

I must be getting more sensitive to bad grammar in blog posts, email newsletters, and other types of content marketing. These errors glare out from the content and totally distract me from the topic of interest. The sad truth is that these grammar mistakes appear in the material of some of the top content marketing authors.

- Does this mean that we now accept the incorrect use of punctuation and capitalization in our writing?

- Do we just overlook bad spelling and typos because brands need to generate content quickly?

- And should we overlook bad grammar in blog posts because this is the new form of communication?

Informal writing with a casual tone is appropriate for many of our content marketing products, such as blogging and social media. However, using this less formal writing style sometimes has us bending the grammar rules. But, no matter how lenient the rules have become, there are some grammar mistakes that are never appropriate and can make your content appear sloppy. That is not an image a professional with an expert reputation wants to project. And although it is not definitive with respect to Google,

why take the chance that poor grammar and typos may affect how search engines rank our content.

Common grammar mistakes

Apostrophe misuses
An apostrophe is used to show possession or contraction.

Examples:
- Use an apostrophe after a noun to make it possessive. *Read this author's work on content marketing.*

- Use an apostrophe to create a contraction. *It's highly possible that our content has gone viral.*

- Never use an apostrophe to make a noun plural as in "*I have two cat's*".

Excessive use of commas or semicolons
Commas and semicolons have a purpose in writing, but people have begun to overuse both in the wrong places.

It appears that writers put commas into sentences where they would pause while speaking. Sometimes that may be correct but oftentimes not. Check out the many grammar rules for using commas correctly in your writing.

Semicolons are often used in place of commas. If you simplify your writing, you may never need to

use a semicolon, but there are cases when semicolons are useful at making your writing clearer and controlling the flow.

Capitalization mistakes
People seem to be a bit "cap happy" in their writing these days. Capitalizing words should not be a random act. There are rules that can help you understand when and when not to hit the shift key.

You should always capitalize:
- The first word in a sentence
- Titles of books, articles, blog posts and music
- Days, months and holidays
- Seasons when they are in a title, not in general writing such as "this winter has been harsh"
- Initials and acronyms
- The pronoun "I"
- Names of places, nationalities, languages and ethnic groups
- Trademarks and brand names
- Words used as proper names but not when used in general – "I saw Uncle Joe the other day. I have not heard from my uncle recently."
- Titles preceding a name but not those that follow or are used as general words – President Brown of ABC company;
Joe Brown, president of ABC company; The president called to discuss his budget today.

What about capitalization in bullet points? There are several views on the use of punctuation and capitalization for bullets. Here is my take on the rules:

- Start each bullet point with a capital letter for easier reading.
- Do not capitalize every word in the bullet unless the words are proper names.
- Be consistent in your sentence structure and punctuation. Start all bullets with nouns or verbs and leave off the punctuation if the bullets are not complete sentences.

Where it really becomes confusing is in reference to departments, services or expertise.

- Debra works in the Marketing Department
- Debra's specialty is marketing
- Debra works in Marketing
- Do you know some marketing people who can help in this project?

Finally a bulleted list of services:

- Marketing
- Human resources
- Finance
- Accounting
- Mergers and acquisitions

Do not mistake bulleted lists for website navigation with all words capitalized as a normal bulleted list.

Most website navigation is generated from page titles, for which capitalization of each word is correct.

Common spelling mistakes

- It's vs. its – "It's" is a contraction for it is. Its is a possessive pronoun. Example: It's confusing to read a sentence with bad grammar because it keeps the reader from understanding its meaning. When unsure which to use, say "it is" instead. If the sentence makes sense, the contraction is correct.

- You're vs. your – "You're" is a contraction for you are. Your is a possessive pronoun. You're not correct if you write "your not correct". You better go back and proofread your content.
- Affect vs. effect – Affect is a verb. Your behavior affects those around you. The effect of your behavior is that you annoy people.
- There, their and they're – "There" denotes a place. Let's go there tonight. "Their" is possessive for more than one person. Their behavior did not make sense to me. "They're" is a contraction of the words they are. They're having a lot of fun.
- Then vs. than – Use "Than" when comparing. Use "Then" in all other cases.

Me, Myself and I
The grammatical use of these three words is confusing to many.

- "Send your report to myself" makes me want to scream. Send your report to me.
- You wouldn't say, "Send your report to I", so never say "Send your report to Joe and I". When in doubt, take the other person's name out of the sentence and see if it still sounds correct.
- Myself has minimal use other than "I thought to myself, grammar is a complicated subject".

One final hot button
If you use WordPress, check with your web designer for how to best use the formatting that is set up in your theme. Most themes have styled bullets, headings and font types, weights and sizes that guarantee a consistent look.

Do not randomly change the font family, size or color throughout your website as it disrupts your brand. So although this is not grammar and typos, a blog post that has a different font than the rest of your site, or different fonts scattered throughout the post itself, is a distraction that affects your brand.

How to get help
English grammar is complex. If you struggle with writing error-free content, there are some simple grammar checkers available that can proofread and help you output quality content. Check out these tools:

- Writer
- QuillBot

Both offer Chrome extensions so you can have the grammar checker active when you are writing your content. In addition, there are plenty of blogs on grammar, spelling, and capitalization that can help answer your questions.

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About the Author
Debra is a marketing coach and mentor passionate about helping small business owners take control of a critical business asset – their online digital footprint – and use it to increase visibility and generate inbound leads. Through expert guidance and support, they achieve success by learning, incorporating and executing marketing activities that take their business from mediocre to marvellous.

Although experienced across all traditional marketing channels, Debra specializes in inbound marketing, a combination of search, social media and content marketing, enabling small businesses to create a larger digital footprint that increases their visibility and generates more quality inbound leads.

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Paul Matthews

Behaviour change needs a workflow solution

Behaviour change needs a workflow solution, not a learning solution. Think about it… When I ask people in Learning & Development (L&D) what they think is the purpose of training, they give answers like learning, knowledge, new skills, compliance etc. Then the answers start to change as people reflect on the desired end result from training. They usually begin to home in on a purpose for training that is about helping people develop so they can be better at doing what they do on behalf of their employer. They arrive at something like, "The purpose of training is to improve competence and change the way people do things so they perform better and consistently get better results at work".

In essence, unless the training is fulfilling some tick-box compliance requirement, it all comes back to behaviour change. We train people because we want them to change their behaviour, yet when I look at the way people commonly deliver training, it is not a recipe for behaviour change.

So, what is a recipe for behaviour change?

Think of something you do that you are good at. Were you always that good? Probably not. How did you get good at it? You started doing it and then practised.

I know this seems obvious, but for someone to develop a new behaviour and do things differently, they have to start doing things differently. Then they have to do those different things enough times to get to a threshold level of competence. Then they probably need to do them even more times to develop the new behaviour into a habit that will be sustained over time. Learning without doing does not lead to behaviour change.

During the time they are practising a new behaviour, the employee will need support, guidance, some information, maybe some coaching, and obviously the opportunity to do the practice required.

In essence, to achieve sustained behaviour change within our employees, we need to provide them with a sequence of activities and some different inputs over a period of time that are designed with the end result in mind. This is how we can 'deliver' behaviour change.

What we have just described is termed a workflow. According to Wikipedia, a workflow consists of an orchestrated and repeatable pattern of activity that leads to a specific outcome. If the steps in the workflow are followed as prescribed, the outcome will be attained.

If the outcome of your learning initiative is behaviour change, then you need a workflow solution, not a learning solution. I'm not saying that learning isn't required; what I am saying is that learning is only one of the many steps in the workflow required to achieve the behaviour change you want.

Are you applying a workflow approach to delivering L&D, or are planning to do so? I'd be keen to hear how you are doing it, or the challenges that stop you doing it…"

Here's more about how to implement a learning workflow approach.

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

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

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

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

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Greg Satell
Leading through uncertainty

Leaders need to make decisions and we rarely get to choose the context. Most often, we need to take action without all the facts, in a rapidly changing environment and a compressed time frame. We need to do so with the knowledge that if we get it wrong, we will bear the blame and no one else. It will be our mess to clean up.

That's a hard bridge to cross and many, if not most, are never quite able to get there. I think that's why we admire great leaders so much because they have the courage to take responsibility on their backs and be accountable, to inspire confidence even in an atmosphere of confusion and to point the way forward, even if they aren't sure it's the right direction.

The truth is that you can never really be certain until you take that step forward. The simple and inescapable truth is that to accomplish anything significant you need to travel on an uncertain journey. It is tautologically true that the well-trod path will take us nowhere new. We can never fully control uncertainty, but we can learn to lead through it.

How Things Get So Complicated And Uncertain
Generally, we prefer to operate with some degree of predictability, which is why we build structure into daily life. On a personal level, we create habits and routines to give us a sense of grounding. On a societal level, we create laws and norms, so that we know what to expect from our interactions with each other.

Yet in *Overcomplicated*, mathematician Sam Arbesman gives two reasons why uncertainty is, to a great extent, unavoidable. The first is accretion. We build systems, like the Internet or the laws set down in the US Constitution, to perform a limited number of tasks. Yet to scale those systems, we need to build on top of them to expand their initial capabilities. As systems become larger, they get more complex and uncertain.

The second force is interaction. We may love the simplicity of an iPhone, but don't want to be restricted by its capabilities alone. So we increase its functionality by connecting it to millions of apps. Those apps, in turn, connect to each other as well as to other systems. Every connection increases complexity and makes things harder to predict.

These two forces lead to what Benoit Mandelbrot called Noah effects and Joseph effects. Joseph effects, as in the biblical story, support long periods of continuity. Noah effects, on the other hand, are like a big storm creating a massive flood of discontinuity, washing away the previous order. Uncertainty, for better or worse, will always be somewhat unavoidable.

The Problem With Simplicity
The most straightforward solution to complexity and uncertainty is to boil things down and make them more simple. Politicians are fond of highlighting the thousands of pages pieces of legislation contain because complexity is widely seen as a fatal flaw. "If it was thought through clearly, why couldn't it have been devised more simply?" is the implication.

Yet while we yearn for simple rules, those rules often lead us astray. As Ludwig Wittgenstein explained in his rule-following paradox, "no course of action could be determined by a rule because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule." Simple rules tend to be necessarily vague, which limits their usefulness.

Something similar happens when we try to tame complexity by summarizing it through identifying patterns. Random points of data, if there are enough of them, will always generate patterns as well, so we can never be quite sure if we are revealing an underlying truth or just creating a convincing illusion. To discern between the two is, unfortunately, complex.

In *Why Information Grows*, MIT's Cesar Hidalgo explains that it is through emergent complexity that we create value. To understand what he means, let's take another look at an iPhone. Its simple design belies incredible complexity, not only in the technology it contains but in what it connects to, a complex ecosystem of apps, servers and data.

Steve Jobs didn't intend to create an App Store, because he wanted to keep the iPhone simple. However, eventually, he was convinced that by limiting complexity he was curtailing the potential value of his creation and, ultimately, he relented. It is through managing complexity, not avoiding it, that we can most effectively impact the world.

Narrowing Scope And Limiting Variables

The Franciscan friar William of Occam is best remembered for Occam's razor, which he didn't exactly invent, but did much to popularize. The technique, which is often mischaracterized as "the simplest solution is often the best," actually had a lot more to do with variables and assumptions, which he advises keeping to a minimum.

It's an interesting distinction that makes a big difference. William wasn't advising us to ignore complexity but to avoid increasing it by injecting things that don't need to be there. We can acknowledge the messiness of the world and still tidy up our little corner of it, by narrowing our scope and limiting the variables we deal with.

Steve Blank advises startups to develop minimum viable products to test assumptions, rather than investing resources into a full-featured prototype. The idea is by narrowing scope you can get a better idea of the marketplace and then increase complexity from there. In our work helping organizations drive transformation, we advise our clients to start out with a keystone change, rather than rolling out everything all at once.

Whatever strategy you use, the key, as William of Occam pointed out long ago, is to limit variables where you can, while still recognizing that the universe is far more complex than our scaled-down model of it. Or, as the statistician George Box put it, "all models are wrong, but some are useful."

Innovation Is Exploration

The truth is that uncertainty is only a problem if you try to control it. The framers of the US Constitution designed it to be a guide, not a blueprint. That's been the key to its success. They recognized it would have to evolve and grow over time and designed a system of checks and balances to curb the human potential for malice.

We need to start thinking less like engineers, designing just the right combination of levers and pulleys to account for every eventuality, and more like gardeners, seeding and nurturing ecosystems, pruning as we go. Gardeners don't need to know the exact outcome of everything they plant but can seek to improve the harvest each season.

In a world driven by networks and ecosystems, we can no longer treat strategy as if it were a game of chess, planning out each move with near-perfect precision and foresight. The world moves far too fast for that. By the time we've put the final touches on the master plan, the assumptions upon which it was made are often no longer true.

Rather, we must constantly explore, widen and deepen connections to ecosystems of talent, technology and information. That's how we uncover new paths that are often unseen from our usual perch and leverage complexity to our advantage. Breakthrough innovations arise out of unexpected encounters.

The next big thing always starts out looking like nothing at all. Today, competitive advantage is no longer the sum of all efficiencies, but the sum of all connections.

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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.
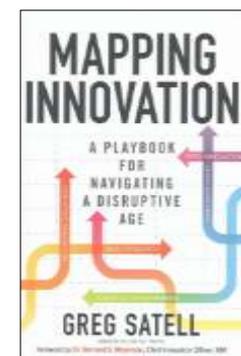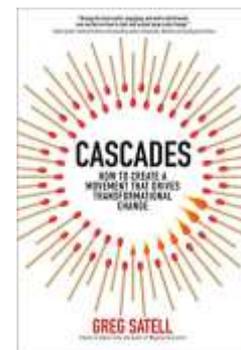
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Marissa Levin

How to find your work-life balance by following these 8 steps

Anyone who balances a full-time job and a demanding home life know the challenges and importance of finding time to rest and recharge.

Today's work environment has permanently blurred the lines between our personal and professional lives, which requires us to be even more intentional and protective with our downtime.

Burnout and mental health issues have reached crisis levels, with nearly 1 in 12 adults having depression.

The number of hours we spend online checking email or engaging in social media platforms continues to grow. Adults today spend an average of 11 hours online.

What can we do to ensure we care for our physical and emotional health while still attending to personal and professional obligations? These 8 steps can help even the most stretched person regain control over his/her schedules and restore a sense of calm to their daily life.

1: **Prioritize your health.** Safeguarding your health should be the highest priority. When we proactively care for our health, we mitigate larger health challenges down the road.

How to do it:
- Schedule required annual doctor's visits, and keep them. This comprehensive list of checkups explains every appointment you need from your 20's to your 70's.
- Prioritize physical health. Join a gym class or fitness group to hold yourself accountable. Block the time on your calendar and treat your fitness commitment as an appointment you can't miss.

2: **Put buffers in your schedule.** Do your appointments bump up against each other? Take back control of your schedule.

How to do it:
- Include at least a 15-minute buffer before and after each appointment to accommodate any meetings that run long or start late.
- Schedule 45-minute meetings instead of 60-minute meetings. Focus on covering only essential topics and do as much pre-meeting prep as possible.
- Ensure every meeting has an agenda, and that only the essential people are there. Identify desired outcomes before the meeting to ensure everyone is on the same page.
- Once a month, schedule a totally blank day, with no pressure.

3: **Stay true to your agenda - not someone else's.** How much of your day is dedicated to fulfilling someone else's agenda?

How to do it:
- Start by saying "No." "No" is a complete sentence. Don't add someone else's obligations to your schedule if you can barely manage your own obligations.

4: **Schedule touchpoints with your friends.** Nothing puts life back into perspective than some fun or talk therapy with your friends.

How to do it:
- Schedule regular calls or lunches with your BFFs to remain connected to other parts of life besides work.

5: **Plan for long-term fun.** Do you have favorite activities you've put on the back burner because life is pulling you in a million directions? Carving out time for small escapes is essential to remain engaged at work.

How to do it:
- Plan a vacation that occurs several months from now. Even if it's a small getaway, it will give you something to look forward to.
- Get reconnected to the most fun part of yourself by booking an activity that brings you lots of joy, such as a concert or theatre production.

6: **Get your sleep.** Sleep deprivation assaults all aspects of our health, including our mental and emotional state.

How to do it:
- Be selfish. If you're exhausted, go to bed earlier. Create an environment conducive to good sleep: no screens, no noise, good sleeping temperature, earplugs, eye mask, essential oils, music to help you drift off (I especially love the Calm app) - whatever you need to sleep. Work can wait, the family can do it all without you.

7: Be OK with not getting it all done. As your life gets busier, it's highly likely you won't ever complete your daily to-do list. That's ok! Somehow, you'll manage to address all of the high priority tasks and make it all work.

8: Remember the power of your thoughts. Finally, remember that it is not our situations that cause us stress. It is our thoughts about our situations that cause us stress. No one really knows what the future brings. Our speculation only fuels our anxiety.

In Summary
The busier life gets, the harder it will be to please others. Our commitment to our health must be our top priority so that we can show up for others.

Life passes by very quickly. Spending your days in an exhausted, over-committed, and overly anxious state is often a choice. Take back the control over your life. The quality of your life lies in your hands.

About the Author
Marissa Levin is the founder and CEO of Successful Culture, which helps CEOs and leadership teams master the three most critical aspects of business growth: leadership development, strategy formulation and execution, and organizational culture assessment and improvement. She is also the author of Built to Scale: How Top Companies Create Breakthrough Growth Through Exceptional Advisory Boards.

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Jeff Eilertsen

Increase productivity and improve customer experience by eliminating "The 8 wastes of service"

The 8 Wastes are central to the Lean Manufacturing system developed by Toyota. **The 8 Wastes of Service** are a modified version used by service experience and service process experts. *The 8 Wastes of Service* are not new, but regular review checks our assumptions about the service we provide.

Waste is anything that does not create value for a customer or colleague. Finding and eliminating waste in your service can cut costs and improve customer experience.

Waste goes unnoticed over time. Often we do something, again and again, as we always have, until we no longer see its impact. We must keep asking ourselves *"Are we wasting value for our customers?"*

Study your Service Transactions closely. Where is waste leading to poor customer perceptions. How can you improve your customers' experience?

1. Where is the service you promise getting delayed?
I had an "urgent" call from a financial provider. I returned the call immediately but was put on hold for nearly 10 minutes. Standing in queues, waiting on hold, late shipments, postponed meetings, and slow downloads.

These are a few examples of delays your customers may experience. How do your customers feel when delayed? Where can you reduce delays in your transactions?

2. Where can you eliminate duplication for your customers and colleagues?
Having to repeat information or actions may be required for your internal process, but it's frustrating for customers and colleagues. Filling out multiple forms, providing account numbers twice, giving your name over and over, returning when the manager is in, or being transferred to yet another person to explain the same issue.

Have you ever used an online service site only to be told you must call the service center?

Where can you streamline access and information to make your customers' experience easier and faster? How will this change your customers' perceptions?

3. How can you reduce the movements needed to receive your service?

I was recently in a government office. I walked back and forth between various offices to complete my transaction. Do your people waste time going back and forth between departments? Office locations? Meetings? Does frustration build with each move?

How can you move people closer to service – creating a "path of least resistance?" How will your customers react?

4. Unclear Communication. Where can you make communication easier?

Written proposals, instructions, agreements, social media and visual signage are a few places to look. Speaking clearly, respecting language differences, and non-verbal communication is just as important as the accuracy of your content.

Where can you provide more clarity for your customers? How will this change their evaluation of your service?

5. Incorrect Inventory (and Incorrect Information). How can you ensure we have the right products and the right information for customers when they need it?

Out of stock products, expired offers, outdated information, or not knowing answers to common questions. Items on the menu at your favorite restaurant are consistently not available. Your order from an online grocery has substituted items.

How can you keep an up-to-date supply of the right products and the right information to exceed customer expectations? How do your customers react when you are ready with what they need?

6. Where are we making mistakes? Are we making the same mistakes?

Bugs in our soup, or bugs in our software. Inaccurate treatments or prescriptions. I received an order of broken glasses because they were not packed properly. The return form was missing.

Not getting what is promised won't delight a customer. Nor will incorrect information.

How can you reduce errors in your service transactions? Will this increase customer satisfaction and retention?

7. Lost Opportunity. When do customers walk away because service behavior is poor?

A service rep told me how awful his job and his manager were. I won't go back. Call centre staff can be apathetic or even rude. Employees complain to each other and do not pay attention to their customers. These behaviors will lose clients forever.

Are you paying enough attention to your customer interactions? How do you hire, enable, and encourage your team members to deliver exceptional service? What is the ROI for such employees?

8. Human Potential. Are you developing and empowering your people to delight customers?

Wasting your people's potential undermines all other efforts to create value. If every employee understands customers and can make decisions to add value, you can deliver a streamlined and uplifting service experience.

Command and control management does not work here. Do your managers make all the decisions, even simple ones? Or are your staff members truly empowered to respond to customer requests and create valuable outcomes?

Studying *the 8 Wastes of Service* is a powerful way to improve your service to customers and to colleagues.

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About the Author

Jeff leads Client Success and Global Education for Uplifting Service, bringing 25 years of experience improving service and leadership. He is a Master Trainer and speaker, working with organizations on every continent.

He has supported large-scale service culture change efforts and facilitated service leadership and service excellence workshops with clients in numerous industries, working in over 30 countries in North America, Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and the Middle East.

Jeff leads live and virtual workshops for leaders and teams to improve service performance and uplift customer experience. And he supports organizations to develop systems and practices that ensure sustained service culture change. He uses a collaborative style to build long-term working relationships with an emphasis on service and results, consistently exceeding client expectations.

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Dr Yoram Solomon
Trust and breaking the rules

Once again, I wrote an article in response to something Simon Sinek said. In a LinkedIn post, he wrote, "We don't trust people to follow the rules. We trust people to know when to break them." I understand the need to be provocative and contrarian, but is that how we should approach the relationship between trust and rule-following or rule-breaking? Is that how we should decide who we trust and who we don't trust? In this article, I will break down the relationship between trust and following or breaking rules. I will also broaden the scope of the discussion and bring in ethics and morals, too.

Should we not trust people to follow rules?
"We don't trust people to follow the rules?" Really? Isn't that the exact definition of anarchy? The dictionary definition of anarchy includes "lack of obedience to an authority." That's what not following rules means. But here is a question to ponder: when you decide to break the rules, are you willing to accept the consequences? Because breaking the rules would typically have consequences associated with it.

Blame it on my law degree, but I believe we should generally follow rules for several reasons. Rules provide *predictability* because you assume that other people will follow them. Rules protect us from each other and the possible arbitrariness of the government. But let me ask you, when you consider breaking the rules: are you OK if other people break the rules in a way that might hurt you? Are you OK if the government or the company you work for breaks the rules and hurt you in the process?

What happens when you don't follow rules?
In the court scene from *A Few Good Men*, Colonel Jessep says, "we follow orders, son. We follow orders, or people die. It's that simple." I served in an infantry brigade, and I never challenged an order given to me. For exactly that reason. Can you imagine what would happen if every soldier would decide for themselves which orders they follow and which orders they ignore?

How about air traffic control? Can you imagine pilots deciding unilaterally which directions to follow and which to ignore? While putting the lives of their passengers in danger due to possible air (or even ground) collisions?

How do you know if you can break the rules?
The second half of Sinek's quote is, "We trust people to know when to break them." How do you know if you can break them or not? One of John F. Kennedy's favorite quotes was from G. K. Chesterton's 1929 book, *The Thing*: "Do not remove a fence until you know why it was put up in the first place." Before breaking a rule, ask yourself—do you know why this rule was created in the first place? Is the reason the rule was created invalid, or is it still valid, and you simply may not know it?

One of the most important components of trustworthiness is fairness. If you break the rule while I follow it, it puts me in a disadvantaged state. If you decide you can drive faster than the speed limit while I follow it, you will get to places faster than I would, which is unfair *to me*.

What if you break the rules simply because you can afford the consequences and I can't? Do you consider the consequences (a fine, for example), "the cost of doing business," while I can't afford those? Wouldn't that be unfair to me?

What would be a good enough reason to break the rules? Because they don't suit *you*? Even if you breaking the rules might hurt other people? How about when it hurts those who can't defend themselves? People with disabilities? Minorities? Is it OK to break rules because *most* people prefer that?

What if there are no rules?
I promised to broaden the scope of the discussion to include ethics and morals. To be clear, when I talk about ethics, I don't refer to a *Code of Ethics* that many organizations put in place. Those have extrinsic consequences, and therefore I consider them rules.

Imagine that the range of actions you may take varies from very bad to very good. Someone on that range is the legal bar. Anything below the legal bar is illegal or even criminal. The legal bar is extrinsic, as the consequences of operating below the legal bar are not natural consequences of your actions (i.e., the consequences are imposed by other people artificially). Somewhere (hopefully

higher) on that range is the ethical bar. Anything you do *above* the ethical bar is ethical or good.

What would you call those actions that fall between those two bars? Actions above the legal bar, but at the same time below the ethical bar? We call them loopholes or the grey area. Those are things you know you shouldn't do, but you do them anyway because they are not illegal.

The government's response to those actions is to raise the legal bar, but that has several unintended consequences. First, we relegate our decision-making to rules. Why should we think for ourselves if the government does it for us? But second, we rationalize breaking the rules (exactly what Sinek did in his statement). We break the rules because we believe they were put there out of the arbitrariness of rule-makers.

What should we do? First, we should behave above the ethical bar, even though we can take actions *below* the ethical bar that are still not illegal. Don't rely on rule-makers to tell you what's right and wrong. Second, we should start raising our own ethical bar. Do more good.

Breaking the rules … and TRUST

How do rule-following and rule-breaking relate to trust? When you operate above *my* ethical bar, you meet the requirements of the *Personality Compatibility* component of trust, and I found that doing that has the strongest correlation to trust (86%). To be trusted, you must operate above the ethical bar of the person you want to be trusted. That bar might differ for different people (Third Law of Trust) and in different contexts (Second Law of Trust). And, by the way, your ethical bar and the other person's ethical bar may not be the same, not for all things, so focus on the other person's bar and not your own because trust is asymmetrical (Fourth Law of Trust). And I already mentioned that when you break the rules, and I don't, it puts us (mainly me) in an unfair situation, and fairness is another important factor in assessing your trustworthiness.

Summary
If a rule is not good for you, don't just break it. Find out why it was put there in the first place and what effect breaking it will have on other people before you decide to break it.

But if the rule is not good for anyone, *do something about it!* Rules were put by people. If it was in your company, quit the company! If those are government rules, speak with your legislators! Ask others to speak with legislators. Remember that legislators are put in office by you during elections. Replace them in the next election cycle, and if you can't find anyone to replace them, run for office yourself! That's what I did…

I want to close with one caveat; there is always the possibility that I didn't understand what Simon Sinek meant… But it was still a good discussion.

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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 helping 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.

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