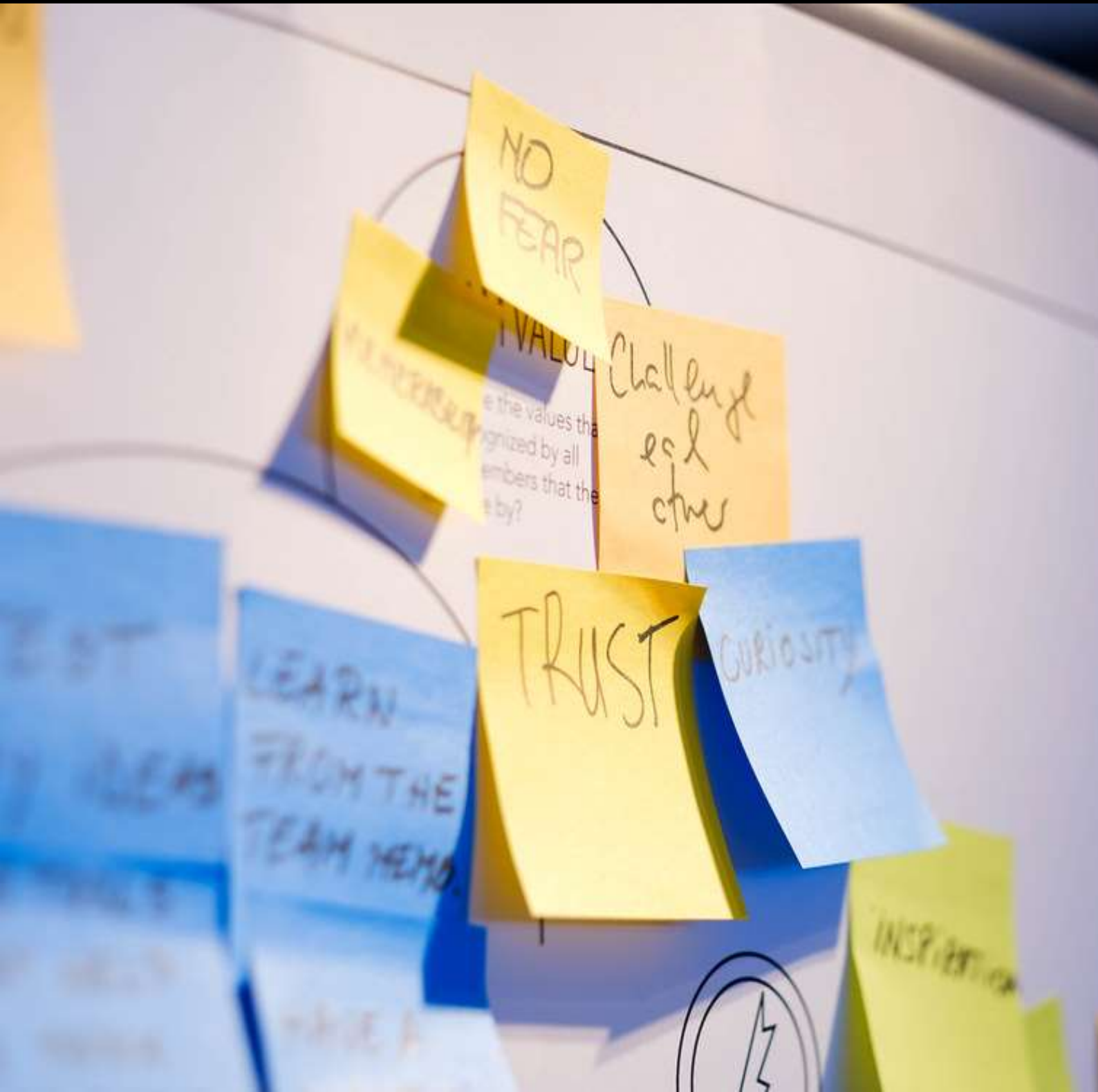


Better Business Focus

August 2021

Expert inspiration for a Better Business



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Better Business Focus is the essential key for business owners and managers. It achieves that by focusing on the way in which successful businesses compete and manage their organisations. It focuses on how people are recruited, coached and developed; on how marketing and selling is undertaken in professional markets as well as in markets with intense competition; on how technology and the Internet is reshaping the face of domestic and home business; and on how people are being equipped with new skills and techniques. In short, it offers expert inspiration for a better business.

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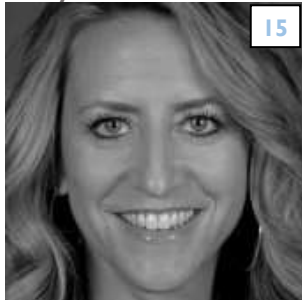
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Want to stay healthy at work? Here are 5 easy ways you can do it with minimal effort



Are you part of the 80 per cent of people not ready to adopt healthier behaviours? Here are some tips that will help you begin your journey toward better health.

According to a report published by the US Chamber of Commerce, approximately 80 per cent of people are not ready to take action to change their health behaviours at any given time.

Unfortunately, that's not really a big surprise. With so many responsibilities and obligations to take care of at work and at home, it is almost standard practice to neglect taking care of yourself.

That's a big mistake.

Don't be part of the 80 per cent who neglect taking care of their own health. Here are some of the most fruitful, effective, and effortless ways you can keep your vitals in check.

1. Grab the smaller bowl or plate.

How much you eat for lunch can be significantly impacted by the size of your plate. Research has shown that those who are offered large plates and larger portions will consistently eat more food. Plus, scientists found that those who ate from bigger serving bowls would eat 56 per cent more food than those who ate from smaller bowls.

2. Choose green tea.

Have a coffee addiction? Why not give it a break and select green tea for your afternoon pick-me-up instead? Rich with antioxidants and nutrients, green tea helps you burn fat by boosting your metabolism and boasts even more health benefits - lowering the risk of heart disease and even lowering the risk of type 2 diabetes.



Picture Source:

<https://search.creativecommons.org/photos/892acd70-39fa-4333-bf0b-cf4180289cee>

3. Or, choose black coffee.

If you absolutely need coffee, you are not alone. Studies have found that over 160 million Americans drink coffee consistently. But here's the catch: two-thirds of this population love to add sugar, cream, milk, and other additives to their brew. These coffee additions can nurture sugar dependence and usher extra saturated fat and calories into your body. Consider indulging in black coffee instead -keep the caffeine and avoid the nutritional hits to your health.

4. Be mindful.

Want to lose weight? Want to improve your eating experience? Pay attention to what you eat, how fast you are chewing, and

why you are eating. If you typically eat because of hunger, then continue, but if you're often eating in response to stress, you may need to practice mindfulness during lunch or snacking times.

5. Don't stay chained to your desk.

Even if you are riding an incredible wave of productivity, prioritise taking breaks. Stretch, walk around the office or take a stroll outside. This can re-energise you and remind you that there's more to life than a sedentary life at your desk.

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About the Author

Peter Economy is the best-selling author of *Managing for Dummies*, *The Management Bible*, *Leading Through Uncertainty*, and more than 85 other books, with total sales in excess of two million copies. He has also served as associate editor for *Leader to Leader* for more than 10 years, where he has worked on projects with the likes of Jim Collins, Frances Hesselbein, Marshall Goldsmith, and many other top management and leadership thinkers.

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Sue Barrett

Hybrid Selling – rebuilding how we sell and buy



COVID has completely reshaped how we do B2B sales with an almost exponential rise in the number of digital/remote client meetings undertaken on video conferencing platforms such as Zoom, Teams, Skype, or Google. Video conferencing and chat has replaced face-to-face encounters overnight. By now, most of us would have experienced video conferences through a number of those platforms, helping us stay in contact to buyers and sellers. What started out as a crisis response is now becoming mainstream and will not be a short-term phenomenon.

Early in the pandemic, savvy business and sales leaders were already seeing the business case for doing B2B selling remotely via video conferencing, chat and phone – it is economically viable, as remote Selling activities directly impact COSA (Cost Of Sales Activities).

At Barrett, we ran the first official remote selling training program in June 2020, with an industrial client who was quick off the mark seeing the benefits and competitive advantages of training and upskilling their technical sales teams across APAC. The cost and time saved and the boost to salesperson activity and productivity with more time to prospect and meet clients remotely, are incredible. Not

having to travel to meetings and instead being able to make more contacts and have meetings with supplier and client teams from different locations remotely makes digital or remote Selling highly attractive and competitively advantageous.

It's not just suppliers taking advantage of this - many buyers are saying they prefer this digital sales space, too. As McKinsey reported in their B2B sales research paper (Oct 2020), only 20% of B2B buyers say they want to return to face-to-face selling.

We reported back in June 2020 that it looked likely remote-selling would become standard operating procedure in the future and that it will be essential to upskill B2B field sales team to know how to sell remotely.

Will B2B sales teams go 100% digital?

Unlikely. But the pendulum is very likely to stay in favour of digital or remote Selling, with a smaller mix of essential or specific in-person client meetings being the exception rather than the norm moving forward. Of course, the ratio of this mix of remote and physical contacts an organisation will have with their customers will depend on several factors, like the actual geographical proximity of buyer and vendor, how progressive or conservative an industry, or more specifically, the

leaders in charge of such decisions are. Organisations, no matter how much they'd like to embrace the new technology, will also need to be sensitive to the expectations of their customers.

While safety will also play a big factor in the rise of digital or remote selling in the COVID normal world, it's the economic factors that are holding sway. The digital selling genie is well and truly out of the bottle and unlikely to go back in.

So, in rebuilding our sales efforts, what do we need to stop, start, and continue to do in 2021?

Stop

- Resist the temptation to try and turn back the clock. View these changes in 2020 as a mere interim necessity, caused by the international crisis and hoping for things to return to some previous "normal" once we can leave the pandemic restrictions behind.
- Clinging to sales methods that are in decline and ignoring the accelerated evolution of sales and Selling in the near future.
- Postponing inevitable upgrades and changes to technology and the way your organisation manages those. Avoid viewing the changes in technology as a disruption caused by a unique situation and look at them as an acceleration of a development that was well under way already.

Start

- Investing in user friendly, self-serve, secure e-commerce sites that make it easy to re-order and make large purchases (>\$50,000) online.
- Training your B2B field sales teams and other client facing people in remote sales skills, knowledge, and capabilities.
- Investing in video conferencing facilities and tech for your sales and client facing teams because video conference is now accounting for 43% of B2B revenue more than other sales channels.
- Consciously work on establishing the necessary strategies, processes, and resources your sales teams need to keep engaging successfully through a diverse array of communication channels.
- Assessing your existing market and exploring potential new ones these changes open up for you and your organisation.
- Exploring the best ways to establish and maintain customer relationships when the frequency of face-to-face meetings should remain low. Studies show that even good salespeople struggle to use their sales skills through these new channels as effectively as in whichever their traditional way was.

Continue

- Keep an open mind and be willing to adapt and adopt.
- Keep the digital communication channels to your customers and other stakeholders open.
- Continue diversifying the ways and means to communicate internally and externally. The new channels will not replace the old ways completely, which means we also need to embrace a broader range of approaches to customers and stakeholders. This will not necessarily make things easier right away, but there will be new opportunities to reward your efforts to proactively drive this change forward with your sales team.

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About the Author

Sue is Founder & Managing Director of Barrett Consulting Group (est. 1995), incorporating Barrett, Sales Essentials, Mind Your Emotions, Sustainable Selling, Barrett Research, and Sell Like a Woman. Barrett is one of Australia's leading sales consulting firms specialising in Sales Strategy, Sales Force Design, Assessments, Sales Training and Sales Coaching.

Sue is regarded by many mainstream business press publishers & editors as one of the most authoritative thought leaders reporting and commenting on the selling profession and sales operations in Australia today, with her company's articles featuring weekly in BRW & Smart Company, as well as bimonthly in IPA's magazine The Public Accountant.

Sue has written and published 21 books and 500+ articles to date on the world of 21st Century selling including topics on sales philosophy/culture/ethics, sales leadership, sales coaching, sales training, selling skills, sales mind set and resilience, neuroscience in Selling, etc. Sue works as business adviser, sales coach & trainer, speaker, and facilitator.

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"How many of you hate it when meetings overrun, and make you late for your next thing?"

I recently asked this question.

Guess what?

Yep – 100% of people hate meetings that overrun.

So how to ensure yours don't?

It's simple.

With ten minutes to go, say the four magic words: **"I'm conscious of time"**

When you say this, two things happen:

- Everybody looks at their watch, to check the time
- They stop talking while they do so

This interrupts your meeting. Giving you time to say "Let's quickly agree our actions before we go".

You then calmly agree your actions, comfortably ending at/before the official time.

Other thoughts on this:

- This approach means you need to plan timings so you complete the agenda with ten minutes to go. Not – as most people do – with no minutes to go!
- You can say "I'm conscious of time" if any agenda item is taking too long. Follow it with "let's take the detail offline" (a polite way of saying 'shut up!')
- When it's someone else's meeting, you can still say it. But...
- ... If it's your boss's boss's meeting, you might just have to suck it up and let them run on!

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About the Author

Andy Bounds is an expert at helping companies communicate and sell better. Author of two best-selling books and winner of the title Britain's Sales Trainer of the Year, Andy has shared his expertise with some of the world's largest companies, helping every one of them have more success.

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Andy Bounds
END
meetings
on time –
with just
four words



Urko Wood

How to gain strategic perspective to drive growth

More and more, I have noticed that the organisations that are most successful at innovation are attaching the Jobs-to-be-Done (JTBD) approach to the front end of their process before Design Thinking, Lean, and Stage Gate processes. This is because JTBD identifies and ranks the biggest opportunities in the target market with statistical validity before ideation. Organisations get three important benefits from this.

First, the team can evaluate and select which opportunities (important unsatisfied needs) to pursue based on how attractive each opportunity is to the firm, e.g., based on the firm's strategy, relative strengths, size of the market, time to market, etc. Great growth strategies are formulated by addressing big market opportunities with the firm's strengths. This forges a tight product/market fit even before any ideas have been generated.

Secondly, because the opportunities are pre-qualified, teams can avoid wasting time and resources generating ideas that address unimportant needs, already well-satisfied needs, or phantom needs (needs that don't really exist). This dramatically increases success rates and shortens development times.

Lastly, because JTBD captures need statements from target customers in a form that is devoid of any solution language, you won't be constrained by current products or services or by the assumption that a product or service is the best way to address

the need. JTBD enables management to evaluate and select the most attractive opportunities in the market and then determine how to best address each one. In many cases, the best way to address a market opportunity is not with a product or service, but with a merger or acquisition, a joint venture, operational innovation, or messaging and positioning. This strategic perspective enhances creativity and delivers dramatically better results.

Consider how **GBQ Partners**, a regional accounting and consulting firm headquartered in Columbus OH, executed this strategy. Their target market is CEOs and CFOs in mid-sized privately held companies. After learning the basics of Jobs Theory, the senior leadership understood that their target customers don't want to hire accountants; they want to get their financial and accounting jobs done. Hence, we interviewed CEOs and CFOs to uncover all the important and unsatisfied financial and accounting-related jobs they are trying to get done in the course of their work, independent of how they get those jobs done today. The partners were then able to decide not only which of the big market opportunities were most attractive to pursue, but how to best pursue each opportunity.

For example, when it came to helping their target customers "protect the firm from cyber-attacks," GBQ recognised that the best solution was to acquire a cybersecurity firm. When it came to helping target customers "hire temporary accountants," GBQ

recognised that the best solution was to enter into a joint venture with a temp accounting firm. When it came to helping target customers "plan for leadership succession," they recognised that they had the internal expertise to grow that practice organically with new and improved service offerings.

By identifying and ranking the opportunities in their market independent of solutions, JTBD gave the GBQ partners the strategic perspective they needed.

It has enabled them to continue to drive revenue growth over time (download the **GBQ case study**). If you don't attach JTBD to the front end of your innovation process, you may be missing some big opportunities.

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About the Author:

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

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Jeff Haden

Why emotionally intelligent people embrace the 2-way-door rule to make better and faster decisions. The 2-way-door rule is an emotionally intelligent way to strip away emotional clutter and build a bias toward action

You need to make a decision. A major decision. A life-changing decision. (Aren't all decisions potentially life-changing?)

So you weigh the pros and the cons. You get advice. You analyse. You agonise. You don't want to make the wrong decision, **because deep down in places you don't talk about in parties**, you want to get it right. You *need* to get it right.

And you never actually make a decision.

Or, if you do, it's a timid, half-hearted, uncommitted version of the full-speed-ahead decision that would make success much more likely.

That's the problem with decisions. The stakes always seem high. Loss of time. Loss of money. Loss of ego.

And, if nothing else, loss of self-esteem. Because it sucks to be wrong.

Sound familiar? If so, here's a simple rule that will help you cut through the emotional clutter to make smarter, faster decisions - and with a lot less angst:

The two-way-door rule.

Here's how it works.

How the two-way-door rule helps you make better decisions

Think about something major you want to do. If you're like most people, you spend a lot more time thinking about potential downsides. What if you **start a business** and it fails? What if you

change careers and fall flat? What if you relocate and desperately miss your old social circle?

Most of us focus on how much we will regret a decision - even if it's something we really want to do - if it doesn't work out.

But when we look back, what we regret are the things we didn't do: the business we didn't start. The career we didn't change. The move we didn't make.

We don't usually regret the things we did, because even if we made a huge mistake, we can fix it. We regret the things we *didn't* do.

We regret the times we didn't take a chance on ourselves.

Because we tend to think every decision is a one-way-door decision.

According to Jeff Bezos - if you want to embrace a bias toward action, you can do a lot worse than taking a page from the Bezos playbook - there are two basic kinds of decisions you can make:

- **One-way door.** These decisions are almost impossible to reverse, so the door only swings one way. Like firing an employee. Selling your business. Ending a vendor or supplier relationship. Generally speaking, once you make a one-way-door decision, there's no going back. (Bezos also calls these Type 1 decisions.)

- **Two-way door.** These decisions are reversible, so the door swings two ways. Like hiring a new employee. Starting a side hustle. Providing a new service. Creating new pricing models. While two-way-door decisions can seem life-and-death, especially before you make them, with a little time and effort, they can be tweaked or modified or even reversed. (Bezos also calls these Type 2 decisions.)

As Bezos wrote in his **1997 Amazon shareholder letter**:

Some decisions are consequential and irreversible or nearly irreversible – one-way doors – and these decisions must be made methodically, carefully, slowly, with great deliberation and consultation. If you walk through and don't like what you see on the other side, you can't get back to where you were before.

But most decisions aren't like that - they are changeable, reversible - they're two-way doors. If you've made a suboptimal Type 2 decision, you don't have to live with the consequences for that long. You can reopen the door and go back through.

According to Bezos, as organisations grow they tend to apply the one-way-door rule to more and more decisions. (Hey, we're big: Every decision is mission-critical.)

The same happens to us as individuals. The more

responsibilities we have, the more goals we set, when life is complicated and time is short - as life and time always seem to be - then every decision can seem mission-critical.

But most are not.

How to apply the two-way-door rule

As Inc. colleague **Jessica Stillman** writes, *"Not all decisions are created equal. Some require deep thought. Other, less weighty choices just demand speed and basic competence."*

So the next time you're struggling to make a decision, take a step back and make a more basic decision:

Whether you're turning a two-way-door decision into a one-way-door decision.

Granted, you'll get some two-way-door decisions wrong. But that's OK. Trust that you'll figure out how to react and respond. Know that you'll come out on the other side a little more skilled and experienced.

As Bezos writes, *"You need to be good at quickly recognising and correcting bad decisions."*

Which all starts with recognising the difference between one-way-door and two-way-door decisions. Because then you'll actually make a lot more decisions.

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About the Author

Jeff Haden is a ghostwriter, speaker, LinkedIn Influencer and Inc. magazine contributing editor. In 2020, his online articles for Inc. alone attracted more than 30 million readers. He has ghostwritten several bestselling books and even more articles, presentations, scripts, reports... and even one eulogy.

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Paul Sloane

The five people you need in your life

Vidusha Nathavitharana is an author and trainer on leadership issues. He argues that you need five key people in your close circle.



Vidusha Nathavitharana

A Supporter. This is someone who believes in you and likes you. They are generally positive and supportive about your plans and ambitions. They might be your partner at home or a colleague at work. Whenever you feel down, you can chat to them and they will help refresh, inspire and motivate you.

A Challenger. A person who challenges you to achieve more. They might say, 'Well done but what is next?' They know that you are capable of more and they push you to achieve it. For many youngsters this is their mother or father.

A Questioner. This is a useful person to have in any team. They ask tough questions in a constructive manner. When you advance your great new idea, they probe it with questions that you had not anticipated. They help keep you grounded and on the right track.

A Mentor or Coach. Someone you can turn to for advice and guidance. Early on this was a teacher or a parent. Later at work it helps to turn to someone who has the experience and wisdom to ask you the right questions and keep you pointing in the right direction. This is someone with whom you can discuss your deepest concerns with complete discretion.

A Technical Expert. In many situations you need a subject matter expert or technical guru to whom you can turn. Don't wing it. Ask an expert and listen to their advice.

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About the Author

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

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Lolly Daskal

Your leadership is contagious—whether you know it or not

When standards in an organisation change, the process tends to be so gradual that it's not readily noticeable. One day you look around and realise that things that used to be unacceptable are now commonplace. Whether it's a lax attitude toward work and deadlines, gossip and backbiting, or dishonesty, it's easy for negative behaviour to take hold.

When norms change, people tend to ask: "How did that happen?" I'm here to tell you: it starts at the top. Leadership is contagious, whether leaders know it or not. If a leader's standards slip, the standards of the organisation follow. If leadership's values are compromised, the values of the business won't be far behind. It's imperative to keep close tabs on your leadership because others are certain to follow your lead, one by one until your entire team is affected.

Here are some of the ways leaders can ensure that their contagious leadership is spreading only good qualities:

Be consistent and predictable. If you want to be trusted, respected and credible, people have to know that they can count on your conduct to be consistent - always.

Remain true to your values. Let others know who you are and what you stand for, and lead through your example of living out your values every day. Give people reason to feel good about emulating you.

Evaluate your communications. Leaders communicate a lot, and people are quick to judge those

communications and the cues they get from body language and nonverbal communication. Think about what you're saying and—even more important—how you're saying it.

Show people what's most important to you. The quickest way to learn what's important to someone is to see what they give their time to. Ask yourself if you're spending your time in ways that reflect your values or if you're sending mixed messages.

Take command of your emotions. If you're quick to lose your temper, if you yell when things go wrong, if you lose patience easily, you're sending a message to others that it's OK—and maybe even expected—to do the same. Don't let your own behaviour validate screaming, tantrums, or abuse. Remember, your emotions have the power to make people comfortable or uncomfortable—which do you want it to be?

Embody positivity. A positive leader means a positive team and positive organisation; a negative leader is working to build a team and culture based on negativity.

Treat others the way you want to be treated. Treat people with respect and dignity and they will treat you—and their coworkers—the same.

When you're a leader, your actions are constantly being watched by others. Ask yourself if you want those you lead to emulate what you do and how you do it. If not, be thoughtful of how you lead and commit to setting a good example.

Lead from within: If you know your leadership is contagious, you're more likely to exhibit behavior worth catching.

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About the Author

Lolly Daskal is one of the most sought-after executive leadership coaches in the world. Her extensive cross-cultural expertise spans 14 countries, six languages and hundreds of companies.

As founder and CEO of Lead From Within, her proprietary leadership program is engineered to be a catalyst for leaders who want to enhance performance and make a meaningful difference in their companies, their lives, and the world. Based on a mix of modern philosophy, science, and nearly thirty years coaching top executives, Lolly's perspective on leadership continues to break new ground and produce exceptional results.

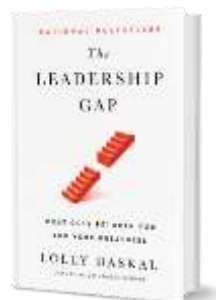
Of her many awards and accolades, Lolly was designated a **Top-50 Leadership and Management Expert by Inc.com 100 Great Leadership Speakers for Your Next by Inc. magazine.** Huffington Post honoured Lolly with the title of **The Most Inspiring Woman in the World.**

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Lolly Daskal's book, **The Leadership Gap: What Gets Between You and Your Greatness** a **Wall Street Journal Bestseller** is available [here](#)



Thom Dennis

The challenges CEO's are facing right now



The challenges facing CEO's right now are mounting. Many businesses have had to stop, start, reassess and reconfigure in the last year as we went through lockdowns, Brexit and unprecedented global health instability, with countless employees having faced isolation, burnout and anxiety. In the UK, we are facing a third wave of the pandemic which may have another huge impact on businesses and leadership strategy.

The challenges facing CEOs right now include:

CONSTANT CHANGE

- 1) **New, unfamiliar and unpredictable scenarios** mean leaders still have to diversify, adapt their product or service quickly, ensure careful adherence to every changing regulation, and change at speed because of the unpredictability we all still face. Simply being reactive means there is little space for being proactive or for long term planning. Many businesses are facing the need to change their organisation's culture.
- 2) **Fear is often systemic** and is felt collectively within the workplace, especially from national or global uncertainty. Employees fear losing their jobs, which keeps them vulnerable and easy to manipulate by fear-based managers obsessed with rules, punishments, and

structure. They use exclusion techniques to maintain control and cling to power. Bullying, harassment, power play, and lack of inclusion need to be tackled head-on more than ever, and denying such behaviour exists in your organisation is likely to be a kind of wilful blindness. There is much fear being generated today, not least in the media, and a calm and steady style of leadership is really called for.

- 3) **Loss of resources.** Some businesses have done well to keep their talent motivated, in the loop, and on board with changes forced upon them; others failed abysmally, negatively affecting loyalty, causing talented employees to move to competitors. Keeping the team working well together from multiple locations is very difficult but many businesses are getting better at it as we go along.
- 4) **Supply and demand.** There has been a huge knock-on effect of both Brexit and the pandemic on the supply of materials for many businesses from cardboard to aluminium to finished goods. This has led to increased lead and delivery times, dreadful customer service and frustrated, disgruntled customers whose patience has run out.

LACK OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 5) **CEOs have had little space or time for reflection** during the last year but have had to show buckets of resilience. We all need time to reflect, and it is important to recognise errors that were made, listen to feedback and have an opportunity to learn and make amends, to grow and truly move on.
- 6) **CEOs want to create a personal legacy** and to make their mark on the company. Sadly not all legacies are positive, with some intimidating or unhappy CEOs leaving a history of poor culture, whilst others leave a wonderful legacy of goals and objectives achieved whilst maximising talent, creating safe cultures and encouraging colleagues to bring their best self to work. The pandemic has made the difference between positive and negative leadership ever more obvious.
- 7) **Administration, demanding project planning and meetings have increased** since the pandemic, leaving CEOs overstretched and in need of time to reformulate their normal day. An understanding that multitasking creates poor performance and ways to honour a healthy work/life balance still baffles many leaders.

PRESSURES OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- 8) **There is increased pressure to improve the leadership skills of senior staff** so they can relieve the executive team from some of their challenges by promoting those who are ready and providing mentorship for those who need it. Having the right resources and timing is crucial for this to fall into place.
- 9) **Getting to know the new needs of your team and customers** is vital because most of us have made some significant changes in our lives in the last 18 months. There is a need for systems whereby top leaders can ask for senior-level staff's feedback to gain front-line insights. Boosting your social media presence may also help to get to know your clients and consumers better.
- 10) **Pushing for growth at a time when budgets may still be frozen** means businesses are having to stay ahead of the competition. They must think outside the box, collaborate more with other like-minded companies and measure their progress so they can refine their approach as 2021 progresses. This is all for the greater good, but it creates substantial pressure to do better despite the continuing difficult circumstances.
- 11) **Effective two-way communication between the C-Suite and employees** is vital, especially because of the unpredictability of the pandemic. Transparency, integrity, honesty, a well-structured board communication strategy, clearly defined roles and documentation, and excellent communication are all must-haves. Leaders need to ask questions; not assume they know the answers.

- 12) **Increased emphasis on employee wellness** at first glance may feel like a drain on the business but a strong emphasis on prioritising good health is not only good for the individual, but the business and company culture.

EMPLOYEE UNREST

- 13) **Concerns over trust during the pandemic** means leaders need to be honest, supportive and consistent, actively listening to employees whilst managing expectations positively and respectfully. Trust takes time to be earned and more to be re-earned. Leaders must work with honesty, integrity and transparency towards a common goal that suits both parties.
- 14) **Employees want a different work-life balance now and have different priorities**, since the onset of the pandemic. Understanding the different needs of your employees and creating individual hybrid models that suit both them and the company will take a lot of clear and flexible thinking to establish and maintain an excellent working and wellness solution for all.
- 15) **We need to tackle burnout head-on.** For employees and businesses to thrive, promote an open working culture so that employees feel comfortable sharing feelings of being overwhelmed with their supervisors. Vulnerability must be honoured; dismissing it will kill trust effectively and immediately. Ensure roles are definitive and be clear about welcoming good work/ life boundaries, ensuring that over-working is neither expected nor encouraged.

D&I ISSUES

- 16) **Solving D&I issues has never been more important** and merely hoping for diversity isn't going to work. Hire diverse talent even if they don't

automatically fit the corporate mould because diversity makes us smarter and changes how we think. Consider removing 'must have' criteria on your job advertisements as this naturally limits your talent pool, avoid group-think, ask for commitment, not compliance and give minorities support and engagement.

- 17) **We need to break the mould to build responsible workplaces.** Whilst some leaders are given budgets to support inclusion, this will simply never be enough to create real change. Leaders need to prioritise training on inclusion and set an example by personally attending themselves and requesting that all senior staff members attend. Sadly, those who live in denial are the most destructive.

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About the Author

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

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

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Benjamin Hardy

Have you lost your sense of urgency?



It is very easy to get distracted and easy to lose momentum.

It's easy to procrastinate and delay your greatest desires or priorities.

It's easy to lose that sense of urgency toward your time and purpose.

You don't have a sense of urgency toward your time and purpose when:

1. You're not clear on what you want
2. You don't believe you can control the outcome or timeline
3. You don't know if you can succeed
4. You don't believe it's extremely important and timely

If you understood the value and importance of your goals, you'd have extreme urgency. We don't have all the time in the world. Time ticks on. But not only that, there are consequences.

For example, I have 6 kids (I know...). If I don't have urgency toward helping them grow and develop as people, they will be grown before I know it. But, they will not be who they could have been.

Two Forms Of Urgency You Must Master

There are two forms of urgency you must master:

1. Urgency toward your day

2. Urgency toward your desired future self

Urgency toward your day

means you get up and get going. You aren't dragging through your day. Instead, you're aggressively getting what you need to be done.

Again, I have 6 kids. My wife is homeschooling them. If I have urgency toward my work, I'll get up early and get it done so I can get home and help my wife. If I don't have urgency, I'll drag through my day and avoid getting home. And because I've been distracted and dragging, I'll show up that same way at home. I won't be engaged. I'll probably be staring at my cellphone.

How you do anything is how you do everything. If you're not urgent about your values and priorities, you're probably disconnected and distracted all-around.

If you have urgency toward your day, you'll be present and engaged where it matters most. You'll see value and importance not only on your time, but on the consequences that come from how you spend your time.

Urgency toward your desired future self means you're clear on your big picture goals. These goals could be 2-5 years out. Maybe they are 10 years out. Sometimes it can be hard to have urgency toward long-term goals, like retiring or publishing a book, etc.

But what would happen if you *did* have urgency?

What would happen if you got laser-focused on your major goals and removed all distractions?

There's a great quote you must understand from Robert Brault: **"We are kept from our goal not by obstacles but by a clear path to a lesser goal."** You're not kept from your goals and dreams by the obstacles stopping you. Instead, you're stopped by "clear paths" to "lesser goals."

Those "lesser goals" are usually distractions. Going on Facebook. Checking your email. Watching YouTube videos. Relationships that aren't serving you. Hobbies that are merely an escape from what matters most.

Whatever "lesser goals" you're actively allowing into your life, they are stopping you from having a sense of urgency toward your future self.

What Would Happen If You Had Urgency?

What would happen in your life if you had urgency toward your goals?

What if you were hell-bent on getting where you wanted to go?

What would you have to get rid of?

What "lesser goals" would you have to drop?

What habits would you need to change?

Changing your life is hard, yes. But living life, in general, is hard. It's hard to make £50,000 per year and it's hard to make £500,000.

Whatever life you choose for yourself will be filled with challenges. **But discipline weighs ounces and regret weighs tons.**

If you're not actively using your time in the most valued ways, then you're going to have regrets. In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey talked about having a "personal bank account," which you deposit into and draw from.

Having a personal bank account means you trust yourself. It means you believe in yourself. It means you have character.

Having a personal bank account is worth far more than having millions of dollars. If you have a personal bank account, and if you do what you believe, then you can have anything you want.

Commit To Your Future Self

"You pile up enough tomorrows, and you'll find you are left with nothing but a lot of empty yesterdays."—
Meredith Willson

Right now, you have a choice. You can continue letting your time pass by. You can continue withdrawing from your personal bank account, getting yourself deeper and deeper into debt of character and purpose.

Or, you can develop a sense of urgency. You can get clear on what you value. You can get clear on what matters most to you. And you can begin living your life like you really believe it. You can become who you really want to be.

Get urgent about your time.

Use it well.

Get urgent about your desired future self. Become that person and create that life as soon as possible. Don't delay!

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About the Author

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

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

Feel free to read my blog posts or watch my **50-minute free webinar**, where I breakdown the four main reasons people aren't as successful or happy as they could be.

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We rely on willpower to create change in our lives...but what if we're thinking about it all wrong?

In *Willpower Doesn't Work*, Benjamin Hardy explains that willpower is nothing more than a dangerous fad - one that is bound to lead to failure.

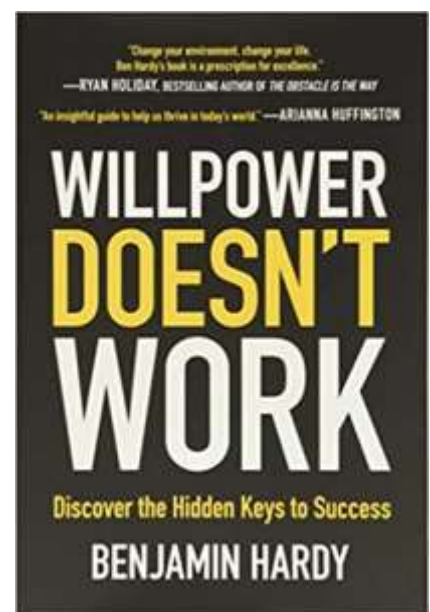
Instead of "white-knuckling" your way to change, you need to *alter your surroundings* to support your goals instead. This book shows you how.

The world around us is fast-paced, confusing, and full of distractions. It's easy to lose focus on what you want to achieve, and your willpower won't last long if your environment conflicts with your goals - eventually, the environment will win out.

Willpower Doesn't Work is the much-needed guide for today's over-stimulating and addicting environment. *Willpower Doesn't Work* will specifically teach you:

- How to make the biggest decisions of your life--and why those decisions must be made in specific settings.
- How to create a daily "sacred" environment to live your life with intention and not get sucked into the cultural addictions.
- How to invest big in yourself to upgrade your environment and mindset.
- How to put "forcing functions" in your life - so your default behaviours are precisely what you want them to be.
- How to quickly put yourself in proximity to the most successful people in the world--and how to adapt their knowledge and skills to yourself even quicker.
- How to create an environment where endless creativity and boundless productivity is the norm.

Benjamin Hardy will show you that nurture is far more powerful than your nature, and teach you how to create and control your environment so your environment will not create and control you.





David Finkel

Ways that you can increase your profits with the help of your vendors

Landing a new client or project can be an exciting time for any business owner, but if you are like many entrepreneurs taking on a new client (or several) at one time can put a strain on you financially - especially if there is going to be a significant amount of time before you can start doing billable work or produce a product for a contract.

So, today I wanted to share with you some tips that I share with my business coaching clients, on how to increase your bottom line profits with the help of your vendors and suppliers.

1. **Ask For a Discount.** It seems obvious to ask for a discount, but for many business owners it's a difficult conversation to have, and therefore one that gets postponed. Every quarter or two, step back and take a fresh look at your suppliers. Can you aggregate purchasing and get better pricing? Have your orders increased? If so, can they give you better pricing? Have you proven that you're a sure and speedy payor? If so, ask for and get a discount. Many vendors would love to see an increase in orders and would love to work with you to make it beneficial for both parties.
2. **Learn to Negotiate.** Almost everything is up for negotiation, so don't be afraid to counter offer. Make it part of the company culture to ask for discounts regularly when working with vendors.
3. **Go Out To Bid- Often.** When was the last time you made your vendors compete to

re-win your business? If it's been over a year, I strongly recommend you consider pricing things out. At the very least you're likely to get a significant price break from your existing vendors when they feel the hot breath of their competitors on the back of their neck.

4. **Pre-empt Any Price Increases.** Send a letter to all your vendors and suppliers notifying them that because times are so tough that for the next 12-24 months you won't accept any price increases. And that if they do have a price increase, that will automatically trigger you to go out for competitive bids. Assuming you are a good customer who pays on time, the fear of loss will prevent them from increasing your prices.
5. **Pay Early (And Choose Your Payment Method Wisely).** Everyone loves positive cash flow, so take advantage of this by asking your vendors for an early pay discount. You can also ask them if they take AMEX, checks or ACH transfers for an instant 3% discount. If you can save them merchant account fees, they will be more inclined to pass the savings to you.

Working with your vendors to increase your profit margins and serve your customers ultimately benefits everyone involved. So don't be afraid to review your current vendors and contracts and find ways that you can work together to reach your goals. Worst case scenario, you find another vendor at a more reasonable price point to further your bottom line. Best case scenario, you save money and continue working with a vendor you already have a great relationship with.

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About the Author

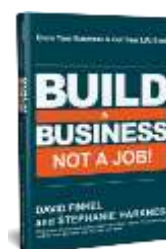
David Finkel is co-author of, *SCALE: 7 Proven Principles to Grow Your Business and Get Your Life Back* (written with Priceline.com co-founder Jeff Hoffman), and one of the nation's most respected business thinkers. A *Wall Street Journal* and *Business Week* bestselling author of 11 business books,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

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If you're a business owner who wants to accelerate your company's growth, but do it in a way that enables you to get your life back, this bestseller is for you.



You'll Learn:

- The only sustainable way to escape the Self-Employment Trap™
- The 4 most costly excuses that hold business owners back
- The 8 essential building blocks upon which to scale your company
- 25 formats to package your business systems
- A powerful 1-page quarterly action plan format
- 6 time mastery strategies to free up a full day each week to build your business
- And much more ...



Amy Vetter

How to stop virtual communication burnout

Many of you have been communicating almost entirely via digital platforms for more than a year, so I don't need to tell you **Zoom fatigue** is real. When hours of every day are spent communicating via videoconference, chat, text, email, and more—all without so much as one in-person conversation—it's only natural for burnout to set in.

And when it does set in, **stress** and anxiety are sure to follow.

Now that a return to in-office work is finally on the cards, now is the perfect time to devise a strategy that will mitigate the negative effects of too much time spent talking and listening through a screen. Slack, Teams and Zoom are here to stay, even if remote work will no longer be mandatory, so it's on you to develop a method to keep them from overwhelming your life. Instead of banishing them entirely, you need to find a happy medium between not enough and too much virtual communication. The best path forward will vary slightly for every individual and business, but there's some ironclad advice that I think will help everyone manage their virtual communication regiments.

Starting getting back in person, but do it slowly and safely.

Depending on where you live, many of your team members may be vaccinated already. If that's the case, there's little harm in inviting people back into the office when they are ready to return. Want everyone to return en masse soon? Set a timetable that allows everyone enough time to get vaccinated. Many companies are

aiming for around **September** as a time to test a full return to in-office work. Plans are subject to change, but if you set a goal in advance, you give your team time to prepare for a return to the office.

In the meantime, there are still ways to start cutting back on virtual communication. If you have a small number of vaccinated team members who want to return to the office, you shouldn't feel guilty about joining them. In a warm part of the country? Why not start taking a few outdoor meetings when the weather's nice? Some of these conversations may happen on an ad hoc basis, but it's still worth the effort of squeezing them in. Not only do they pull you away from the screen, but they also allow you to get your feet wet with regards to meeting folks in person.

Set Zoom parameters

For a while, you had no choice but to conduct all of your important meetings via Zoom. I don't even want to know what the record for most Zoom meetings in a week is, but I'm sure it's too many. Many of us have spent the last year taking meetings at times we're not used to and from places we'd never thought. Flexibility has been the name of the game, but if we want to develop healthy habits going forward, we have to set some boundaries now.

While it may not be possible to put a hard cap on Zoom meetings or limit them to a specific set of hours, it's a great idea to develop some guidelines so you're not moving from meeting to meeting day after day. As clients may still want to meet via Zoom, the best place to target for limitations is internal meetings. Block off a couple of hours every day where no internal Zoom meetings can

happen to give everyone a rest from the screen time.

Encourage pop-ins

In a world before the pandemic, we often dropped into a coworker's office to ask them a quick question. These days, you probably do the same thing via Slack or another messaging app. Once you're back in the office, don't lean on an app for these types of chats. Instead, pop in on the person who has the answer you need.

There's so many benefits to this approach. It gets you up and moving, taking you away from the screen for a minute, it allows you to build camaraderie in the office, and it creates for more dynamic conversations. Getting back to the office also means recreating the culture of the place, and pop-ins can play a huge role in doing just that.

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About the Author

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

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Dr Lynda Shaw

Make sleep a top management priority



Most of us accept that good quality and enough sleep is essential to human survival and is vital to our mental and physical health. Sleep has a profound impact on our neurological performance and is essentially food for the brain. Given its importance, forward thinking businesses should make sleep a top management priority, according to neuroscientist, business psychologist and change specialist Dr Lynda Shaw.

WHY SLEEP IS ESSENTIAL FOR OUR BRAIN

Sleep is a complex process but simply put sleep-promoting cells within the hypothalamus and the brain stem produce a chemical called GABA which reduces senses of arousal in the brain stem and hypothalamus, sending us signals which make us feel tired. This is reinforced by an increased production of the sleep hormone melatonin sent by the pineal gland.

Once asleep and as other parts of our bodies are resting, our brain spends time processing emotions, memories and replenishing our minds for the next day. The majority of this occurs during REM sleep, a phase which takes up about 20% of adult sleep. The cerebral cortex starts to process short and long-term memories with help from

the thalamus which relays information from the senses such as images, sounds and other sensations. The amygdala, a part of the brain responsible for processing emotions, also increases in activity. The brain stem also plays a vital neurological role in sending signals to our muscles to relax, which is essential for body posture, energy renewal, and limb movements.

It is also believed that the glymphatic system is opened during sleep and cerebral spinal fluid flushes out the day's accumulation of toxins. In fact, deep sleep is a time for recovery and repair, supporting the immune system and growth hormones.

PUTTING SLEEP ON THE MANAGEMENT AGENDA IS VITAL BECAUSE IT AFFECTS:-

1. **Physical health and stamina** – Sleep is involved in the body's healing process. Ongoing sleep deficiency can prevent healing, affect your immune system and increase inflammatory issues in your body and making you feel drained and weak. Lack of sleep is linked to heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.
2. **Mental health and mood** – Sleep deprivation can leave you feeling irritable and exhausted in the short-term, and suffering from burnout and anxiety, and has also been linked to depression in the long-term.
3. **Memory and recall** – Sleep has a profound influence over memory and recall and can increase the formation of false memories.
4. **Problem-solving ability** – Good quality and quantity of sleep enhances creative problem solving, concentration and cognitive abilities.
5. **Make mistakes or poor decisions** – Sleep-deprived people are twice as likely to make easily avoidable mistakes or forget important things or fail to engage with logical thinking compared to colleagues.
6. **Creativity** – Disrupted or diminished levels of REM sleep can slow down brain function negatively impacting creativity because the brain struggles to generate and remember new ideas.
7. **Emotional intelligence** – Sleep helps us be more emotionally intelligent by helping us manage our emotions and build empathy.

Picture Source: <https://search.creativecommons.org/photos/97412f6c-e682-4440-a0a9-0468ce6bf996>



8. **Engagement, concentration and focus –**

People who are sleep deprived have diminished levels of alertness and concentration, difficulty paying attention, brain fog, are easily confused and their judgement can be impaired.

9. **Workplace happiness –**

When we are sleep deprived, our risk of stress and poor mood, and levels of stress and irritability all increase which is linked to our overall life satisfaction and workplace happiness and loyalty to our place of work.

10. **Safety –**

Fatigue is often blamed for a number of health and safety related accidents at work as there is a clear, dangerous causal link between physical injury and sleep deprivation.

SOLUTIONS

1. **Don't encourage over-working.**

Being overworked, stressed and constantly multitasking means we are continually in a flight, fight or freeze response resulting in the over stimulation of cortisol and adrenalin which in the long term leaves us exhausted and at risk of serious illness. An overworked employee will never be as productive as one that has a good work/life/sleep balance.

2. **Open conversations –**

Invite open discussion about the impact of sleep deprivation so that employees feel comfortable coming to you if they have concerns. Employees going through menopause for example are often sleep deprived due to hormonal changes but feel like it is a taboo subject. An open door policy and longer term planning and support is needed from the employer.

3. **Revise your supporting wellness programs –**

Recognise and identify how sleep deprivation impacts workplace performance. Ensure that messaging around

improving sleep and rest is clear as part of the company intranet and protocols.

4. Offer flexibility – Whilst asking them to agree to core hours, allow your employees the opportunity to start work a bit later if that suits their normal bio-rhythms better. Many experts argue that a later starting time is optimal as it allows employees to have a full night's sleep and perhaps get some exercise and fresh air first thing in the morning.

5. Taking a day off for exhaustion – Businesses need to stop penalising employees when they legitimately take days off because they are exhausted. These are not for employees who are burning the candle at both ends and simply want a day at home to recover, but those that are genuinely struggling. Someone facing a temporary over-stressful home or personal issue should be regarded in the same way as someone who needs a few days off because of a physical illness such as a virus.

6. Ensure best practise – Show your support to someone who is feeling exhausted by lengthening deadlines, having good planning in place and practicing patience. Employees will be more loyal, motivated and engaged as a result, which should be the goal of any business.

7. Collaboration – Delegate tasks between employees and encourage collaboration. This will provide support to those who are struggling, whilst ensuring that all deadlines are still met.

8. Identify with compassion – If you know that an employee is struggling at work due to sleep deprivation, imagine yourself in their shoes. Find out from them what they need in the short term and see if it is something you can offer them. Whilst we all know sleep is important, many

of us do not stop to recognise that it can affect just about every single part of our health and life, including work.

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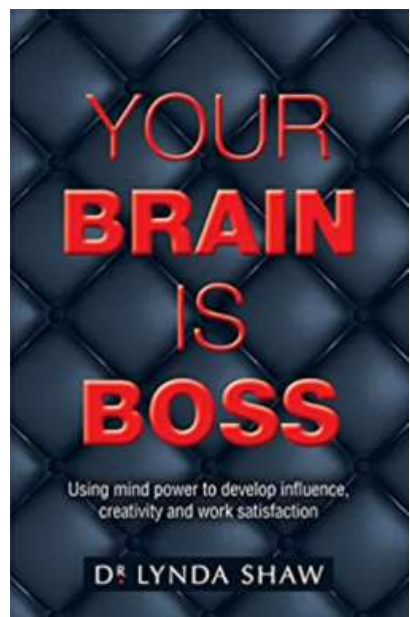
Dr Lynda Shaw is cognitive neuroscientist and chartered psychologist, a Forbes contributor, an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, a Fellow of the Professional Speakers Association. as well as an entrepreneur and author of adult and children's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

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

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August Aquila

No heir apparent – What does the small firm do?

I had the opportunity to speak to small CPA firm owners from several different states and was struck by a consistent theme voiced in the audience – "I sometimes wish I wasn't the owner." In reality, I don't think they really meant this. They were voicing their frustrations about being the sole person responsible for the practice, the clients and the employees. This is a common problem among CPA owners today – no one seems interested in taking over the practice. So, what can be done? Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet or magic solution to solve this problem. I do, however, have some solid suggestions that may help you work through the problem. And, if you start sooner than later, you will have a better chance of successfully passing the baton to someone else.

Nine Steps to Effective Succession Planning

1. How do I know it's time to sell or merge? There is perhaps one key indicator that it's time for you to move on or do something else. I call it the "Fun Factor." Ask yourself these simple questions:

- Am I having more or less fun building the practice?
- Am I still excited about getting up in the morning and going to the office?
- Are you complaining more about clients, employees and the practice in general?

- Would you mortgage your house to grow the practice? If you said no to two or more of the above questions, then it's time to start thinking about your succession plan

2. Develop a plan. There are only so many things you can do with your practice. Sell it to someone internally, sell it to someone externally, merge with another firm or simply decide to shut the lights some day by letting the practice gradually dwindle down. Only you can determine which one is the best course for your practice.

3. Get your personal finances together. You will never be able to retire until you have a solid retirement plan. Make sure you are taking full advantage of tax deferred retirement programs and don't be afraid to look to client opportunities to invest in.

4. Form an advisory team. You don't want to be doing this yourself. You will need others to bounce ideas off of. Again, look to your client base, is there a business owner you admire and respect. Perhaps one of your clients has already gone through a succession event. You might want to include someone from your family, your spouse or other relative. A local attorney, financial advisor or M&A consultant can also help. Succession is as much an emotion event as it is a financial one.

5. Determine the value of your practice. Depending on the market and geographic location, your practice may be

worth from 80% to over 100% of revenue as a rule of thumb. Few buyers will pay cash up front. Most transactions are structured as an earn out paid over 3 to 5 years. The more the practice is dependent on you, the less it is worth.

6. Begin to implement the plan. If you have decided what to do with the practice (See #2 above) now you can start the implementation process. This could take as long as 3 years. If you think it will be an internal sale, then you need to speak with your successor and start developing the transition plan. The more you know what you want to do, the more options you will create for yourself.

7. Transfer skills and clients. Make a list of your skills, top clients and referral sources. Start the process of transferring this knowledge to your successor.

8. Don't wait until the practice or your health declines. It's best to sell your practice when it and you are at the top of your game. Too many sole practitioners wait until something drastic happens. I often say that a practice is like an ice cube on the sidewalk on a hot summer day. It not only melts, but it evaporates very quickly. There are multiple examples of practices that have lost 70% or more of their value in only a few months.

9. Final Thoughts. It's never too early to think about your exit plan. When you reach your mid 50's it's time to get more serious.

When you reach 60, make sure you have a detailed plan laid out, even if you plan to work for many more years. No matter what your age start developing other interests and hobbies. Remember, the best succession plan is the one that provides the owner with the most options.

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About the Author

August founded AQUILA Global Advisors, LLC in order to provide specialised services to professional service firms in the areas of succession planning, mergers and acquisitions, compensation plan design and resolving partnership issues. He also works with partners and managing partners to help them become better leaders and to create partner engagement and accountability.

August is an internationally recognised consultant, keynote speaker and author. He is consistently listed as one of the "Top 100 Most Influential People" in the accounting profession by Accounting Today. He has worked with clients in the US, Canada, Indian and England. August has authored several books and has been an avid contributor to professional journals in both the legal and accounting markets.

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How to stop Apple watch now playing from auto-opening

The Apple Watch Now Playing app is handy when you're actually listening to music via your Apple Watch, but it's annoying that it auto-opens when you're listening to music on another Apple device. Here's how to disable Auto-Launch Audio Apps on your Apple Watch.

If you don't want Now Playing to launch every time you start playing audio on your iPhone, you can change your settings to stop it from happening.

1. On your Apple Watch, open the **Settings** app.



2. Tap on General



3. Scroll down and tap on **Wake Screen**.



4. Toggle off **Auto-Launch Audio Apps**.



When the toggle turns gray, you've successfully disabled the Apple Watch Now Playing app and other audio apps from starting up automatically when your watch detects audio playing on another device.

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

Pete Foley

Pros and Cons of becoming an Innovation Consultant



One question many innovators face at some point in their careers is whether to work in a large, corporate organisation or in a small start-up or consultancy. I want to revisit and update a blog I wrote a few years ago for LinkedIn that discussed some pros and cons of consultancy versus corporate innovation. At that time, I framed it, somewhat tongue in cheek, as a midlife crisis challenge, and indeed, many of us moved into consultancy in mid or late career. But in reality, the choice of moving from big to small organisation, or vice versa, can occur at any time and may present itself on multiple occasions throughout a career.

The motivation for change can be catalysed by many things. It might come from a contact offering an opportunity, or from a desire for lifestyle change. Or it can be forced on us. Most large companies go through cycles of downsizing, even during periods of growth. And we have been riding a wave of sustained economic growth since 2009 and will inevitably face an economic correction or recession at some point in the not too distant future. When that comes, innovation is often the first casualty in cost-cutting. So, it's never a bad idea to have a plan for innovating in a recession, whether it's a fallback company strategy as an organisation, which I've written about before, <https://innovationexcellence.com/blog/2018/02/16/innovators-what-is-your-strategy-if-the-market-crashes/>,

or as an individual innovator, who may need to find new roles. For some at least, consultancy will be an option to at least consider whenever the next economic downturn arrives.

My Story. For my part, I 'retired' from Procter & Gamble about six years ago at age 52. While I was more than ready to walk away from 6-day weeks, and long hours at the office, but like many people, I wasn't completely ready to give up contributing. So, I went into part-time consulting.

It was by far the best decision I ever made. I absolutely love my new lifestyle, and it has come at the right time for me in my career. But it is also easy to see that it might not work for everyone, and as with any difficult decision, there are pros and cons associated with it. We all have different needs, commitments, levels of risk tolerance, habits, and bank balances. So, what is right for one person may not be right for another.

It was right for me, but would it work for you? I've sketched out my top pros and cons associated with the transition from corporate to consulting life. It's not meant to be a recommendation, just some observations with the benefit of hindsight. I hope some of you find them helpful.

Pros:

Freedom, Flexibility and

Creativity: When I worked, I often used the phrase 'work-life balance'.

In hindsight, I now realise that I had really didn't have work life balance at all. My schedule was driven by work, and I squeezed life in around it when I could. Of course, many people do a better job than I did of managing life work balance than I did, and at the time I was quite happy to 'live for work'. But moving to part-time consultancy has completely changed my life. It allows me to be far more in control of when I work, and when I don't. I vacation more, and hike nearly every day. Of course, there is still business travel and meetings, and at times consultancy can be every bit as intense as the corporate world, perhaps more so. But in general, I am more in control of my life. I can take advantage of a beautiful day, hike for two hours in the afternoon, make up for it by working in the evening, and not have to explain it to a 'boss'. And the ability to create downtime also enables my creativity, by giving my mind time to process data and make unexpected connections that lead to eureka moments, while also giving me time to explore more diverse fields, providing a broader experience base to draw analogies and surprisingly obvious connections from.

Avoiding Corporate Politics. For me, politics was the biggest waste of energy and time in the corporate world. The internally facing, and self-generated problems it creates distract from external challenges, and inevitably it drains creativity and innovation. It's a frustrating reality in many large organisations, some small ones, and of course, not

completely avoidably as an external consultant, or member of a start-up team. But as a consultant, it is much easier to side-step it, especially if you are in a position to say no to projects.

And while start-ups can be political, there is usually less entrenched bureaucracy, and small, lean organisations have less time to fight over territory. For me, bidding the BS and politics goodbye has been a massive bonus. It's allowed me to focus on meaningful problems, big ideas I'm passionate about, and again, helped me to be more creative.

Variety: If we have transferable skills, consulting opens the door to an enormous variety of opportunities. I was lucky in that Procter & Gamble was a company that had its fingers in a lot of different pies, which provided me considerable opportunity for variety in assignments. But that variety pales in comparison to consulting, where I've worked in a huge variety of fields, including healthcare, hospitality, leisure, financial services, food, consumer goods, and fashion. And the added benefit of the expanded experience this brings is the personal growth and expanded skills come along with it. I'm a big believer in expert generalists or T-Shaped innovators, and consulting is a great way to expand our horizons and experiences, and hence our value as a T-Shaped innovator.

Cons: Of course, it's not all good, and there are about as many cons as there are pros when comparing small and large organisations. Here are just a few of the downsides I've encountered as a consultant or in small start-ups.

Stability. As a consultant you never really know where your next job is coming from. Especially if, like me, you are not a particularly good salesman, and don't like business development. And similarly, in a start-up, income is often reduced or deferred and job security frequently tenuous.

I therefore believe it is extremely helpful to build a financial cushion before moving into a start-up or consultancy role. If you are living

hand to mouth, consultancy or start-up life has the potential to be considerably more stressful than a salaried position. And stress is the enemy of innovation and creativity.

A consultant chasing work to make ends meet cannot be picky about where he or she works. And in a start-up where others depend upon you for their livelihood, much, if not all of the freedom and flexibility mentioned earlier can disappear.

Experience: As a consultant, experience is crucial, and in a start-up, it helps enormously. Good companies encourage fast cycle learning and productive failure in their employees. Many start-ups thrive on fast learning/fast fail models, but tight budgets and funding cycles make experience highly valuable, by limiting failures, or at least making them as productive as possible. But in consultancy, failure is rarely an option. Most companies don't employ a consultant to fail and so create a learning experience. We are brought in to succeed. That's not to say we can never fail, there are always exceptions, but in general, companies are buying our expertise to avoid painful learning experiences of their own.

Chief Cook and Bottle Washer. Whether a consultant or working in a start-up, we inevitably have fewer resources than a corporation, and so will likely have to take on many peripheral tasks that may not fit with our core skills. For example, as a consultant, I not only have to come up with innovative ideas and processes, I am also responsible for business development, marketing, travel, contracts, creating presentations, defining IP strategy etc. Jobs that I'm frankly not as good at. This has the benefit of expanding my skill base, but it also dilutes my contribution. It just comes with the territory, at least until you grow enough to surround yourself with other specialists.

Network Challenges. The smaller the organisation, the less social interaction there is at work. At P&G I interacted with a lot of really smart, interesting people on a day-to-day basis. Conversely, as a sole proprietor, often working remotely,

it can get a little lonely around the water cooler. Even in a start-up, the group is smaller, and that means less opportunity for serendipitous connections and discussions with people working in other fields – the discussions that are often the catalyst for serendipitous creativity and surprisingly obvious insights.

Of course, partnerships, and close collaboration with fellow innovators or entrepreneurs, partnering with people who possess complimentary skills, mentors and of course clients all partly offsets this. But I've found my network is quite different to what I had in a corporate role. It is wider, more diverse, but also more loosely and less frequently connected. Not bad or good, but different, and certainly requiring me to be more proactive in maintaining it.

Bottom line. Virtually any important decisions come with pros and cons. For me, moving to part-time consultancy was brilliant, and the best move I ever made. I live in a better climate, have a better social life, travel more for leisure, weigh less, have lower blood pressure, eat better, and will likely live longer. But it's not for everybody. Likewise, if you are considering a move from a small organisation into a large company, it will come with opportunities, potential stress relief, but also bring new challenges.

Either way, it's not a decision to take lightly, and the more you know about the pros and cons the better. Go in with your eyes open, but I would urge you to go in at least once. If I've learnt anything, it's that the skills and experience we glean from big and small organisations are complimentary. I brought a lot of skills I'd learnt at P&G into consultancy, but I could also have used many of the new skills I've subsequently acquired in consultancy and start-ups back in my corporate role. As I mentioned at the beginning, I used to talk about work life balance, but had no real idea what I was talking about. And there is a scarcity and urgency mindset, and a willingness to make decisions on limited data in small organisations that big organisations could learn from. Ultimately big organisations can benefit from acting

smaller, and small ones from acting bigger.

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

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

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

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

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Sunil Bali

It started with a kiss.....

Can you remember your first date with your spouse or a partner? Can you remember how you felt?

Butterflies in the stomach, can't wait to see them?



But after while the ardour fades doesn't it, and we don't hang off our partners every word.

This is also true of business relationships so that's why we need to keep it fresh and let our customers, colleagues and loved ones know that we care about them and appreciate them.

In over 30 years of business, I've never come across anyone who has ever told me that they feel over appreciated!

Research at the Berkeley University of California shows that if you add a little "gr" to your attitude, then it will help to "find, remind and bind" you to the people that will enrich your life and help you get the results you want.

The researchers also found that gratitude:

- is expansive as it broadens your thinking and increases perspective which leads to
- increased creativity, better problem solving and
- is contagious and lifts and energises those it touches – we all prefer positive, enthusiastic people as opposed to members of the BMW Club (bitching, moaning and whining)

So, who do you know that needs a handwritten note (one of the most effective ways of expressing gratitude) reminding them how you feel about them?

And next time someone you like is a little prickly and rubs you up the wrong way, remember that you always have a choice how you respond: you can either complain because rose bushes have thorns, or you can be grateful that thorn bushes have roses.

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About the Author

Sunil is a Performance Coach, Speaker and Author.

Ex Head of Talent for Vodafone Group and Santander, and having run a £50m business, Sunil has been responsible for hiring over 50000 people and has had the pleasure of working with some great entrepreneurs, professionals and leaders.

Moving minds - Transforming performance

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Tom Koulopoulos

Jeff Bezos sums up what separates winners from dreamers in just 2 words



Few figures have captured our attention the way Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos has. In just under 23 years, Amazon's revenue has soared from \$500,000 to \$178,000,000,000, from nine employees to over 560,000, and its stock has increased 1,000 fold since its IPO. You can't argue with that sort of success. But trying to put it into a formula is somewhat ludicrous.

I'm always leery of reducing anything so complex to a simplistic set of rules. Still, there's much we can learn from Bezos's rise to the richest person in the world and Amazon's spectacular growth.

Some of those lessons are captured in his latest letter to shareholders in Amazon's annual report, which at times reads more like a Dear Abby for struggling entrepreneurs than a CEO's update.

In the letter, Bezos doled out his usual pearls of wisdom. I'm especially drawn to what he has to say because it speaks directly to what I believe to be the most important tasks of being a leader.

A few things are clear.

1. Divine Discontent

First, Bezos has always been unyieldingly customer focused. I love how he repeatedly refers to what he calls "divinely discontented" customers. What a wonderful way to look at the friction and discomfort caused by customers who are always demanding more, no matter how much time and effort a company puts into its products and services.

Although Bezos begins his letter by talking about how Amazon has ranked in the No. 1 spot for customer satisfaction for many years in a row in both the US and UK, he then quickly follows up with the quote: "One thing I love about customers is that they are divinely discontent." You can discount his obsession with the customer by saying that it's easy for him as CEO to detach from the trenches, where dealing with customers can be absolute tedium.

Now you can use the power of established online marketplaces to grow your brand and sales while streamlining and simplifying your business processes.

Bezos has been just as obsessed with customer focus from the earliest days of Amazon. In an early interview, after going public 20 years ago, Bezos stated:

"We have a relentless focus on customer service. That's even more important online than in the physical world. If you make a customer unhappy in the physical world, they will tell five people. Online they can tell 5,000."

2. Ideas Are Plenty

Second is Bezos's focus on operations and execution. Again, going back to Amazon's early beginnings, Bezos is a firm believer that "Ideas have very little value in business and what turns out to have huge value is execution."

Bezos is utterly transparent in detailing his weaknesses in operations and execution, which he had to work on to lead and grow Amazon. In my own experience, I've found that the ability to keep one foot in a vision of the future and one firmly planted in the exceptional execution of the present is among the most important skills for a leader, especially a CEO, to develop.

3. Nature or Nurture?

The third point speaks to the quintessential question at the core of all hiring, "Are skills intrinsic or teachable?" Most of us would prefer to hire someone who has all of the requirements for the job. After all, training, mentoring and ramping up all take time.

Bezos does not discount the inherent capabilities of some people and uses a wonderful example from basketball to illustrate—you can't teach height—however, he is unwavering in his conclusion that an organisation must focus on teaching skills as a core competency. In fact, much of his letter is dedicated to the topic of learning to do a handstand (yes, you'll just have to read it!).

So, few organisations have the sort of obsession with teaching and learning that Amazon does—even if that learning falls well outside of the scope of the employee's responsibilities and career path within Amazon. The plain truth is that if you invest in training and teaching, it becomes the single most important determinant of your culture. It creates a culture in which learning, improvement, and growth are an expected part of everyone's journey.

4. Set the Bar Really High

Each of these first three points have been critical to Amazon's success and are well worth paying attention to in your own organisation. But it's the fourth point that contains the gem I alluded to in the headline of this column and which, in my mind, is the exclusive purview of the CEO to consistently reinforce throughout all phases of a company's life cycle.

It is utterly simple and straightforward and it is the single most important task of every leader: "High Standards." Bezos's letter is littered with references to the importance of high standards, how they are teachable, and why they are the core differentiator of a successful organisation.

One of Amazon's Leadership Principles puts it in very blunt terms: "Insist on the Highest Standards. Leaders have relentlessly high standards—many people may think these standards are unreasonably high."

I'd go so far as to say that if your standards are not considered unreasonable then they are simply not high enough. A leader's role is

to stretch people beyond their perceived limitations and to take them to places that they never would have thought to, or could, go on their own. We respect and admire leaders who do this because those are the leaders who ultimately help us grow. In fact, the greatest joy of leadership is in seeing the impact you can have on people just by asking them to do better. Strike that, expecting them to do better.

Bezos puts it in very direct terms:

"...a culture of high standards is protective of all the 'invisible' but crucial work that goes on in every company. I'm talking about the work that no one sees. The work that gets done when no one is watching. In a high standards culture, doing that work well is its own reward—it's part of what it means to be a professional."

So, there you have it. Is it a formula for success? If only it were that simple. What these four lessons do provide is a foundation that is, at best, necessary but insufficient. However, what I can virtually guarantee are two things: Without these cultural cornerstones, your chances of success fall dramatically, but with them firmly in place, you at least have a foundation to achieve the extraordinary.

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"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."

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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.

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