

Better Business Focus

November 2020

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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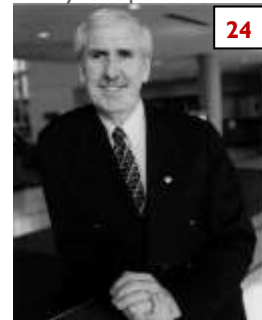
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Amy Vetter

A new era of client relationships

It's not hyperbole to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected every aspect of the way we do business, and many of the changes are far from temporary. Everything from the way we use **tech** to the nature of **leadership** has had to adapt to this year's unprecedented circumstances. The approach we take to client relationships is no different.

At this point, you've probably read a **guide** or **two** on how to adapt your messaging and client experience to a post-coronavirus world. You may have even seen a **compendium** of some of the bone-headed mistakes big brands made at the start of the pandemic. With nearly half-a-year of communication behind us, we can begin to extrapolate some of the key takeaways that will continue to influence client relationships going forward.

It's time we add a few pillars to the list of the tried-and-true basics of **relationship building** in accounting. While the need to adapt communication and messaging strategies is true of businesses across the board, it's especially important in ours. Your clients trust you with their most intimate and vital business information. If you absorb the lessons that have been forged in this unprecedented time, you stand to form bonds that will be nearly unbreakable.

Empathize before you scrutinize

There is something about challenging times that bring us together. Before the pandemic, it was easy to see your firm as dealing with a different set of goals and concerns than those of

your clients. It's much easier to see now that we're all in this together. As such, it's crucial to go out your way to learn about your client as people, understand what they're going through in their lives, and tailor your services and communication accordingly.

You may say that humanizing your clients too much will hurt your ability to assess their financials, but I would argue the exact opposite. Yes, there is a portion of accounting that requires clinical data analysis, even when it comes to advisory services. That work is enhanced by human connection, not hampered by it. It provides context that allows you to provide actionable, resonant advice in service of your clients.

Meet clients where they're comfortable

Just as surely as we've changed the nature of our messages, we've transformed how those messages are delivered. The fact that **Zoom weddings** are now a common occurrence goes to show how quickly these changes are being adopted. There will come a time when meeting virtually is no longer a prudent health decision, but our new variety of communication tools is here to stay.

Some of your clients may be tech-savvy. Others may be dying to meet you in person again and trying to figure out a responsible way to do so. One group of clients may prefer written communication via email, another meeting via Zoom, and yet another via a quick text before an extended phone call. The combinations are endless, but if you can figure out the recipe that works for each of your clients, you'll find reaching them easier than ever before.

Be willing to have the tough conversations

The stress that the pandemic has put on businesses worldwide has

led to some serious heart-to-hearts between clients and services providers of all kinds. I'm willing to wager that you've had at least one such discussion with a client of your own. Broaching topics like downsizing and applying for government aid is no easy task. Once you've crossed that bridge, nothing is off limits.

This openness allows you to be a better accountant to your clients. It gives you more information to work with and more of an impetus to provide powerful insights. While we'd all like to provide such insights under rosier circumstances, we can't forget what the challenges of 2020 have taught us. With what you've learned and experienced this year, you can build stronger client relationships than ever. Don't miss the opportunity.

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About the Author

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

Co-ordinates

Email: INFO@AMYVETTER.COM
Web: www.amyvetter.com/



Adi Gaskell

Investing in people builds resilience against the covid recession



It's widely accepted that the economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic will be substantial. Indeed, the World Bank predict that we're facing up to the worst global recession since the 2nd World War. Already we've seen retail demand falling to unprecedented levels, with reduced mobility also causing demand for oil to plummet.

It's prompted economists to predict a recession that is twice as deep as that experienced after the 2008 financial crisis. This unprecedented situation will claim the lives of many companies, but the fallout will not be felt equally across the economy.

Pleasingly, for those of us who have long been advocating greater employer investment in the workforce, new [research](#) from Warwick Business School suggests that those organizations that have done this are likely to be buffered from the worst of the Covid recession.

Building the contract

The researchers find that the best workplace performance occurs when there is a clear contract between employer and employees.

This isn't a contract in an explicit and legal sense, but more in the implicit sense that employees know that their employer will do the right thing, will invest in them

and their skills, and will generally have their back through thick and thin.

This implicit contract then invokes a feeling of reciprocity, with employees striving to return that faith and do the best they can for an organization that has done well by them. It's a contract that's based upon trust and is vital if productivity is to be high across the business.

The risk is that when faced with the intense pressure an external shock, such as a recession, places upon managers, they can be tempted to take short cuts, reduce costs to the bone, and fundamentally break these implicit contracts, both through reducing pay and benefits, but also shortchanging employees in a variety of ways.

Such measures are not without consequences. Redundancies made in haste leave an indelible mark on the employees left behind, especially as their work is likely to intensify in the absence of former colleagues. It all adds up to a gradual, or even rapid, erosion of trust and commitment, which in turn undermines productivity.

Supporting the foundations

These implicit contracts are inherently fragile, but the research found that they can be bolstered and reinforced by robust HRM practices that are designed to benefit both employee and

employer. Such practices can often incur short-term costs, but they pay off in the long run.

The findings came from an analysis of the British Workplace Employment Relations Survey that was undertaken by the UK government either side of the 2008 recession. In total, 989 workplaces were included in both the 2004 and 2011 surveys, allowing the researchers to compare employment relations in these firms alongside their ability to weather what was the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

The researchers assessed the state of HRM in each firm across five domains: employee development, team working, incentives, selection, and participation. They then attempted to control for various factors that might influence workplace performance, such as the region the firm was based in, the size of the workforce, and the industry the company operated in.

The assessment revealed that those companies with a more comprehensive HRM practice were able to emerge from the recession better than their peers with weaker HRM practices. What's more, this was especially so among firms that had experienced a particularly severe contraction as a result of the recession.

Developing the workforce

In his latest book, *Backstage Leadership*, INSEAD's Charles Galunic outlines a number of things organizations should take into account when developing the kind of workplace that can survive the Covid recession.

- **Changing relationships with work** – Many workers today lack the unstinting, job-for-life loyalty that was perhaps common in the past. Instead, they are more loyal to values and causes, and want their work to help them fulfill those. In a Covid context, this means operating in the right way, and investing in both your workforce and your community.
- **Technology matters** – More and more of the workforce consider themselves to be digital natives, so working from home is no big deal as they have the skills to do so. They just need the technology and the trust from their employer to do their job from anywhere.
- **Leadership needs to change** – Leadership comes in many shapes and sizes, and the traditional hierarchical approach is increasingly outdated, with employees today expecting a more servant leadership style that sees the leader working to help the subject matter expert as much as they can rather than standing over them with whip in hand.

Galunic argues that leadership in such a context has to become a lot more accessible, with employees given real-time access to their leaders. Organizations should also strive to ensure that work has real meaning to it, both in the outcomes of each employees work, but also how their work fits into the rest of their life.

"Work-life balance not only encompasses family life, but increasingly it goes beyond, touching on individuals and time for their personal development," Galunic says.

If this can be coupled with rigorous development opportunities that offer both deep dive opportunities and ongoing mentoring, networking, and other more tacit forms of knowledge exchange, then organizations stand a better chance of developing the kind of culture the Warwick team suggest is key to surviving recessions like the one we're about to encounter. While it might be too late for organizations to pivot on such a scale to create this culture now, it will hopefully forewarn leaders for recessions to come.

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About the Author

Adi Gaskell is an innovation writer and consultant who has worked with leading organisations from the private and public sectors, including Deloitte, Dell EMC, GSK, the Ministry of Defence, InnovateUK, Government Office for Science and National Health Service. He writes regularly on business, innovation and technology for Forbes and the BBC, as well as academic publications such as the LSE Business Review. He has also contributed authored and ghost-written content for companies such as Salesforce, Alcatel, BBVA, HCL Technologies, Adobe and T-Mobile, as well as white papers and journal articles. He has an academic background in computing and artificial intelligence and studied innovation at the Tuck School of Business.

Co-ordinates

Twitter: [@adigaskell](https://twitter.com/adigaskell)

LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/in/adigaskell/

Web: adigaskell.org/blog

Inspirational Quotes

It isn't where you came from; it's where you're going that counts.

Ella Fitzgerald

If people are doubting how far you can go, go so far that you can't hear them anymore.

Michele Ruiz

Nothing is impossible, the word itself says 'I'm Possible!'

Audrey Hepburn

Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.

George Bernard Shaw

If you can do what you do best and be happy, you're further along in life than most people.

Leonardo DiCaprio

Debra Murphy

5 tips for managing your online reputation



“Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.”

This children’s rhyme does not apply in today’s highly connected world where a few negative words can cost your company a lot of business. Now everything from quality reviews and recommendations, legitimate issues and reputation damaging complaints are there for the entire world to see.

Managing your online reputation is no longer optional. It needs a simple strategy that combines monitoring what is available about you and responding appropriately. This will ensure your business is not unknowingly damaged by negative comments.

Even if you have never added your information into Yelp, Google My Business or other online business directories, it doesn’t mean that your business isn’t already visible online and immune from the backlash of an unhappy customer.

How should your business approach managing its online reputation?

Because of its critical nature to the success of your business, you need to proactively manage your online reputation. It’s not something you should leave up to someone else. When it comes to responding and engaging your audience, you should handle that

personally. Here are 5 tips to get you started:

Regularly monitor your brand’s reputation

Search for your business name and see what comes up. Conducting a vanity search helps you identify not only where you are listed but also what is being said about your company. You want to be sure your information is accurate and complete.

Take note of all the places your business name appears. You will need this information to determine what online directories are important to claim and control.

Claim your local business listings

Did you know that **90% of consumers search for local businesses online**? So how does your business be visible in a crowded local market.

Claiming your local business listings is a mandatory action item. When a listing is claimed, it sends a message that the business is open and ready to help. Unclaimed listings make your business seem out of touch. Plus you run the risk that someone else can claim your listing.

Make sure the content in the listing is accurate and optimized to include your top keyword phrases to get better visibility for local searches.

Stay or get more active online

Is there something negative about you or your business that shows up in the search results? Removing content from the search results is nearly impossible, but you can make it less visible.

Implement a sound **content marketing strategy**. Create more interesting and positive content that pushes the negative down and out of the first few pages of the search results.

- **Start a blog.** Remember each blog post is a new page that can be indexed.
- **Implement a public relations strategy.** PR is a great way to post positive news about you and your business.
- **Post on LinkedIn.** This content can show up in search results.
- **Guest post on popular blogs.** Put together a strategy for guest posting and reach out to quality blogs that take guest posts.

Google wants fresh content so the more you post, the more content you will have in the search results. New pages of content in your or your business’s name will push negative content lower in the results and out of site.

Encourage customers to write reviews about your business

You can't easily remove negative reviews but there are ways to **minimize their impact**. However you do need to get your best customers to speak on your behalf.

There are several ways to encourage reviews without being pushy:

- Add a note to your invoice asking "How did we do?" and point them to your website.
- Provide links directly to your Google My Business write a review feature.
- Create a big "Write a Review" button on your website which takes them to a page of links to your Google My Business, Bing Local, Yelp or other online review sites. This makes it easy for you to point them to one place where they can click a link and write a review.

Respond to negative comments and reviews immediately

You cannot ignore what is being posted about your brand online. Reviews, both good and bad, will happen whether you want them or not. Most rational people understand that you can never please everyone all the time, so a couple of unflattering reviews are expected. But if all I find are negative comments, I will question the integrity of the company.

Take the high road and **respond to negative reviews**. Try to resolve them as quickly as possible. Respond as you, the business owner and be visible, authentic, concerned and humble about the situation. This will alleviate fears and send the message that your company is concerned about their customers. (Then strive to get happy customers to post positive reviews!)

For most of us, monitoring and managing our online reputation is not that difficult. It takes a little time to monitor what is out there and determine what you need to do to respond or change the perception. This exercise is part of your marketing plan. It is important to create the image you want your prospects and customers to see. Even if you don't have any negative content about you, you still have work to do to create an image that is visible, credible and consistent with your brand.

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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.

Co-ordinates

Web: masterful-marketing.com/

Twitter: [@masterfulmktg](https://twitter.com/masterfulmktg)

LinkedIn:

[linkedin.com/in/debramurphy](https://www.linkedin.com/in/debramurphy)

Facebook:

[facebook.com/MasterfulMarketing](https://www.facebook.com/MasterfulMarketing)



Unlocking Your iPhone While Wearing a Mask Gets Easier Thanks to New iOS Update

To use this tip, you'll need to update your iPhone's software. If you've forgotten how, we have a tip on **how to update** iPhone software. Once your update is complete, the first time you unlock your iPhone you will be required to enter your passcode to enable Face ID. Going forward, to unlock your iPhone while wearing a mask:

1. **Swipe up** from the bottom of your iPhone's Lock screen.
2. Your phone will give you the option to **Swipe up for Face ID** or **Enter Passcode**.
3. Enter your passcode now.



iPhoneLife



Dimis Michaelides

Unexpected foes – weak links in Innovation roadmaps

Imagine you are implementing a transformation program in your organization. You have it all spelt out with the fashionable jargon of our times. A new **vision** for a new **business model** which came from heaps of **Out-of-the-Box design thinking**. With entirely **customer-centric** systems using **state-of-the-art digital technology** (and of course **chatbots, actionable analytics, big data, internet of things**). A **lean** and **agile** operation with plenty of **scrum** will implement this model which will empower everybody to **think smarter** and **act faster**. You might even **celebrate a few failures**. Oh and (how could I forget?) the truckloads of **artificial intelligence** you poured in to make it happen.

Then humans move in to spoil it all. Bastards! Really now? If you really thought the innovation roadmap you showcased on paper (or on powerpoint slides) would move everyone to action, then your own intelligence must be artificial.

Cranky old fogies, arrogant pricks, short-sighted accountants, unimaginative bureaucrats, scheming silo sheikhs and comfortable chieftains are the usual suspects. But the most dangerous foes are in fact the most unlikely foes.

Technology Managers.

They are probably good in managing yesterday's technology and have good knowledge and tight control over today's systems in operation. They are always ready to service new demands, if only users would express their wishes more clearly. But they hate the new generation of geeks and nerds.

I experienced reticence and even hostility to change from heads of technology a number of times in my career. In the late eighties/early nineties the IT manager of the multinational company I was then working for, could not see why everyone needed to have access to the systems with personal computers. Desktops were anathema to him. "But we can do all this with the systems we already have, just put in a request", he fumed!

And only last year the technology manager of an important public organization once declared during a strategy session "Why should I want change, I'm retiring in ten years"! Still, he was not fired.

Exceptionally Creative Thinkers.

Organizations need them more than ever to create transformation plans and solve problems in new, imaginative ways. But beware, they have egos too, and big ones at that. If it's not **their** creative solution you opt for they might be miffed. If they feel you are stifling their creativity their blood will boil. And they can find very creative ways to thwart your change plans too.

Excellent Workers.

They are valuable employees. To date they have been brilliant in their work, delivering what is expected and more. They sure know how to do things well. But now they are asked to do different things and they are less sure. Perhaps they will be working for different bosses. They will have to prove themselves again. These things make them feel mighty uneasy.

Compassionate Souls.

They, too, are precious for company life and progress. They have empathy and high emotional intelligence. They are skillful in detecting feelings and moods. They socialize a lot and know the

personal circumstances of their colleagues. The innovation roadmap however will, like it or not, have different types of impact on different people. And if their co-workers feel threatened, ignored or slighted, compassionate souls will militate against the injustice of the new transformation plan.

Culture.

Culture is a known deadly enemy of innovation. At times though it's a scapegoat for people who don't want to change – "our culture is not open to change, other things are more important ...". When it embarks on a serious innovation journey, leadership can and must change cultures too, above all by their own behaviour and actions. The transformation roadmap must be implemented with panache and finesse as well as vitesse.

Good leaders will stretch each person's capacity to change. They should be aware that the adversaries of change are not always the most obvious ones.

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About the Author:

Dimis Michaelides, keynote speaker and author on innovation, creativity and leadership. Dimis has extensive international experience as a business executive and as a speaker in corporate and public events. He also offers workshops and change management consulting for private businesses, NGOs and public organizations.

Experiences with Dimis are out-of-the-ordinary, designed to have a lasting and practical impact. He blends subject-matter expertise with individual client needs, participants' energy and... a touch of magic!

Co-ordinates:

Web: www.dimis.org
Subscribe to dimis.org newsletter





Braden Kelley

Eat, Sleep, Innovate: How to make creativity an everyday habit inside your organization [Interview]

Interview with Scott D. Anthony

I had the opportunity recently to interview fellow author Scott D. Anthony of consulting firm Innosight to talk with him about his new book *Eat, Sleep, Innovate: How to Make Creativity an Everyday Habit Inside Your Organization*, which is his eighth book with his co-authors Paul Cobban, Natalie Painchaud, and Andy Parker. Congratulations Scott!



1. Given all the innovation books already written (including yours), what did you see missing to make you write another one?

This book traces back to a conversation with a client about five years ago. We were doing a workshop with the top team of a global logistics company, and talking about all of our usual stuff about the need to create organizational space for disruptive innovation and whatnot. The CEO stopped the discussion and said basically, "I've read all of your books and we've done what you would tell us to do. I have a small team focused on disruption. They are doing great. But what should I do with the 28,000 other people in my organization?" We didn't have a great answer to the question! In 2017-2018, we did a project for DBS Bank here in Singapore that forced us to push the thinking on the topic, so decided that we would take what we learned, augment it with

additional research and case studies, and create a book.

2. Why do behaviours command such a central role in innovation?

Innovation doesn't happen magically. It happens from people doing things. Much of the innovation literature focuses on the end output, on the strategy, on the supporting organizational structures and processes, but of course all of that only works if people follow certain day-to-day behaviours. One simple way we remind people of this is to return to the basic definition we have of innovation: something different that creates value. You can't do something different that creates value if you don't do something!

3. What behaviours are most important to innovation?

There has been good research and writing on this from a range of different scholars and thought leaders. Our synthesis of this work and our own field work suggests that five behaviours are the most critical. It starts with curiosity. You have to question the status quo and ask "What if?" to begin the innovation journey. Next is being customer obsessed. Ultimately, for innovation to take root it must solve a real problem that matters to customers, so great innovators take the time to find problems worth solving, what we call a job to be done. The third behaviour is collaboration.

One of the most time tested findings in the innovation literature is that magic happens at intersections, when different mindsets and skills collide together. Great innovators recognize that none of us is as smart as all of us. The fourth is being adept in ambiguity. Innovation success comes from

trial-and-error experimentation, and requires being willing to fumble, take false steps, and sometimes fail. Finally, innovation requires being empowered. To be a broken record, you can't do something different that creates value unless you do something!

4. What are BEANs and why are they important?

A BEAN is a behaviour enabler, artifact and nudge. They are important because they get at a hidden barrier to innovation inside organizations: institutional inertia. Let me explain this by describing a puzzle. Over the last 15 years, I've watched my four children grow up in parallel to working with large organizations all around the world. I didn't have to teach my children to follow behaviours that drive innovation success. Like all humans, they are naturally curious, collaborative, and love to experiment. Yet organizations, filled with people that once followed these behaviours naturally, struggle with innovation. Why? Established organizations focus on doing what they are currently doing better. Innovation is doing something different. Ingrained habits constrain innovation energy. A BEAN draws on the habit change literature to break this inertia and encourage innovation.

5. What makes a successful BEAN?

There's a basic answer and a more complex answer. The basic answer is that a BEAN engages the two decision making frames that Daniel Kahneman identified in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*: behaviour enablers trigger the rational, logical part of our brain where we carefully consider decisions (System 2) and artifacts and nudges trigger the portion of

our brain where we make quick, subconscious decisions (System I). The more complex answer is that a successful BEAN has six criteria. A good BEAN is simple, making it easy to do regularly, practical, lowering barriers to use, reinforced, making it stronger, organizationally consistent, making it natural to do, unusual, making it easy to remember, and trackable, allowing it to be further refined and improved. Yes, those words form the acronym SPROUT. So, a good BEAN needs to SPROUT.

6. Why are artifacts important?

Artifacts are visual or digital reminders help people unconsciously follow new behaviours. One of my favorite examples is OXO's wall of globes. In its headquarters the company, which makes kitchen appliances and tools, has a visible display of lost gloves, as a way to remind employees that its products have to work for people with lots of different sized and shaped hands. These kinds of repeated reminders are great subtle ways to shape behaviours.

7. Is it difficult for people to come up with behaviour modification ideas instead of product/service ideas?

In our experience, it can be, at least at first. The innovation movement has been in the mainstream for several decades now. But behavioural psychology and economics concepts aren't in the mainstream in many organizations yet. The biggest barrier that we have seen is identifying what we call a "behavioural blocker."

Organizations are pretty good at identifying the behaviours that they want to follow, such as being better at experimenting and taking risk. When asked what they do instead of the desired behaviour they often respond with a feeling ("we are scared") or point to obvious barriers ("we don't have time"). It's good to probe to figure out what is really going on. We ask people to describe a behaviour to bring the feeling to life. So instead of saying we are scared, perhaps people change the conversation, or suggest going

back to do more detailed analysis. The more you can home in on where an intervention will have the greatest impact.

8. Are all organizations capable of using the BEAN approach?

Absolutely! And, I'd note too, while we developed it in the context of creating a culture of innovation, it is a general purpose tool that you can use to create a culture of customer-centricity, trust, or, really, whatever it is you are seeking.

9. Where do BEANs plug in to the average innovation process?

Our book *Eat, Sleep, Innovate* has 101 BEANs in it, and in the back of the book we describe some of our favorite BEANs tied to the four general phases of innovation: discovering opportunities, blueprinting ideas, assessing and testing ideas, and moving ideas forward. So, BEANs can really connect into all stages of average innovation process. It is all about figuring out the specific behaviour you want to encourage. Curiosity and customer obsession tend to tie more towards discovering opportunities, collaboration becomes more important as you start to blueprint ideas, being adept in ambiguity obviously matters hugely in the testing phase, and being empowered is critical to move ideas forward.

10. What must people keep in mind when trying to build a successful BEAN?

I would say two things here. First, while the BEAN is a very useful tool, it certainly is not a silver bullet. In the book, we share the story of DBS Bank's cultural transformation. BEANs played an important part in the journey, but of course cultural transformation requires identifying a desired future strategy, working on key structural issues, significant leadership role modeling, and much more. Our book's appendix highlights some of the top tips from a review of the culture change literature. The second thing I would note is like innovation, the best BEANs emerge from trial-and-error experimentation. Sorry to torture the metaphor but plant a few seeds

and see which ones grow and which ones don't!

Thanks for all that Scott! I hope everyone has enjoyed this peek into the mind of one of the people behind the new book *Eat, Sleep, Innovate!*



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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 an InnovationExcellence.com co-Founder. Braden has been advising companies on how to increase their revenue and cut their costs since 1996. He writes and speaks frequently on the topics of continuous innovation, digital transformation, and organizational change. He has **maximized profits for companies** while living and working in England, Germany, and the United States. Braden earned his MBA from top-rated London Business School.

Co-ordinates

LinkedIn: [LinkedIn](#)
Twitter: [Twitter \(@innovate\)](#)
Web: [bradenkelley.com](#)



Bob Apollo

The status quo isn't what it used to be...



Whenever a purchase is inevitable (the customer must act) your competition tends to be predictable - and it will often be another vendor like you. But - as is so often the case in complex B2B sales - the purchase is discretionary (the customer may or may not decide to act) - your fiercest competitor is often the status quo.

This was true even before Covid affected our economy. It is even more true now. It will continue to be important in the future. But the status quo isn't what it used to be.

Preserving the status quo involves doing nothing and sticking with what is familiar rather than venturing into the unknown. It has often been seen by customers as their least-risk option, particularly if there was any significant uncertainty about whether any proposed changes were likely to have a positive impact.

But your customer's world has changed and for many the old certainties and uncertainties will no longer apply. Battening down the hatches until they can revert to the "old normal" - far from being the safe approach - may now be a risky strategy. For many, change is inevitable...

The more enlightened amongst your customers will already have recognised this. They may have concluded that changes that they

could previously afford to defer until some future date now need to be accelerated. Their priorities have shifted - and how you qualify sales opportunities needs to shift as well.

Why change?

Let's firstly acknowledge the three reasons why customers agree to implement change programmes: to fix a problem, to avoid a risk, or to achieve an opportunity. Any proposed project needs to address at least one of these, and the identified problem, risk or opportunity needs to be significant enough to justify action. But that by itself is not enough in the current climate...

The three critical criteria

The change projects that are being prioritised by your customers now are the ones that satisfy three critical criteria: they must be strategically relevant, tactically urgent and offer rapid time-to-payback. Let's examine each of these criteria in more detail:

Strategically relevant

The purchases that are being most easily approved today are the ones that have a direct or strong indirect connection to your customer's high-priority corporate initiatives. This means that your salespeople need to establish the strongest possible (and preferably indispensable) connection between your proposed "solution" and the

customer's most important current priorities.

If you fail to establish this clear connection, your project may still be approved, but it may take longer and require more effort to achieve.

Tactically urgent

As well as being strategically relevant, purchases need to be seen by the customer as tactically urgent. This means that any delay in their decision-making or implementation will mean that it will take longer to achieve their desired outcomes (and may even put those outcomes at risk). You need to help your customer to recognise the full costs and consequences of inaction.

If you fail to maximise the perceived costs and consequences of inaction or delay, the project may still go ahead, but it is likely to take longer to get their commitment than it needed to.

Rapid time-to-value

The third critical factor is that any proposed solution must be able to demonstrate rapid time-to-value. Multi-year projects that only deliver meaningful benefits in a distant and uncertain future are far less likely to be approved than projects that can demonstrate rapid initial time-to-value which is then (for larger and longer projects) compounded as each phase of the initiative delivers additional incremental benefits.

This requires a high level of customer confidence in both the need for the project and in your proposed solution's proven ability to deliver the expected outcomes on-time and within budget. The stronger the evidence you can provide, the more likely it is that the customer will approve the project now rather than later.

Different problems, different risks and different opportunities. Your customers are facing a different set of problems, risks and opportunities compared to the start of the year. Their priorities have changed. Their certainties have been challenged. Their status quo isn't what it used to be. And their new normal is probably going to be significantly different from their old normal.

Your sales organisation needs to see this as an opportunity. You need to reassess your priorities. You need to identify the common widespread issues that you are best-in-class at solving, the characteristics of the organisations that are most likely to suffer from them, the change agents within these potential customers who are most likely to be driving new initiatives, and the specific triggers (other than Covid) that are likely to be driving their need for change.

These may be different from the ones that prevailed at the start of the year. The issues may be different, your ideal customers may be different, the change agents may be different and the specific triggers that drive urgent change may be different. The definitions of strategic relevance, tactical urgency and time-to-value may have changed.

Hope should never be a strategy. Hopefully, you will have already recognised this, and acted. Hopefully, your messages, priorities and targets will have changed. Hopefully, your salespeople's behaviour will have changed. But as we all know, hope is not a strategy. Whenever our customers circumstances change, we need to pivot to help them achieve their newly revised desired outcomes. We need to

help them to recognise what is now possible.

For both our customers and ourselves, the status quo isn't what it used to be. For both our customers and ourselves, our pre-covid trajectories are unlikely to help us to maximise our future success. Both we and our customers have been exposed to an unanticipated shock to the system.

How we respond - and how we choose to help our customers respond - will lay the foundations for our future success or failure. It's up to us.

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About the Author

Bob Apollo is the founder and Chief Strategist of Inflexion-Point Strategy Partners Ltd, a pioneering B2B sales and marketing performance improvement consultancy, based in Reading, UK. Inflexion-Point is one of the UK's leading B2B Sales and Marketing Performance Improvement specialists. Their research-led, evidence-based approach enables clients to increase pipeline values, shorten average sales cycles and improve average sales win rates.

Bob now works with growth-minded organisations of all sizes to help them build scalable businesses. He has written hundreds of articles on the subject of sales and marketing performance, spoken at dozens of industry conferences and events, and blogs regularly for a range of thought-leading sites including Entrepreneur Country, My Venture Pad, The Customer Collective and CustomerThink.

Co-ordinates

Mail: Inflexion-Point Strategy Partners Ltd, PO Box 8087, Reading, Berks, RG6 9GR, UK
Email: bob.apollo@inflexion-point.com
Web: www.inflexion-point.com
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/bobapollo
Blog: www.inflexion-point.com/blog



Paul Sloane

The Accidental Innovation

Thomas Sullivan was a tea merchant in New York. In 1908 he despatched to customers samples of tea leaves in small silken sachets for them to try. Some people thought that the sachets were to be used like metal infusers. Customers were supposed to empty out the contents but instead they put the whole bag into the teapot and then added hot water.



Sullivan heard back that the customers were happy with this new arrangement so he designed teabags for large scale production. He made bags of gauze and then paper. He later added string and a tag so the bag could be easily removed. Innovators are open-minded and quick to learn from failure. They are ready to observe and adapt when the unexpected happens.

According to the [Daily Mirror](#) a survey by English Heritage showed that people rated the teabag as one of the most important inventions of all time alongside the wheel and the internet.

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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. He is a skilled facilitator and course leader who helps top level teams achieve breakthrough results in their meetings.

Co-ordinates

Web: www.destination-innovation.com
E-mail: psloane@destination-innovation.com





Soren Kaplan

6 ways to create a culture of Innovation in a virtual world

Culture is a key success factor for every team and organization. Shape it to get more innovation, even from your remote workforce.

Companies like Facebook, Twitter, Box, Slack, and Salesforce all say that employees can keep working remotely well into next year or even forever. *We're seeing a sea change toward remote work* and how to make it more fun and effective. But what happens to the culture of teams and organizations in a virtual world?

In my latest book, *The Invisible Advantage: How to Create a Culture of Innovation*, I define culture as "the norms and values that shape behaviour." If you want to change culture to get more innovation, for example, you need to change norms and values toward things that inspire people to generate ideas, prioritize the best ones, test them out, and implement them using customer input. So how do you do that when you're working remotely and it's impossible to gather around the water cooler?

To change norms and values, you need to first change your own behaviour, since our behaviour is what ultimately communicates and reinforces what's important. If you want more innovation, you need to do things that demonstrate you're serious about soliciting ideas and doing something with them.

Here are six things you can do to *get more innovation from your remote team in today's virtual world*:

1. Find Problems to Fuel Ideas

Innovation starts with problems. Ineffective leaders ignore problems and sweep them under the carpet. Innovative leaders love problems because they're the basis for new ideas. Every month, ask your team to share the toughest problems they're facing due to working remotely or in their work serving customers. Keep a running list that you can continually prioritize. The result: *People see you're serious about addressing real issues and they don't hold back sharing problems that, if solved, will make a big difference for the business.*

2. Bring on Virtual Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a simple process that includes generating lots of ideas, prioritizing them, and the selection the best of the best to pursue. Get a tool specifically designed for online brainstorming, like Mural, Lucidchart, or Ideaboardz. The result: *People learn the brainstorming process and your team will have online tools that are just as effective as stickies on a white board.*

3. Tell Symbolic Stories

People remember stories. And stories contain messages about what's important and why. Look for current or past examples of "innovation" from your team, other teams in your organization, or even outside your company. Find stories about how people overcame physical distance or used technology to innovate. Discuss what led to success and how you can do similar things as a team working remotely. The result: *People internalize what's important and why and will re-tell*

the same stories to others as part of reinforcing culture.

4. Pair Up to Show Up

Working remotely can feel isolating. Pair people to tackle a tough idea or problem. Give pairs time to work together and then report back progress. Use the larger team to provide feedback and support each pair's efforts. Run virtual "innovation synch-ups," where pairs share their ideas with the larger team and get feedback. The result: *Pairing people up builds relationships infused with the values of innovation while ensuring more robust results.*

5. Count It to Make It Count

You get what you measure. Set a target to collect some number of new ideas per month (like 15-20) and successfully implement 1-2 as a team. Track and report on progress regularly so everyone knows the targets are serious success measures. Create an online dashboard that you use to track progress from meeting to meeting. The result: *People see the importance of quantifiable results and feel accountable to them.*

6. Celebrate Wins to Create a Winning Team

Recognition of achievements and team celebrations are as important as ever. When someone delivers an innovation—whether creating a new product, service, process, or anything else—recognize them publicly. During virtual team meetings, set aside time for "virtual awards" to recognize those who have made valuable contributions. Email or snail mail a certificate or gift card in advance so recipients have real-world awards in their possession during the ceremony. The result:

People understand the innovative behaviour and results that are valued and will do what they can to deliver more of it themselves.

As I wrote in my last article, business should ideally keep going and growing, even in a pandemic or economic downturn. Innovation shouldn't stop either. If you're not innovating, it's likely someone else is. And it's likely your competition. In today's world, everything eventually gets disrupted. Your culture is ultimately your only sustainable competitive advantage—even in a virtual world. Shape yours today.

If you want to see how you can build tools & resources to support your remote team, [sign up for a free beta account on upBoard](#).

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About the Author

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

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

Co-ordinates

Twitter: twitter.com/sorenkaplan
 LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/sorenkaplan



Sunil Bali

Wet wisdom.....

Over 70% of our body is made of it (water), we can't survive a week without it, and we can also learn a few lessons from it.

Here are six of the best:

- Boiling water softens potatoes and hardens eggs. It's about what you're made of; not your circumstances.
- Don't water the concrete. Nothing grows there. Stay focused on doing what matters most.
- Don't water yourself down, because you'll be less palatable to yourself and cheating those who matter. Don't water yourself down, simply because someone can't handle you pure, undiluted and 100% proof.
- At 211 degrees Fahrenheit water doesn't do very much, but at 212 degrees it boils and produces steam which can power trains weighing over 500 tons. That's a change in temperature of less than half a percent. Small differences in

behaviour can create huge changes in results.

- Ships don't sink because of the water around them. They sink because of the water that gets in them. Be careful who you let into your head. And finally,
- When life pees on you, remember the words of Billy Connolly who said, "Today's rain, is tomorrow's whisky."

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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 50,000 people and has had the pleasure of working with some great entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders.

Moving minds - Transforming performance

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



Dr Lynda Shaw

Working from home or the office – How to do it best



For many of us, Coronavirus has turned the way we work upside down. With more of us negotiating how to safely go back to work versus working from home, office workers and business leaders have never needed to be so flexible. But should we go back to the office or continue to work from home where possible? Here are some of the things employers and employees need to consider.

AS AN EMPLOYER:

1. **Be Flexible.** It is very hard to create a case that your employees can't work from home as they have more than likely proved over the last few months that they can do exactly that with great efficiency. Some people may be shielding, may want to avoid public transport, might need greater flexibility because of school issues and others might really want to go back to the office. Hybrid working (part time at home and part time in the office) is gathering strong momentum. Consider individual cases and keep communication open.

2. **Showing safety is paramount.** It is very important that you are clear about how you are keeping your employees, clients and visitors safe by creating a Covid secure space. Clearly explain the extra precautions you have taken to do this. Reducing hot desking, shift creation and extended choice of working hours are in top demand. Health, hygiene and responsible management have never been such a top priority and you will be judged by your workforce, clients and colleagues accordingly.
3. **Construct a code of conduct** – Be clear with your team about their hours and the need for them to be flexible too. Create set days when catch ups are necessary. Having a clear code of conduct is key.
4. **Reduce unconscious biases** – Elevating diversity and inclusion has never been more important. Most biases are unconscious but can influence decisions in staff development, training, recruitment, promotion and rewards. Avoid having a bias towards workers who only share your views. Reduce opportunities

for bias through self-evaluations, 360 evaluations, open communication and being aware of biases. There may be a tendency for more results-based working especially as budgets tighten in the recession but be careful about increased anxiety and stress when adding extra employee monitoring and performance-based roles.

5. **Build a strong relationship with your team members** – Building trust between yourself and your employees ultimately creates loyalty which encourages staff retention. Experienced and loyal staff are more likely to go above and beyond and produce a healthy productivity output in a strongly bonded team. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy.
6. **Care about their anxieties** – some of us will be struggling more than others about our constantly changing world or will be feeling more vulnerable. Each set of circumstances will be different. Show you care. Equally encourage a healthy work-life balance as this is vital for everyone's mental wellbeing.

7. **You will be judged on performance** - Employees are less likely to be jumping ship right now as job security is highly valued but equally bosses will be judged on how good an employer they are during this difficult time.
8. **Communicate to motivate** – Stay in contact with your team often. Working remotely may mean it is harder to keep on top of tasks and track everyone's progress. Find a way that works for you. A virtual daily update in the morning is often a good place to start. Offer employee rewards and share positive feedback (and negative if needs be).

AS AN EMPLOYEE:

1. **Working from home may seem like the perfect idea** but it is possible that if you are working at home whilst all your colleagues are back in the office that the case of 'out of sight out of mind' may come into play and you could sadly be overlooked for great projects or even for a promotion. Make sure you are not being kept out on a limb and that a two-tier workforce doesn't form.
2. **Be flexible** – Just as you want flexibility from your employer make sure that you can offer the same in return when possible. Fairs fair and you need to strike a balance. Give your thanks to office leaders who have offered you requested increased flexibility.
3. **Avoid isolation** – Isolation is associated with cognitive decline and lack of motivation which are damaging in multiple ways. Not being around colleagues or in an office environment can make you feel isolated. Ask questions, arrange virtual meetings and stay in the loop, otherwise you may be left feeling undervalued and isolated.

4. **Utilise the benefits of working from home** – By all means enjoy the opportunities and benefits of working at home. Equally it is the perfect opportunity to show how motivated and diligent you are. Feeling as though you have more control over your hours and work projects should increase motivation.
5. **Prove your commitment** – Be careful never to breach the trust given to you by your employer if you are working from home or alone in the office. Maintain deadlines, respond to emails and keep your phone on you at all times. Work your contracted hours as if you were in the office. Prove you are committed, efficient and serious about working from home.
6. **Avoid distractions** – If you are working from home you are likely to have chosen an area to work in which has minimal distractions. If you are going to be working from home long term, make sure you have all the equipment you need to work efficiently including a good desk space and chair. Distraction can cause cognitive fatigue which can increase the risk of errors within your work.

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About the Author

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

Dr Shaw has lectured in Psychology and Neuroscience at various Universities in the UK and conducted research on brain function and impairment, specialising in consciousness, emotion and the effects of ageing.

She was honoured to receive the Professional Speaking Award of Excellence in October 2017, it is the highest accolade for UK speakers given by their peers.

Co-ordinates

Email: lynda@drlyndashaw.com

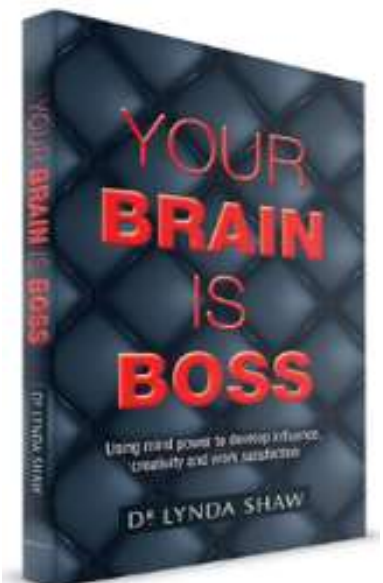
Web: www.drlyndashaw.com



“Your Brain is Boss”

Dr Lynda Shaw's book provides business leaders with insights into the role of emotion in business, and how to use their own mind power to develop influence, creativity and work satisfaction. Your Brain is Boss is a brimming with ideas and tools that can help simplify your work and personal life so you can reach your goals. Whatever stage you are at in your life or career, by understanding that your brain is boss and how to take charge, you will enhance your emotional, mental, physical and financial wellbeing.

Buy now on Amazon





Thom Dennis

Bullying is systemic in the workplace despite working from home

Whilst we may not all be facing each other across our desks at the moment as we circumnavigate our way through Covid-19, bullying is still rife and systemic in the workplace, with cyber bullying in particular being driven higher by the pandemic, according to leaders in change management.

As anti-bullying week (16th November - 20th November 2020) approaches, Thom Dennis, MD of Serenity in Leadership, is calling for deeper understanding and systemic action to tackle the problem. "Whilst bullying can sometimes be down to one individual, it can often be deep rooted right in the core of a business. Commitment and persistence are required to alter a culture of bullying because it will show up at every turn, taking many forms, therefore demanding systemic solutions.

"The world is forcing us to pay attention to lingering problems more urgently than ever before. Real change on the issues of dignity, justice and mental health are long overdue. These are urgent problems that are too important to earn only a moment of our attention, regardless of other important issues going on in the world today. Businesses need to keep attending to and identifying bullying and inequality problems to make the changes that will benefit both our people and our businesses.

Organisations thrive when people thrive."

In early 2020 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found in a survey that a quarter of employees think their company

turns a blind eye to workplace bullying and harassment.

Neuroscientist and business psychologist Dr Lynda Shaw says: "What we need to remember is bullying can be found in all walks of life and takes many forms. Often bullying leaves no visible scars, so goes unreported and therefore doesn't show up in statistics. It is even harder to prove now many of us are working from home. Adult bullying can be hard to quantify but everyone should be entitled to a safe and enjoyable work environment, but if invidious bullying has crept in there are ramifications not only for the employees but the business's bottom line will also suffer."

Bullying in the workplace can take many forms including verbal abuse, offensive behaviours, unjustified criticism, singling someone out for the wrong reasons, excluding employees, or embarrassing or humiliating, and much more.

The effects of bullying can be anxiety, depression, low self-worth, feeling intimidated, low morale and stress to the employee or employees, amongst others. In addition, bullying can affect the business in creating poor performance, high levels of sick leave, valuable employees leaving the business, and a hostile environment which can trickle down throughout the workplace becoming visible to customers and business associates thereby affecting the brand.

Thom Dennis tells us how we can address bullying in the workplace:-

1. **Work at a systemic level** for real change rather than just

ticking the boxes. Respect must be a key value throughout every part of the workplace. Bullying must be seen as unacceptable. Full stop.

2. **Diversity** of race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and social differences – businesses need to be passionate about inclusion for everyone – the importance of belonging and connection in an unconnected world has never been more vital. Active, genuine inclusion is the single most effective way of eliminating dysfunctional behaviour.
3. **Leaders need to master responsible power** to enable workplace resilience. Egoless leaders who are seen by colleagues as impactful and inspirational are never ones who abuse their power. Instead these leaders work with transparency, accountability and inclusivity.
4. **Clear protocols** about what to do if you are being bullied or if you see someone being bullied are key and regular policy meetings should be held. There must be clear consequences for bullying too with written bullying and harassment policies, and a clear code of conduct or duty of care to employees.
5. **Don't depend on low statistics to prove that a particular problem doesn't exist in your organisation.** However comprehensive and all-encompassing your protocols are, there will be a significant proportion of people who will not make use of them, despite your reassurances. There are other ways to listen to people and you need to have these separate conduits.
6. **Understand disconnection** in the way we work can mean emotional disconnection and fragmented communication

which creates isolation and anxiety and allows bullying to go even more unnoticed.

7. **Drill down into power and privilege in the workplace** and its use and misuse. Are certain staff members being disempowered by others?
8. **Emotional intelligence** is key to a well-functioning work environment and should be highly valued as it is key to personal and professional success.
9. **Create real dialogue** - We need a safe space to talk about our concerns with leaders. Bring change through facilitated dialogue so that people with the total opposite views can hear each other, and find ways to eliminate biases.
10. **Accept that change in business** is difficult for everyone, more so than ever, and actively ensure good communication, that plans are as transparent as possible in order to face uncertainty head on and that employees are treated equally.

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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.

Co-ordinates

Web:

www.serenityinleadership.com

Email:

serenity@serenityinleadership.com



Urko Wood

Focus: The Key to Success



Knowing where to focus is the key to success at innovation.

"Focus...means saying 'no' to the hundred other good ideas...You have to pick carefully...Innovation is saying 'no' to 1,000 things."

– Steve Jobs

But how do you pick the one best idea among hundreds? What constitutes a "good idea?"

First and foremost, a good idea addresses an important unsatisfied customer need. If an idea does not address an important unsatisfied need, then it is a bad idea. People only buy new products/services that address their important unsatisfied needs.

If you can identify and rank the best opportunities (important unsatisfied needs) in your market and focus only on them, why would you waste time and resources running experiments on dozens or hundreds of bad ideas?

"Jobs theory is not just another framework or marketing approach, but a powerful lens that has driven breakthrough innovation and transformational growth in some of the world's most successful organizations – in wildly diverse arenas. Jobs theory transforms how you define the business you're in, the size and shape of the market in which you compete, and who your competitors are. This enables you to see customers where there were none, ideas for solutions where there were only problems, and opportunity where you least expect it."

– Christensen, Hall, Dillon and Duncan. *Competing Against Luck*. HarperCollins, 2016. p 47.

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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**.

Co-ordinates:

E-Mail: uw@revealgrowth.com

Website: www.revealgrowth.com

LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/in/urkowood





Jeff Haden

If you can answer yes to any of these 5 questions, you're (still) wealthier than you think

Even if your business is struggling these days, now's the time to take stock in what you do have and consider how indeed you are still successful.

One problem with comparisons is that no matter how successful you feel as an entrepreneur, there is always someone who seems more successful. Or smarter. Or more accomplished. Or more talented.

Or wealthier.

Including, at times, when the person you compare yourself to is yourself.

If recent events have impacted your business or bank account, it's easy to feel like you've failed - that all the hard work you put into starting and building a business was for nothing.

That all your **wealth**, in whatever way you choose to define "wealth," is gone.

But there's a different comparison you can make: one that focuses not on what you may no longer have - at least for now - but on what you do have.

Answer yes to any of these five questions, and you're wealthier than you might think:

1. You still have enough money to be able to make positive choices.

Many people live paycheck to paycheck. Worse, many have to decide between necessities. Like whether to fill a prescription or put gas in the car.

If you make enough money, and don't spend so much money, that you can make positive choices about what to do with some of it - whether it's investing or taking a vacation or taking classes or doing

anything by choice rather than necessity - then you're not only better off than you could be.

You're also in a position to **leverage** those dollars to become even wealthier.

2. You still give much more than you take.

We've all experienced this moment: We're having a great conversation, we're finding things in common, and, then, boom: The other person plays the "I need something" card.

And everything about the interaction changes.

What once appeared friendly has turned needy, almost grasping, and, if you're like me, you feel guilty if you decide you don't want to help.

People who feel successful aren't needy. They accept help if it's offered, but they don't feel the need to ask. In fact, they focus on what they can do for other people.

3. You still work for yourself in some fashion, even if "only" a side hustle.

Check out a "richest people" list. Or the **IRS list of largest gross adjusted incomes** (which, admittedly, doesn't get updated very often).

Aside from a few people who won the genetic lottery and inherited fortunes, almost all are entrepreneurs.

Why? When you work for someone else, you will never be paid more than the person or company wants to pay you. Your income is always capped.

But when you start your own business, the only limit on your income is you. Which means your future is still bright - as long as you still believe in yourself.

4. You're still investing in yourself.

The only guaranteed return you will ever receive comes from investing in yourself: sharpening your skills, expanding your network, and improving your expertise, talent, and experience.

Investing in becoming a better version of you will generate better long-term results than any other investment. It's the one investment whose outcome you can almost totally control.

And is the only investment guaranteed to help you live a more fulfilling life.

5. You still enjoy a sense of purpose.

Spending every day doing what you need to do just to provide food and shelter for yourself and your family is certainly a purpose.

But working at something that inspires you, fuels you, and makes you excited to get up, get out, and achieve, that's what turns work into something even more meaningful.

If that's you, then you're wealthier than you think - because you're living a large portion of your life on your terms.

And if that's not a great way to describe "wealth," then nothing is.

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About the Author

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

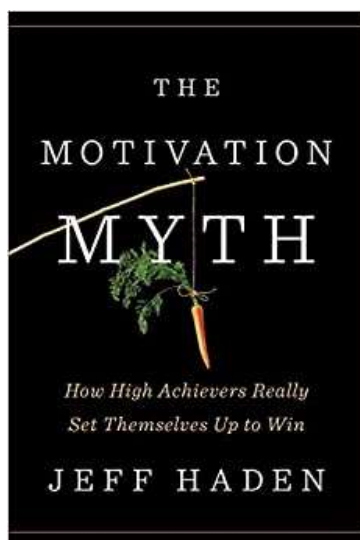
Co-ordinates

Web: inc.com

LinkedIn:

[linkedin.com/in/hadenjeff](https://www.linkedin.com/in/hadenjeff)

Twitter: twitter.com/jeff_haden



Barry Shamis

Choosing leaders in the new economy

The three skills are Flexibility, Ability To Learn and Strategic Thinking.

Flexibility

In today's marketplace, a leader needs to be able to change direction based on an ever-changing analysis of the situation. The rapid pace of change in the market and arrival of new and unique competitors forces flexibility.

The dogged Type "A" leader who refuses to vary from the plan has a much harder time being successful in today's market. This doesn't mean the new leader changes for the sake of change. It does mean that planning is ongoing and fluid enough to meet rapidly changing conditions. Today's leader must constantly compare and analyze new information and take the appropriate action.

Ability To Learn

The ability to learn is defined as quickly absorbing new information and putting it into use. Interestingly, we usually assign this requirement to entry-level employees. In today's market, this skill is a must for the effective leader.

The changing market has caused many of the "traditional" solutions to problems to be rendered useless. A leader who relies on past solutions may be doomed to failure. Today's leader needs to constantly upgrade their knowledge and skill set if they are to identify new and unique solutions to problems and challenges.

The best leaders I know all view learning as a continuous process that needs to keep pace with the pace of change around them. They are great students and constantly invest in their own education.

The demands of leadership change based on the environment and circumstances a leader faces. There can be no doubt that the current economic climate is unique. Businesses are facing more competition, a greater pace of change and more uncertainty than ever.

As a result, the requirements for our leaders have changed as well. Certainly, there are some skills and traits that leaders need regardless of the economic environment. The ability to attract, choose and retain top talent is a skill that transcends time and circumstances.

It is impossible to maintain a successful organization without great talent filling the halls. Talent certainly cures a lot of ills in other facets of a company. The one sustainable competitive advantage in this or any market is the quality of the people in the organization.

A leader who doesn't attract, choose and retain top talent will not be a leader for long.

However, current economic conditions have dictated a change in emphasis to a new set of skills and traits for leaders. The new economy is characterized by an escalating pace of change, and the surge in competition from more diverse sources.

As a result, there are three "core skills" that an effective leader needs to exhibit.

Strategic Thinking

Strategic thinking is the process of blending both short-term and long-term thinking and actions. The knee-jerk reaction when the environment is rapidly changing is to focus strictly on tactical issues. Putting out today's fires. The strategic leader always weighs short-term actions against long-term consequences.

Selling out for either short or long-term is not the act of real leader in the new economy. Careful consideration is given to both and decisions made accordingly.

There are certainly other traits and characteristics of leaders but these three because more prominent in this market. The question now becomes how to select leaders in these challenging times.

The good news is the process of choosing leaders remains consistent. It is always best to rely on the Behavioural Model. This tells us that:

Past Behaviour Predicts Future Behaviour

Putting this into practice is as easy identifying the behaviours necessary for success in your environment and choosing people who behave that way.

When interviewing for flexibility, get specific examples from candidates of plans they adjusted on the fly. Question them about how the decision was made. Learn what options were considered and how the final decision was made.

Don't just get one example. Multiple examples lead to more consistent behavioural patterns. Using the behavioural model, it is possible to project the behaviour to your environment with great accuracy.

For the ability to learn, get multiples examples of how the candidate has improved their skill set. Explore all the investments they made in their own education. Get specific examples of how they put the new information or skill into practice.

Never settle for generalities. Get specific examples with results attached.

For strategic thinking, get examples of decisions the candidate made that considered both short and long-term consequences. Go into great detail about everything that was considered.

Get examples of decisions made that sacrificed either the short or long-term. Once again, get all the details and have the candidate walk through everything that was considered in making the decisions.

For every example get as much detail as possible. Your goal is to learn all of the circumstances of the situation and all of the actions the candidate took. The more data collected, the better the hiring decision.

The traditional profile of a leader needs to be modified as a result of the current market conditions. New times call for new leadership models.

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About the Author

Barry Shamis is the CEO of the international management-consulting firm Selecting Winners. Also, he is the founder and Managing Director of the Institute for Executive Selection.

Barry is an entrepreneur, author of three books and dozens of articles, a trainer and an internationally sought-after speaker. He is the author of the critically acclaimed hiring system, "The Small Business Guide to Recruiting and Hiring Success" and the best-selling program, "How to Hire the Perfect Salesperson."

Co-ordinates

Twitter: twitter.com/barryshamis

LinkedIn:

[linkedin.com/in/barryshamis](https://www.linkedin.com/in/barryshamis)

Web: www.SelectingWinners.com



Claim tax relief for your job expenses

Working from home

You may be able to claim tax relief for additional household costs if you have to work at home on a regular basis, either for all or part of the week. This includes if you have to work from home because of coronavirus (COVID-19).

You cannot claim tax relief if you choose to work from home.

Additional costs include things like heating, metered water bills, home contents insurance, business calls or a new broadband connection. They do not include costs that would stay the same whether you were working at home or in an office, such as mortgage interest, rent or council tax.

You may also be able to **claim tax relief on equipment you've bought**, such as a laptop, chair or mobile phone.

How much you can claim

You can either claim tax relief on:

- £6 a week from 6 April 2020 (for previous tax years the rate is £4 a week) - you will not need to keep evidence of your extra costs
- the exact amount of extra costs you've incurred above the weekly amount - you'll need evidence such as receipts, bills or contracts

You'll get tax relief based on the rate at which you pay tax. For example, if you pay the 20% basic rate of tax and claim tax relief on £6 a week you would get £1.20 per week in tax relief (20% of £6).

Check if you can claim



Peter Thomson

“Here are 3 MORE powerful marketing words you can use this very day”



Isn't it strange, how the smallest changes can make such a difference to success of our marketing messages?

Well, in fact, I'm going to share with you...

Some more power words you can sprinkle into your marketing and get better results.

Hello. My name is Peter Thomson. I'm the UK's most prolific information product creator. And over the last 27 years, I've been helping people like you and me to be more successful. They done this by sharing their knowledge, experience and expertise. Usually by writing, creating and marketing informational products. And by building for themselves businesses and lives of choice.

And today, a bit like the last video I recorded for you, are some more power words you can take away and use. There's three of them. The third one is magnetic. And I'll come to that at the end. Prefer to watch the video? [click here](#)

So, number one is the word "secrets."

What a powerful word this is to use, particularly, perhaps in the title of a free report that we've created: The Seven Secrets Of Increased... whatever it might be.

But, there's a thought here, when we use the word secrets, about who the audience is.

So, for example, secrets tends to be, not always, but tends to be a towards-motivated word. In the sense of, if I create a report called The Secrets Of... whatever it might be, then that's something somebody wants to find out about.

Now, it could well be that we're creating, using the word secrets, this idea of FOMO, F-O-M-O, fear of missing out. Or in other words, if we don't know the secrets, then we're going to miss out.

Let me back up a moment or two...

And think about the type of marketing that we can do. Particularly with email, subject lines or our headlines.

I've found that the best type of marketing is, when I focus on the benefits that the reader or the viewer or the listener.

The second one is that I'm creating curiosity.

So, for example, The Seven Secrets Of... would be curiosity, wouldn't it?

And the third one is news.

And I tend to rank them in that order.

Number one, a benefit for the reader listener or watcher.
Number two, creating curiosity of

some description. And number three is a news value.

So, 'secret' is good because it works. We need to think if we want to focus on an away-motivated message or a towards-motivated message.

And what I found is:

(A cold audience is one that doesn't know me yet)

If I'm marketing to 'cold audience' an away-motivated message out-pulls a towards-motivated message.

So, rather than talk about the secrets of something, I talk about the mistakes that we can avoid. And that 'mistakes' tends to be the away-motivated message. Whereas the secrets tends to be the towards-motivated message. In fact, one of the most powerful, most responsive bits of marketing I ever created...

Was an email that offered a free report, called:

"The 7 Big Mistakes Business Owners Unwittingly Make. Costing Them A Fortune In Lost Turnover, Lost Profits. And What's Even Worse, Lost Personal Cash, And How To Avoid Them".

A great, big, long title. But I've never had a problem with long titles. I found that they've worked well. And this away-motivated title of the report was powerful.

And I've taught this idea to hundreds, if not thousands of people, over many, many years. When they're dealing with a cold audience, the away-motivated message works much better.

The second word we're going to use in our marketing...

Is "breakthrough." And breakthrough implies both news and something new. And the word "new"... There's an extra one for us today. And the word new is powerful as well. But if we can talk about something being a breakthrough, people will be curious.

So, it's a curiosity add word. People will be curious about what that breakthrough might be. Using the word 'breakthrough' creates curiosity about the benefits they might receive.

You can use breakthrough as the title of a programme. You could use it in a report. You could have it as the first line in the name of a report, the title of a report, said, Breakthrough. And then, The Seven Secrets of. Or, Breakthrough: How To Avoid The... whatever number of mistakes that you're going to use.

And I've tended to use what I call spiky numbers. In other words, odd numbers. Pick a like seven, it's got one big angle in it. But I like those spiky numbers when I'm talking about mistakes. Rather than round numbers, like eight, if I'm talking about a benefit in that way.

Now the third one, and this is the one that I told you, is magnetic:

And this is an amazing word. In fact, words, it's a series of words. And the word is these. Or it could be "this." And particularly, these and this, as opposed to those and that.

And here's why:

Many, many years ago there was a headline that didn't work. And it was this, "Do You Make Mistakes In English?" And that didn't work. And the reason it didn't work was it was somewhat critical of the reader. Do you make mistakes in English?

And of course, as a reader of that marketing message, we would almost get defensive, wouldn't we? And we'd sort of lean back and fold our arms and say, "No, of course not." Even though, of course, everybody does.

But when they added the word,

Do You Make "These" Mistakes In English? Wow. What a difference that was. Massive curiosity, with an implied benefit of, once we know the mistakes, then we can avoid making them.

And so, we won't be looking silly in the way we may have looked silly before by making some of these mistakes in English. That word, "these," is great. Now, imagine the difference if we'd used the word "those." Do you make those mistakes in English?

Well, of course, those are over there somewhere. Do you make that mistake in English? It's over there somewhere. Whereas, if you say, do you make these... Ooh, gosh, it's upfront and personal, isn't it? It's, ooh, these mistakes. It's almost frightening. It's so close.

So, that's when I mentioned about the free report that I created:

I would use as a subject line: "Do You Make Any Of These Seven Mistakes In Business". Rather than Do You Make Seven Mistakes In Business. Very different, isn't it? It's that word "these"...

It's that word "these" that is so powerful. In marketing we call this a 'magnetic' word. It draws the reader in.

So, there are three very simple and yet very powerful words...

We can use. We've secrets, we've breakthrough and we've this and these. We can sprinkle in our marketing to, , increase our conversion rates. To increase the number of clients. And to increase our profits and turnover and personal cash.

So, I urge you to take those away and use them. And particularly,

the idea of away-motivation for a cold audience. You'll find that'll work well for you too.

And if you have any questions at all about this email me at success@peterthomson.com

And in the meantime:

I wish you every success in all your adventures in life. As you have freedom from anything that may have held you back and freedom to be, do and have. Always in that order, be, do and have.

Go on then,
Peter

Peter Thomson
"The UK's Most Prolific Information Product Creator"
PS: If you'd like a FREE copy of my latest book called: "How to Write Your Business Book In Five Days Or Less", go to:
<https://www.peterthomson.com>

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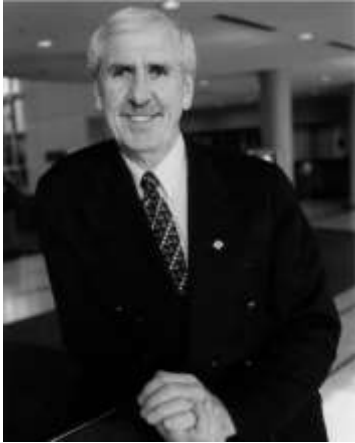
About the Author:

Peter Thomson founded Peter Thomson International Plc to provide a variety of products and services to help business people grow in sales, marketing and communication skills. He is now regarded as the UK's leading strategist on personal and business growth. Starting in business in 1972 he built 3 successful companies - selling the last to a public company, after only 5 years trading, for millions enabling him to retire at age 42. Since that time Peter has concentrated on sharing his proven methods for business and personal success via audio and video programmes, books, consultancy, seminars and conference speeches. With over 60 audio programmes written and recorded he is Nightingale Conant's leading UK author. Simon & Schuster publish Peter's books - The Secrets of Communication and The Pinnacle Principle.

Co-ordinates:

E-mail: success@peterthomson.com
Web: peterthomson.com





Barry Urquhart

"It's a war out there"

Media headlines declaring war, relating to battles, and referring to the need to fight are inflaming emotions.

Those are not the best means to mediate and medicate the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

Such headlines may generate more readers, listeners and viewers. They will do little for confidence and sustainable demand.

Moreover, respected military strategists would question the advisability of such treatment. Sun Tzu and Carl Van Clausewitz both contended the best strategies avoid conflict and the spilling of blood.

Many businesses, big and small, appear to lack appreciation of the first lore of military thinking. That is:

To, win the hearts and minds of people

Now is not the time to be conspicuously opportunist. Winning sales and new customers because of the virus seems crass.

Promoting, fostering, supporting and applauding senses of "community" and "family" are laudable, and doubtlessly, its rewards will prove innate.

True leaders are encouraging team-members to reconnect with existing, prospective and past clients. The spoken word, expressions of genuine concern about the well-being of individuals,

companies and networks are being met with delight. They will be long remembered.

Genuine strategic analyses will underscore the importance of supply-chains, and their effective management.

Introducing, offering and promoting new and free online deliveries, activities and transactions will typically elicit huge positive responses. Much of that will be non-discriminatory. Interest and participation will emerge from diverse global recipients.

Converting casual interest into transactions, revenues, profits and ongoing relationships will be quite another thing. Respect, loyal and referral business seems a bridge too far for many.

Now is the time to review, refine and develop an integrated communications strategy.

The word "propaganda" has a distasteful aura. Its effects, where astutely applied, can have significant, mutually beneficial outcomes.

Sadly, there is sparse evidence of these being adroitly applied. Accordingly, the government, public health authorities and commerce are finding it difficult to win – *the War of Words*.

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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.

Co-ordinates

Mail: 26 Central Road, Kalamunda, Western Australia 6076

Tel - Office: 006 1089 257 1777

E-mail: Urquhart@marketingfocus.net.au

Website: www.marketingfocus.net.au





Janet Sernack

Leading and managing transitional change

In a previous article **“Leading and managing human transitions through disruption and adversity,”** we described the importance of leaders and managers becoming more generous, tolerant, caring, empathic not only with themselves, and also with others they interact with. Describing how many leaders and managers have been emotionally hijacked by the often-dire consequences of their own particular series of downturns and stresses, causing them to unconsciously resist, or react against the current Covid-19 range of crises.

Failing to realise that this not only wastes their energy and drains their resilience, it also inhibits them from embracing and evoking both a “being” and a “doing” perspective in effectively leading and managing change in transitioning people from the old to the new. Where it about acknowledging people’s core survival needs whilst at the same time, letting go of the need for control. By cultivating mental toughness to lead and manage their people compassionately, creatively, and courageously to be resilient and successfully traverse the wilderness between the “now” and what could be a more desirable future.

Mining decades of stability

In the face of the massive disruptions and adverse environment, leading and managing change requires a lot more than the obligatory change management strategy, process, and team. It requires leaders and managers to strategically mine and evoke their previous decades of

stability to unearth their deep wisdom, knowledge, experience, and inner strength, and bring these elements to the present.

By leading and managing change in ways that celebrate the freedom of non-resistance, embrace flexible and open minds, and empathic and compassionate hearts to effect courageous and confident choices about how to “be” in order to know what is the best thing to “do” next.

To support and enable people to safely and creatively transition through three key phases; letting go of the old, wondering, and wandering through the wilderness of “not knowing” and embracing a “beginner mind” to emerge and co-create what might and could be the “new”.

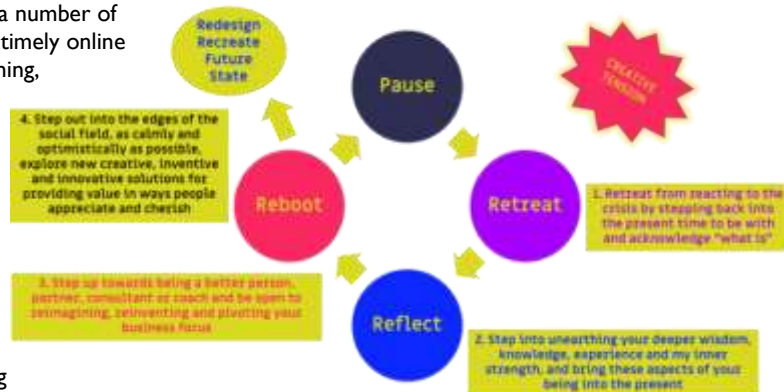
Embracing the freedom of non-resistance

Despite having an online global learning and coaching practice, and having my own stresses and range of survival challenges, I have been using my time, to wander and wonder in the wilderness. by investing in a number of innovative and timely online app-based learning, mindfulness, and meditation programs. With the aim of helping me deal with my own range of reactive responses whilst emerging creative and inventive ways of better helping and supporting others when leading and managing

change to transition through the disrupted world.

One of the programs was generously given as a free six-week virtual learning opportunity by Shirzard Carmine, of **positive intelligence**. It aimed at developing mental fitness as a measure of the strength of my positive mental muscles (Sage) versus the negative (Saboteur). Whose measure of your Mental Fitness is called PQ (Positive Intelligence Quotient). I am also still participating daily in a very different free program, called 40 days of Calm and Resilience, presented by **Calm in the City**.

Which is a not-for-profit community initiative, aimed at engaging with city communities to bring calm into the heart of the city. Finally, I am eight months into a healthy lifestyle paid program from an app called **Noom**, whose aim is to make the world a healthier place, body, mind, and spirit.



Learnings from the wilderness

Here are some of my key learnings from wondering and wandering in the wilderness of “not knowing” and embracing a “beginners mind” that I can happily share with the **ImagineNation™** community:

1. Learning how to be present and hopeful, positive and optimistic, calm, and resilient reinforced the importance of being able to consciously and safely hit my pause button to retreat from reacting to the crisis. **By stepping back into the present time to be with “what is”** really going on for myself, my partner, and my clients, rather than constantly staying in action and doing things to try and “fix” everything.
2. Reflecting on my decades of stability and creativity by **stepping into unearthing my deeper wisdom, knowledge, experience, and my inner strength, and bringing these aspects of my being into the present.** As valuable deep-rooted inner resources, they helped me cultivate the mental toughness needed to calm my mind and endless negative self-talk, to bring more hope, possibilities, and opportunities for a more sustainable, abundant and equitable future into being.
3. Reimagining how to better live my values and passionate purpose by courageously **stepping up towards being a better person, partner, consultant, and coach and being open to reimagining, reinventing, and pivoting my business focus** yet again.
4. Allowing whatever is happening to flow through me, even when its unpleasant and uncomfortable, by **stepping out into the edges of the social field, as calmly as possible, to explore new creative, inventive, and innovative solutions for providing value** to people, in tough times, in ways they appreciate and cherish.

Cultivating mental toughness

Whilst this certainly hasn't been an easy or comfortable learning journey, it has been worthwhile being able to:

- Expose, confront and overcome many of my previously unconscious and resistant demons,
- Let go of a number of old stories and untruths,
- Learn distinctions about the critical role and importance of the “soft” being states, mindsets and behaviours and how they integrate with the necessary “hard” being states, mindsets and behaviours.

All of which are required to cultivate the mental toughness required to help myself and pull others out of their paralysed, overstressed, anxious, or apathetic state, when leading and managing change and **riding the wave of disruptive change** in the transition from the old to the new.

Constantly reinforcing that it's a fine balance for managers and leaders, to find the equilibrium necessary to be both “soft” and “hard” in helping themselves and their people compassionately, creatively, and courageously successfully traverse the wilderness between the “now” and pull them toward a more desirable future.

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About the Author

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

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

Co-ordinates

Email: janetsernack@gmail.com /

info@imaginationation.com.au

Web: www.imaginationation.com.au

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/janetsernack](https://www.linkedin.com/in/janetsernack)



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businessVision

We are different to other accountants

We work much more closely with our clients than traditional accountants. We also have a much smaller number of clients than normal and are selective in the clients that we act for. We want to get to know our clients businesses inside out, enabling us to easily identify problems and spot opportunities. We want to help improve profits and encourage growth.

Our mission is to always add value

Whatever we do for you, we will always carry out our work with the aim of adding value to your business. We run a very cost effective business by making the most of modern technology and homeworking, but we will never be the cheapest solution. John Ruskin defined value as follows:

"It's unwise to pay too much, but it's also unwise to pay too little. When you pay too much you lose a little money, that is all. When you pay too little, you sometimes lose everything, because the thing you bought was incapable of doing the thing you bought it to do.

The common law of business balance prohibits paying a little and getting a lot. It can't be done. If you deal with the lowest bidder, it's well to add something for the risk you run. And if you do that, you will have enough money to pay for something better."

A unique feature of our service is fixed price agreements

Once we have established your needs we will give you a guaranteed fully inclusive price from the start. This will give you peace of mind and no surprise bills.

Background

businessVision are a small friendly firm of Chartered Accountants specialising in small and medium sized businesses. The practice was formed by Marc Lawson in 1985.

Our aim is to provide small and medium sized businesses with information and advice that goes beyond the traditional accountancy services of preparing accounts and tax returns.

businessVision benefit from having a stable number of long serving team members and a reputation in the South West as being a practice that is different from the typical accountancy practice, is small and friendly, but able to offer the type of services more commonly associated with large accountancy firms.

Tel: **01752 752210**

Fax: **01752 752211**

Email: **marc@marclawson.co.uk**

Web: **www.bvisionaccountants.co.uk**

Address:
**Unit 4
Sandy Court
Ashleigh Way
Plymouth
PL7 5JX**

Our philosophy is to provide a high value service by:

- Providing the best possible service
- Aiming to continually exceed our clients' expectations
- Making the time to really listen to the needs of our clients
- Suggesting ideas to improve profits and help the business grow
- Providing professional expertise in order to proactively identify opportunities and provide solutions
- Being an indispensable part of your business

This is achieved by:

- Maintaining a small portfolio of high quality clients
- Employing qualified individuals with a zest for business
- Investing in training and I.T.

We are members of the following professional bodies:

