THE FUEL FOR BUSINESS

spark MAGAZINE

WHY AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION IS NEEDED NOW

+

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T BASE YOUR INNOVATION APPROACH ON GOOGLE

INNOVATION HACKS FROM AUSTRALIA'S LEADING COMPANIES

WHY YOU NEED TO STOP GIVING CASH FOR GREAT IDEAS

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Spark Magazine is “The fuel for business”. The target audience is business people, with an interest in innovation, technology and new ideas. We provide the ideas, motivation, and inspiration for success.

MASTHEAD

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WELCOME
TO SPARK MAGAZINE

With winter all but finished we are in that bonus earning run to Christmas now. The economy had been holding up well, albeit with property prices predictably coming off silly highs. That's great news for buyers who have had the wrong end of the stick for years.

The big cities continue to boom – especially Melbourne where there seems to be a crane or two on every corner. Unfortunately those on the land are not fairing so well with widespread drought. Farming is not just a lifestyle but a business, a business that underpins the economy in this country and feeds us. It would be a sad day when all our food must be imported from countries with much lower food standards. I try to only buy Australian grown food and I would encourage readers to support those who work the land at this difficult time.

Australian financial institutions, and many of those high paid, sanctimonious executives who run them, have been found wanting, in fact rotten to the core. They have put themselves first, the regulators second, and their customers dead last. The regulators have been "out to lunch" and asleep at the wheel too. Goodness me, we have some cultural problems in this country.

Our politicians are not fairing much better. Probably the worst example of government – at federal and at council level is the slow strangulation to death of the general aviation industry in Australia through neglect, ignorance and greed. It has got to the point where we are training so few pilots (as flight training organisations are closing left right and centre) that Qantas has (foolishly) been given an easy way out with government permission to import foreigners to fly Australians domestically and perhaps, internationally. As Dick Smith says, this is a strange experiment, the result of which will not be known for some years. Few countries match the quality of Australian pilots – perhaps just the US, Germany, New Zealand and the UK. But I do not think the imports will come from these places. The deputy prime minister has an opportunity to fix things by changing the Act to ensure CASA must also foster and encourage general aviation, but will he?

Despite all these difficulties SMEs like you continue to power ahead creating jobs, innovating, and earning foreign exchange, as world leaders in so many areas. This month's issue is packed with ideas to make you a better leader, and your business more successful. *Enjoy.*

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Paul M Southwick
Editor

by Gabrielle Dolan

WHY AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION *is needed now*

Authentic communication has always been important in business, but it seems it is needed now more than ever before. We are in a time of unprecedented change, where we are constantly asking our employees and customers to follow us into uncharted territory. What's more, some of Australia's largest companies such as ANZ, Telstra, nab and Australia Post are going through significant organisational changes.

With the rise of technology, new corporate jargon phrases and acronyms enter the business vocabulary on an ongoing basis. The result is that employees and customers feel more and more isolated when they do not readily understand the technology, let alone the words and phrases that come along with it.

Furthermore, the expectations of employees continue to evolve, with a noticeable rise in workplace disengagement. The Gallup 2017 State of the Global Workforce report showed that 85% of employees worldwide are not engaged, or are actively disengaged, in their job.

The reasons above indicate that we need to focus on authentic communication. But one of biggest justifications for doing so is that the business world is in a battle for trust.

The Oxford Dictionary defines trust as the *'Firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something.'* This is further broken down into:

1. Acceptance of the truth of a statement without evidence or investigation.

2. The state of being responsible for someone or something.

3. A person or duty for which one has responsibility.

A more succinct definition comes from the Cambridge dictionary. 'To believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or something is safe and reliable'.

Life is easier when we can trust people, business, government and other institutions.

We trust financial institutions with our money and superannuation. We trust our accountants to ensure they file our tax legally. We trust our insurance companies that they will pay our insurance claims if we get sick or our house burns down. We trust our local barista when they say they serve organic coffee. We trust our kids when they say they don't have any homework ...well maybe we are a little bit suspicious!

The flip side is that when we loose trust, things become a lot harder. This could mean we don't make decisions as quickly or take more time to double check information. Sometimes we don't know who and what to trust. It can be exhausting.

When it comes to leadership, if people don't trust you, they will not follow you. If you look over your shoulder and no one is following you... guess what? You are not a leader. If you are a business and your customers don't trust you, this will result in a loss of loyalty and sales... sometimes forever.

Over the last few years, knowing who and what to trust has become significantly harder.

Edelman, a global communications marketing firm, conduct an annual study to determine levels of trust. They have been undertaking this research for 18 years and each year they capture a high-level theme from the results. The 2017 study deemed that 'Trust was in Crisis' whereas 2018 was labelled *'The Battle for Truth'.*

Moreover, the 2018 report unveiled some concerning statistics. For example, trust has declined in the US in the last 12 months by the steepest margin for any country ever measured over the 18 years of the study. The US dropped a staggering 23 points from being ranked 6th in 2017 to 28th, along side South Africa, the lowest ranked country when it comes to trust.

Besides collecting data on countries, the report also investigates trust in four institutions; Media, Government, Business and Non-Government Organisations.

- Non-Government Organisations are distrusted in 10 countries and have seen a decline in 14 of 28 countries over the last year (2017 to 2018)
- Businesses have seen an increase in trust for 14 of the 28 countries but are still distrusted in 18 countries
- While trust in Government has increased in 16 countries, Governments are still distrusted in 21 out of 28 countries
- For the first time Media is the

most distrusted (22 of 28 countries). The study classifies Media as both content and platform, so it is worth noting that the study found trust in journalists rose 5 points to 59 but trust on platforms dropped 2 points to 51

- Overall, 59% of participants stated that they are not sure what is true and what is not. 56% stated that they do not know which politicians to trust and 42% said they do not know which companies or brands to trust

When we look at what has happened over the last couple of years there is no surprise that trust is on the decline. We are in an environment of alternative facts and fake news.

Recent awareness of institutional abuse is also having a negative impact on who we trust. Companies and brands that traditionally maintained strong loyalty and trust, have suffered the consequences of dishonesty or mistreatment of their customers/employees.

The Facebook - Cambridge Analytica scandal is one such example. Over 2014 and 2015 Facebook allowed an app to access users' data without their knowledge. They ended up harvesting a reported 87 million profiles of users around the world. This information was later used by Cambridge Analytica in the 2016 US presidential campaign to influence voters. It was not until 2018 and the courage of a whistle blower that this was discovered.

In 2017 and 2018 Australia also went through two Royal Commissions into institutions that a generation ago would have been the pinnacle of trust in our society. Both Royal Commissions uncovered systemic cover ups of abuse and deceit.

Deloitte was commissioned to undertake research into the Australian financial industry by surveying over 1,000 Australian consumers. They published their insights in July 2018. They show that trust in the financial services industry has 'taken a dive'. The report stated that:

- 32% of customers said their trust in the finance industry has deteriorated in the last 12 months
- 25% of customers do not trust the financial service industry, with banking and insurance the least trusted
- A staggering 47% of customers do not trust their own financial service provider

To show the extent of distrust in the financial services industry, 23% of those surveyed said they would consider financial services from an airline carrier such as Qantas and Virgin. This insight shows how far the finance industry has fallen in the eyes of its customers. We have lost so much faith in the financial services industry that we are considering having our needs met by airline carriers.

Overall it signals how important trust is. If money and financial security is important to me, then perhaps I am going to put it in the hands of a company that I put my trust in every time I need to travel safely on a plane. For example, I trust Qantas with my life every time I fly with them. Is it much more of a stretch that I would trust them with my superannuation or savings?

What's more, rebuilding customer loyalty is critical for companies, especially when faced with the threat of new competitors. A customer will be tempted by new brands especially when they have greater choice than ever before.

So why is trust important?

It's interesting to refer to the Edelman report and their explanation of why they study trust. They believe that in modern societies we delegate important aspects of our lives to four major institutions. We rely on:

1. Government to provide national security and public policy

2. Media for information and knowledge

3. Business for our economic needs and well-being

4. Non-Government Organisations for social causes and issues

Edelman believe that for us to feel safe when we delegate important aspects of our lives to others, *'we need to trust them to act with integrity and with our best interests in mind.'*

Consequently, when our level of trust diminishes in relation to these institutions, we no longer feel safe. They also suggest that 'trust is a forward looking metric' and is an indicator of whether people will find you credible in the future. Unlike reputation which is based on previous behaviour.

For these reasons trust becomes a critical asset that institutions, companies and individuals need to fight for.

Authentic Communication

So how do companies maintain and build trust? They should focus on authentic communication. This requires simple language that uses real words and avoids hiding behind corporate jargon.

In 2005, Don Watson published Weasel Words. It contained an A to Z list of corporate jargon. I was intrigued from the opening paragraph of this book.

'When the Prime Minister speaks of core and non-core election promises, your boss asks you to commit to an involuntary career event (you're fired), and hospitals refer to negative patient outcomes (you're dead), you know you are in a world gone mad. Politicians and managers not meaning what they say is nothing new, but these days it seems that are also incapable of saying what they mean. Groaning with platitudes and clichés, their words kill meaning and twist the truth. Spontaneity is rare, expressiveness and imagination long dead. It's time to fight back.'

If that was a world gone mad thirteen years ago, now we are in a world that is completely out of control. We still have Prime Ministers speaking of core and non-core promises, but we also have Presidents citing fake news and alternative facts.

Flicking through Watson's dictionary of Weasel Words, I believe a second volume could be written to include the corporate jargon words and phrases that have emerged in the last decade and a half.

This could include optics, bio-break, employee value proposition and move the needle.

"The optics will not be good on this project if we don't move the needle significantly enough to effect our employee value proposition. Let's revert back after a short bio-break."

When did 'optics' become a suitable substitution for talking about if it looks good or not? Or 'I need a bio break' instead of 'I need to go to the bathroom?'

The Oxford Dictionary defines jargon as, *'Special words or expressions used by a profession or group that are difficult for others to understand'*.

Considering the prevalence for corporate speak, it is quite ironic that communication forms a major part of a leader's role. Especially when the dictionary definition states that jargon makes it difficult for others to understand. Unless of course it is deliberate, and they don't want people to understand what they are saying.

Unfortunately, this can be a deliberate strategy. For example, politicians use jargon to avoid answering questions and to be deliberately vague. It helps them to spend time talking without saying anything at all.

Wikipedia describes jargon as the *'type of language that is used in a particular context and may not be well understood outside that context'*. So, unless everyone around the table fully understands the jargon or acronym, which is rarely the case, we are disconnecting and isolating people. Regardless of whether it is intentional or not.

Research conducted in 2011 at New York University, concluded that there was a lower level of trust when vague words were being used as opposed to a higher level with more concrete words.

The more you use jargon the more people distrust you.

By default, too many people use jargon to sound more credible, but this is at the expense of being trusted. We learn from experience that people don't use 'real' words when they have something to hide or they are not being completely authentic.

During the Royal Commission into Australian banks, Don Watson also wrote a column for the 2018 June addition of The Monthly. The article titled, 'A pack of bankers', focused on the senior executives of all the banks failing to take responsibility for what they had done and using language that watered down the seriousness of their actions. Watson concluded his article with the following paragraph.

'And that is what the royal commission is turning up repeatedly: all the moral failures, all the failures to comply, all the rip-offs were failures not of human bastardry or weakness, but of process. And as with the industry, so with the regulator: all the processes were expressed in language so ingeniously meaningless, so calculated to disguise or make legitimate what was clearly illegitimate, they never used and never heard words, like "swindle", "dupe", "cheat" or "scam", that might have woken them to the truth.

Trust is critical in business. Your customers need to trust you, especially in a time of increased choice and competition. Furthermore, your employees need to trust you as you lead them through unprecedented change.

If rebuilding or maintaining trust is important to you as a company or as an individual leader, then think about how you can be more authentic in your communication. Focus on using 'real' words that people understand and connect with. When building trust, it's critical to avoid using unnecessary jargon that that disconnects and isolates people.

by Michelle Sales

CONFIDENCE CRUCIAL FOR *leadership*

In Australia, public trust, confidence and overall satisfaction is at an all-time low. The 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer, which measures public trust across 28 countries revealed that only 35 percent of Australians have trust in their government. Australia is now in the bottom third of the countries surveyed.

It has long been said that for people to believe in their leaders, the leaders must be seen to exhibit a strong degree of confidence in themselves.

Francisco Dao, a speaker on organisational performance and strategy, describes self-confidence as the fundamental basis from which leadership grows. As he puts it in his "Without confidence, there is no leadership" Inc. article, *"Trying to teach leadership without first building confidence is like building a house on a foundation of sand. It may have a nice coat of paint, but it is ultimately shaky at best."*

Leaders are now expected to inspire their team through a world of complexity and uncertainty, to unite the individual members, plus give them drive and great purpose. Without confidence, this will never last.

Over 100 years ago William James, a psychologist teaching at Harvard University, wrote that the reason so many people never fulfill their potential is not because of a lack of intelligence, opportunity or resources, but because of a lack of belief, or faith, in themselves.

I Leaders that show up and seem anxious and insecure, or seem to have some self-doubt, won't be perceived favourably because people think they are a liability, regardless of their actual level of competence and skill to do the job.

Those that are competent can tick all the boxes and get the job done. They have the ability required for the role, the right level of skills, the right level of knowledge and the right capacity. However, being competent in their job is no longer enough.

Leaders must be able to cultivate a culture of confidence in their team and everyone around them so they too believe they can do whatever it is they are expected to do. That means leaders everywhere, in every industry or role, must first have confidence in themselves and their own leadership ability.

In order to cultivate confidence in other people, leaders must first believe and have confidence in their own ability to weather the storms, to perform well under pressure, to learn from mistakes and bounce back, to create and innovate, and to keep raising the bar and driving higher levels of performance.

In research work, professor of business at Harvard Business School Rosabeth Moss Kanter compared companies and sporting teams that had long winning streaks and long losing streaks. In the Harvard Business Review article *"Cultivate a culture of confidence,"* where she discussed some of her findings, she argued *"self-confidence, combined with confidence in one another and in the organization, motivates winners to make the extra push that can provide the margin of victory."*

She explained that the lesson for leaders is to build the cornerstones of confidence and maintain a culture of confidence.

Surely, doing so will ensure that, when faced with the inevitable downturns in performance – whether in politics or an organisation – then leaders will be much better placed to champion everyone through the change.

Michelle Sales is the author of 'The Power of Real Confidence' (Major Street Publishing)

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by Corrinne Armour

DOES LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT *deliver bang for buck*

Leaders often show a level of 'surprise' when they tell me they have enjoyed one of my training programs and that they feel confident to use their new skills to increase their workplace effectiveness.

Surely that's the point of leadership development. So why do numerous leaders experience uninspiring training that lacks relevance, is hard to apply, and yields little. Eighty six percent of human resource (HR) and business leaders surveyed by Deloitte in a 2015 study citied leadership as one of their most important challenges, and yet most HR directors agree that their leadership development programs are ineffective or do not provide lasting results.

The traditional approach to leadership development is failing because training content is not targeted, and the link between business priorities and training outcomes is weak. Solutions cater for the masses more than individual needs, and learning is not targeted at a level to create sustainable change.

The second reason that leadership development is failing is that classroom training alone is not enough. One-off training events don't support on-the-job changes, and there is little incentive or encouragement to apply formal learning back on the job. Development budgets are directed at typical classroom-based training, which contributes less than 25% of learning effectiveness. Very little time is invested in training follow-up (for example, manager and peer support, coaching, feedback to support behaviour change), which contributes a major portion of learning effectiveness.

How does your leadership development stack up? A key role of leaders is to grow others, so instead of spending money on external leadership development for your junior managers, invest in skilling your leaders to develop performance in others on the job. If this is done well, leaders create supportive conditions for real-time development in the workplace through providing continual learning events with multiple touch-points. Leaders can also enhance learning effectiveness by providing opportunity for practice and consolidation of learning, supplemented by on-the-job support and encouragement.

Leaders can embed development in real work, providing increased return on investment (ROI) with tailored learning for the individual and the company. Results are more readily measurable as new behaviours are linked to actual performance metrics and real business outcomes.

Great leaders also boost learning by leveraging brain science through asking questions. The "generation effect" replicated in several behavioural and neuroscience studies, shows that people are more likely to remember an idea they generate themselves. Therefore, questions are a critical tool in a leader's development toolkit.

When leaders tell people the answers, the rational brain may be listening, but this won't help with recall or ownership of learning. Conversely, when leaders ask questions that lead people to a new understanding, insight is involved.

Insight is that light bulb moment where the brain pulls seemingly unrelated ideas together and connects them in new ways.

Insights are invaluable for learning, because an insight engages the brain's reward system and triggers dopamine: a neurotransmitter known as "happy chemical." The simple act of searching for and finding our own answers is rewarding to the brain. Insight also activates the hippocampus: the area of the brain responsible for long-term memory. Our memory is augmented by insight. We construct rich neural connections to things we already know and can then apply the solution more broadly in the future.

What's the way forward in your workplace? Perhaps it's time to stop outsourcing the responsibility for development and capitalise on the impact leaders can have on the job. To develop performance in others, your leaders need to embrace the role of coach to support growth and learning on the job. To create the results you want to see, skill your leaders to tell less and ask more.

Corrinne Armour is the author of Leaders Who Ask: Building Fearless Cultures by telling less and asking more visit ***www.corrinnearmour.com***

by Dr Amantha Imber

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T BASE YOUR INNOVATION APPROACH *on google*

I spoke at an innovation conference recently that had some big-name speakers and companies. A leader from Airbnb talked about how his team had applied design principles to improve the inclusiveness of their innovations. An ex-Apple executive discussed the big mistakes innovators make. And a "Googler" spoke about how they use the physical environment to enhance collaboration.

Leaders eagerly took notes, presumably to take back to their team and consider implementing some of the strategies that these tech companies have done. Perhaps they will start hanging chairs from the roof of meeting rooms, like Google do.

But the problem when listening to any of these types of companies is you are dealing with a case study of one. And that is fundamentally risky.

It is risky because there is no data to suggest that this approach will work for your organisation. It is risky because only a crazy person would make fundamental changes to a company based on such anecdotal "evidence." And it is risky because your company is probably very different to a phenomenally fast growth technology company (if you worked for Google, you probably wouldn't be reading this article).

To avoid basing your innovation approach on sample sizes of one, follow these three rules.

Don't get sucked in by the buzzwords.

In almost every meeting I have with a new company that has called Inventium's (www.inventium.com.au) offices, I can guarantee certain buzzwords will be dropped in the first meeting. Design Thinking is often the first to be mentioned, followed closely by Lean Start-up Methodology, Hackathons, and Sprints. Sometimes Three Horizons makes it in, along with Blue Ocean Strategy.

Don't assume that if you have heard of a methodology, that it is a valid and reliable way of driving innovation. Do your own research into the term and try to find large scale research studies examining its effectiveness in controlled studies.

While the above-mentioned approaches may work for some, consider the types of organisations that have worked well at, how your company may be different, and that any of the above buzzwords certainly won't provide you with the panacea they claim to be.

Recognise the obvious differences between your company and the ones you aspire to be.

In "The Founder's Mentality," authors Chris Zook and James Allen discuss the big differences between a company that is run by its founder (e.g. Facebook) versus one that is not (e.g. any of the big four banks in Australia). When a company exhibits the founder's mentality, it demonstrates an insurgent attitude, an obsession with the front-line and employees have adopted an owner's mind-set.

Compare this to companies where the founder is long gone, and the opposite often exists: a fear of challenging the status quo, leaders being out of touch with their customer, and a "renter's" mentality.

While Zook and Allen discuss how companies without a founder at the helm can seek to regain what perhaps they might have lost, it is a long and hard journey.

Trust the science

To decide on the best innovation approach for your organisation, you need to act like a scientist. Investigate research that shows methodologies that have been scientifically proven to work across many organisations and industries. From there, you can then have confidence that it will might work for you too.

Become a subscriber to some of the more popular peer-reviewed journals, such as Academy of Management Journal, Organizational Science, and Journal of Applied Psychology, and experience a significant uplift in your knowledge of strategies that have been proven to work.

By avoiding fads and buzzwords, and assuming what has worked for Google will work for you to, instead, turn to the science to ensure that your innovation approach actually works.

Dr Amantha Imber is the Founder of Inventium (www.inventium.com.au), an innovation consultancy that only uses tools that have been scientifically proven to work. To learn more about Inventium's science-based methodology, contact us at

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by Jaquie Scammell

HOW CONSCIOUS LEADERS DRIVE A CUSTOMER SERVICE *mindset*

Mediocre customer service is at an all-time high in Australia. Over one-third of customers surveyed in CPM Australia and the ACRS Omnibus Tracker's The State of Customer Service in Australia Report stopped shopping at a company in the year spanning July 2016 to 2017 due to a poor customer service experience, and this number looks sets to increase.

Society's desire for speed and convenience is compromising the customers' greatest and basic needs as humans: care, kindness and one-on-one attention.

Service is simple. Yet the many complex systems and processes organisations have are not delivering the service customers crave.

A recent report by McKinsey & Company explains that companies adding the human touch to digital sales consistently outperform their competitors. They achieve five times more revenue, eight times more operating profit, and, for public companies, twice the return to shareholders.

Rather than look at complex customer service strategies and ways to engage staff, organisations must look to the powerful and influential people in their business – the frontline leaders.

Ray Kroc, for example, built the fast food revolution that is McDonalds. His secret to building the empire that now feeds 1% of the world's population? Employ the right people and teach them the systems later.

While most people suggest operational systems and automating is what made the brand a global giant, and the poster child for any franchise, it was the type of employee that the golden arches attracted and Kroc's obsession with building a tribe of brand advocates.

It is also no accident that McDonald's employees, particularly those who have held leadership positions, stand out on resumes compared to other potential candidates. They have been part of a culture that understands service. They have been trained and developed in an environment that treats its employees, and its leaders, as being just as important as its customers.

Leadership is about consistently behaving and showing up as a role model that others respect. Leaders set the tone for the day, and the shift, with every interaction with an employee. In turn, this has a flow-on effect to customers.

When leaders are conscious about their behavior, they ask great questions of staff, listen deeply, see things through others' eyes and always explain clearly the intention behind things, trust is created with employees, which creates a truly influential tribe.

This is how an organisation creates a workforce that is consistently engaged, performing at their optimum level and supporting each other to make sure that the small daily acts of devotion to customers are felt regardless of the time of day, purchase price or length of transaction.

Service leaders in a hierarchical organisation are directly responsible for the frontline workforce, so it is their responsibility to encourage their teams to love giving service, to cultivate this kind of service culture.

Leaders must be able to identify and lead healthy human behaviours of their employees in as it has a significant impact on overall business performance.

They must become conscious of their own habits and practices, and promote, encourage and lead their frontline staff, so that they in turn look after and nurture an organisation's most valuable assets – the customers.

Jaquie Scammell is the author or Creating a Customer Service Mindset (Major Street).

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by Dr Ron Ehrlich

HUMAN CAPITAL AND FULFILLING *potential*

How is the health of a company or business assessed? The often quoted "triple bottom line" encompasses financial, social and environmental considerations, but most often it is the financial which really is the bottom line. How does human capital fit in to how healthy a company really is?

The health of individuals within a society is a good reflection of that human capital, so there is genuine cause for concern and it may be time to reassess priorities.

Life is stressful. The *Stress and Wellbeing in Australia Survey,* conducted by the Australian Psychological Society found five million Australians reported their current stress levels had an impact on their physical health. It may be an underestimation as its seems everybody is stressed, and that stress is having a significant impact on people's health. Not all stress is bad but understanding it is important.

This is especially true when considering the epidemic of preventable diseases not to mention mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, are all on the rise, and it's not just that that society is getting older.

When we are faced with a health crisis there is no better place to be than our health system, but beyond that it has largely become a chronic disease management system, literally fed by the food industry and managed by the pharmaceutical and medical industry. It's a great economic model, just not a very good health model, reflected in the financial and human costs, which are constantly reminded, are unsustainable.

Business leaders are uniquely placed to inspire, prioritise, facilitate and improve the health of the individuals that spend so much of their lives under their leadership. The trickle-down effect of a healthy work-force, the return on investment financially, socially and environmentally is far-reaching, not just to the for the employees and their families, not just for the companies, but to society.

Public health messages are often confusing, contradictory and are frequently sponsored by those very industries whose business model is dependent on long term chronic disease management, rather than health and wellness. If the evidence is anything to go by things need to change. That change must come from the ground up, empowering individuals to take control of their own health, focused on building physical, mental and emotional resilience to face the challenges of our modern world. Fulfilling potential is a worthwhile goal and an individual's good health is central to that.

Understanding how stress has the potential to compromise immune function and promote chronic inflammation is key to dealing with the challenge of stress. A useful model is to identify five stresses; emotional, environmental, nutritional, postural and dental. They are inseparable. The final stress may surprise people, but it is the story of a hidden epidemic going on right underneath people's noses.

As the challenges faced in today's world become more complicated, the solutions are remarkably simple. Focusing on five pillars of health gives a simple and sustainable framework with which to take control of health. They include; sleep, breathe, nourish, movement and thought, together build that resilience.

There has never been a better opportunity for leaders to lead and effect this profound and positive change. A healthy company is a company people will want to work in, and a company people will want to work with.

If business is truly the foundation on which our society is built, it's great a time for leaders to step up and lead the change so badly needed.

Dr Ron Ehrlich is a corporate health specialist and author of A Life Less Stressed; the 5 pillars of health & wellness.

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by Dr Amantha Imber

INNOVATION HACKS FROM AUSTRALIA'S *leading companies*

While no one really questions whether innovation is a critical ingredient for success, the question of "how to innovate" tends to be a challenging one to answer.

The obvious place to turn is to look at high growth tech companies and try to replicate what they do. Unfortunately, this can lead to big purchases of colourful bean bags and table tennis tables, which is not the best way to drive innovation in a business.

In Australia, there are many organisations kicking innovation goals. Rather than polish up their foosball skills, they have leveraged off what has been scientifically proven to drive innovation and implemented that to a tee.

Here are several hacks from the big guys that you might want to try.

1. They put their money where their mouth is

Talk is cheap when it comes to innovation. It's very easy to say that your business is "innovative", but it's another thing to commit time and money to driving innovation.

The most innovative companies take resourcing innovation seriously. Organisations such as Commonwealth Bank, Lendlease, Nestle and Blackmores (to name a few) all have what they call Innovation Champions. These are people who have received specialist innovation training and spend 10-20% of their time coaching and mentoring others in the company through their innovation process.

In addition, these organisations are providing micro-funding for innovation projects so that teams can easily run quick and lean experiments on potential innovations. For example, anyone within Commonwealth Bank can apply for micro-funding to run an experiment to test an idea that they have.

2. They get out of the building

One of Lean Startup theorist Steve Blank's most famous pieces of advice is to "get out of the building". Indeed, many of us spend most of our time in the isolation of our offices. However, to truly get in touch with customers and their needs, we need to get out of the building and closer to where our customers are hanging out.

At healthy insurer Australian Unity, staff regularly get out of the building, spending time at branches observing and speaking to customers. Staff will watch customers and interact with them, trying to understand what frustrates them about health insurance and the service Australian Unity and its competitors deliver.

Think about where your customers are hanging out and block out time in your diary to go and spend some time with them. You'll be well on the way to unlocking some big innovation opportunities.

3. They crush assumptions

The most innovative companies are constantly crushing assumptions. These might be small assumptions or big ones, and these assumptions might be real or perceived. But regardless, deliberately challenging the status quo is one of the most effective ways to improve your innovation efforts.

From an international perspective, Airbnb crushed the assumption that people wouldn't feel safe staying at a complete stranger's home. Slack crushed the assumption that people need e-mail to communicate effectively at work. Locally, Blamey Saunders (in partnership with Planet Innovation) crushed the assumption that you need to visit an audiologist to get your hearing aid levels adjusted.

To start the process of assumption crushing, take a problem you are trying to solve. Next, set aside time to reflect on what are all the assumptions fencing in your thinking. Some examples of common assumptions are "My budget to solve this problem is $X" or "I need to produce a solution in X weeks' time" or "Customers in my category have no brand loyalty".

After developing a list – and it might contain anywhere between 10-40 assumptions, your next step is to crush those assumptions one by one. You can do this by asking: What if the opposite was true? For example, if your assumption is "My budget is $50,000", crush this assumption by asking, "What if my budget was $1?" or "What if my budget was $1 million?"

By posing such an absurd question, you effectively give your brain permission to wander in lots of other areas that assumptions were restricting it in going.

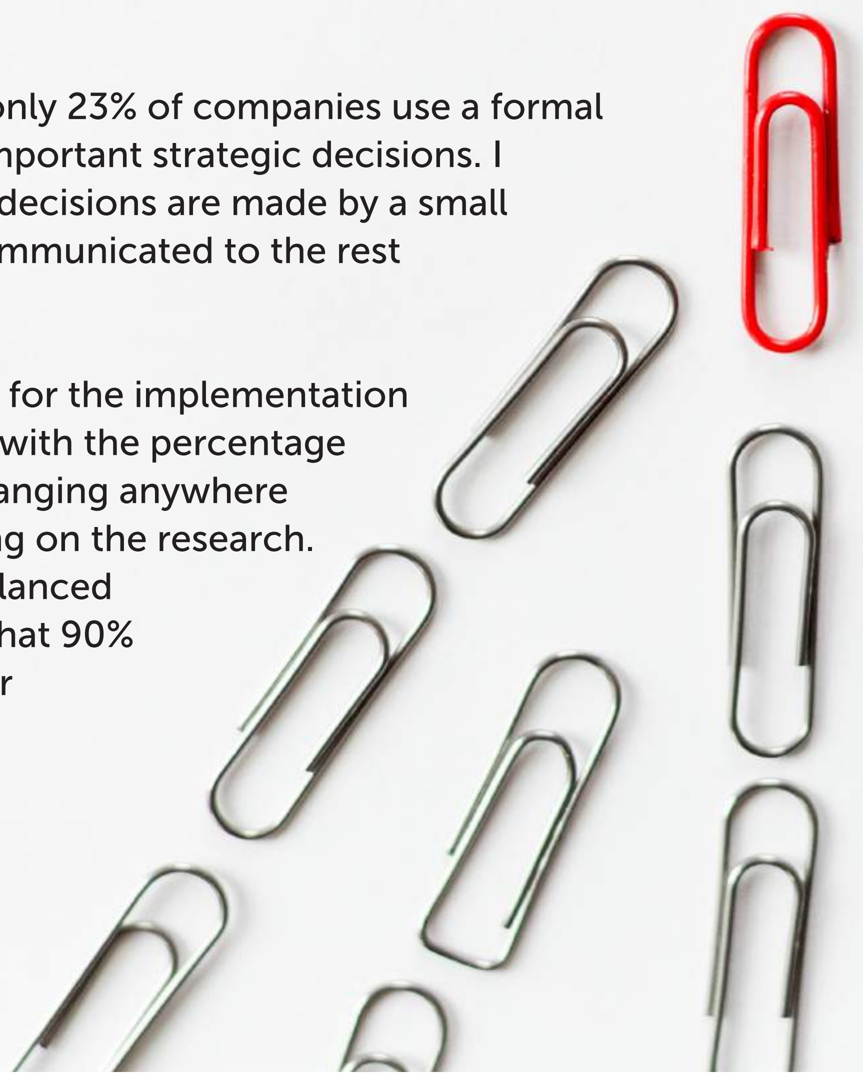
Dr Amantha Imber is the Founder of Inventium, Australia's leading innovation consultancy. Her latest book, The Innovation Formula, tackles the topic of how organisations can create a culture where innovation thrives.

by Dr Amantha Imber

THE POWER OF EXPANDING LEADERSHIP *bandwidth*

McKinsey have found that only 23% of companies use a formal process to operationalise important strategic decisions. In 52% of companies, these decisions are made by a small senior group and poorly communicated to the rest of the organisation.

As a result, the success rate for the implementation of strategic plans is dismal, with the percentage of failed implementations ranging anywhere from 63% to 90%, depending on the research. In fact, Robert Kaplan of Balanced Scorecard fame estimates that 90% of strategies fail due to poor execution.



At the heart of this strategic execution failure epidemic is a command and control operational structure that dates to the turn of the 20th century. This model is founded on the belief that businesses are made up of thinkers, called managers, and doers, the workers that are directed by these managers.

However, senior executives are far too starved for time and attention to actively lead the strategic adaptation required in today's highly-dynamic business environment. To successfully evolve, businesses need to be intentional about leveraging leadership across the entire organisation.

For people to take on leadership roles that will shape the business, they need to be engaged in and motivated by activities that will benefit the organisation. It has become clear this takes more than bean bag chairs, foosball tables and trendy in-house cafes. Staff need to be given something meaningful to be engaged in and a purpose to be motivated by.

In the early 2000s, Google implemented their famous "20% time". Employees were encouraged to spend up to a day a week working on ideas outside of their normal project work. The only criteria for this work – it needed to be something they believed would "most benefit Google." Founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin said they did this to empowered people to be creative and innovative.

Google claims that "20% time" resulted in new products that currently account for 50 percent of their revenue.

Before "20% time", 3M had "15% culture". For nearly four decades, they have encouraged employees to spend 15 percent of their time on the projects they choose – what former chairman William McKnight called 'experimental doodling'. This policy underpins structured, employee-led collaborative processes that has made 3M one of the most innovative companies in history, as well as one of the most consistently profitable.

The field services division of Powercor/Citipower maintains a portfolio of projects that are specifically targeted at realising the business's strategic objectives. These projects are developed and led by field management staff.

Projects selected for the portfolio are the highest priority strategic initiatives that the business unit has the capacity to complete – making them both meaningful and achievable. Senior managers lead through sponsorship – supporting and enabling the project teams so they maximise the opportunity for success. As a result, they have successfully completed 15 of 18 projects, secured some valuable strategic wins and built important working relationships with other business units.

These examples highlight intentional programs to use the leadership bandwidth of the entire organisation to generate value-based business outcomes – employee-led activities that solve problems and create new opportunities. Giving staff the tools, support and trust to pursue meaningful change sends a powerful message about the value that the organisation places in their leadership.

However, the most enduring benefit comes from the development it creates in their employees' leadership capabilities. Leading meaningful work creates what Harvard researcher, Teresa Amabile, describes as 'an upward spiral of creativity, engagement and performance' which drives a quest for new leadership opportunities in their day-to-day activities. The result: leadership bandwidth continues to expand, and adaptation becomes part of the operational fabric.

Jeff Schwisow is a strategic execution specialist and author of Projectify

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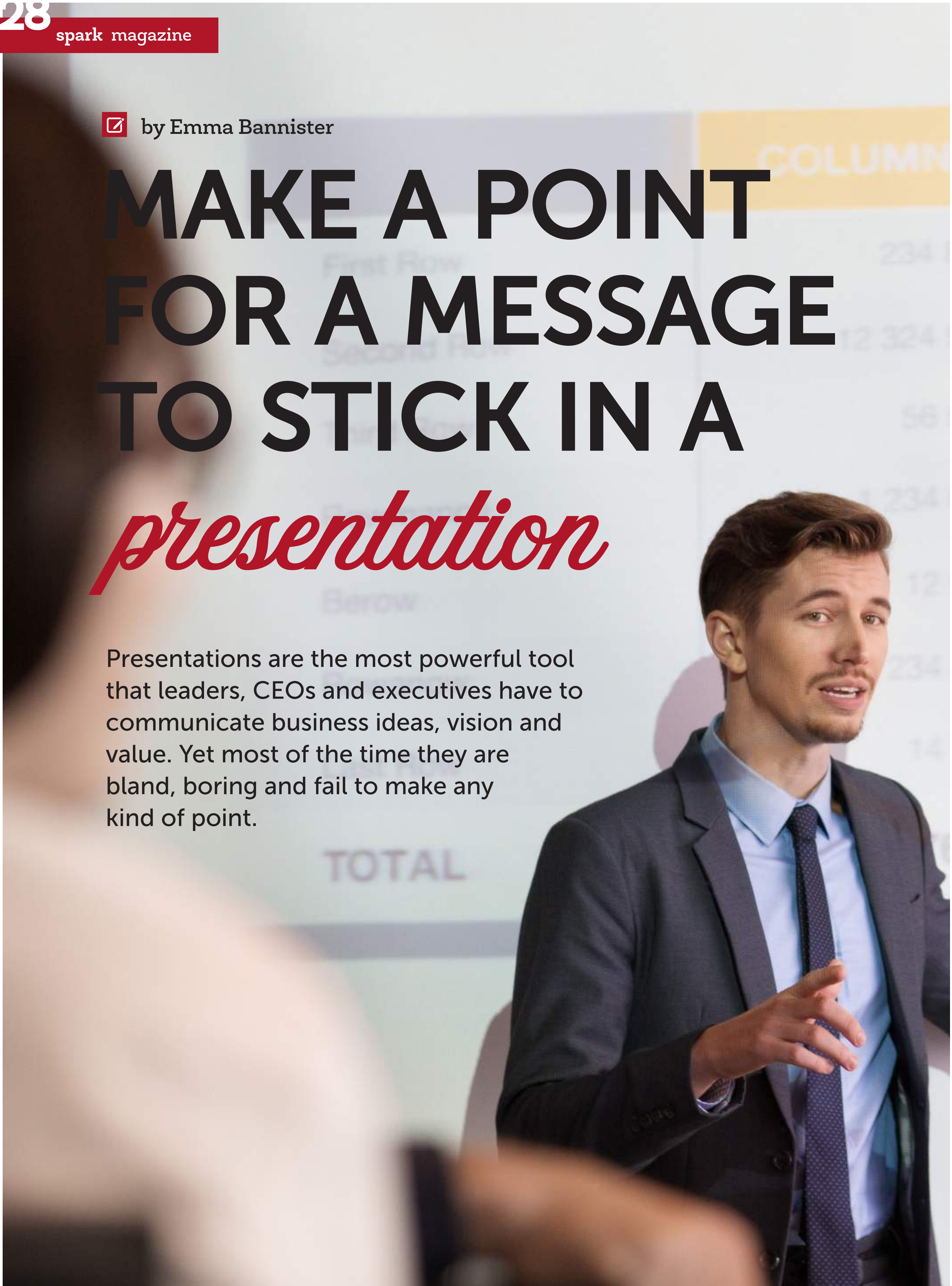
by Emma Bannister

MAKE A POINT FOR A MESSAGE TO STICK IN A *presentation*

Presentations are the most powerful tool that leaders, CEOs and executives have to communicate business ideas, vision and value. Yet most of the time they are bland, boring and fail to make any kind of point.



Important and urgent messages are hidden in badly designed slides, complex paragraphs of information, verbose language and screens of bullet points that have no clear purpose or call to action.

Research suggests that the average professional spends 14 hours per week creating, delivering and attending presentations – many of which are vastly unproductive and amount to very little, if anything at all. For a small team of 15 people that equates to over 10,000 man-hours a year.

The challenge most CEOs and leaders face is pulling a presentation together, often at the last hurried minute. Although there may be a dedicated person or team for a presentation, they are usually busy dealing with an increasing workload and competing deadlines.

Presentations are usually dug up from the archives, with numbers updated to make them seem current. Aside from this not being inspirational for the audience who have viewed this reincarnated presentation before, it is also like trying to pull a rabbit out of a hat for the person presenting.

It's impossible to find and communicate a clear message in slides that have been used time and again for varying, and often differing, reasons. When spoken out loud and communicated on screen, it ends up as waffle and it's one of the reasons presentations are too long.

On average, only 10% of a presentation is remembered. This means most of what is said could be condensed or cut in half.

Any leader or CEO wanting to have an impact when they present must pick one clear message to structure their presentation around and then repeat that message throughout to make the message stick.

It is that one idea, purpose or point that is the glue that holds everything else together. Once there is a clear bumper sticker message then it's easy to figure out what the key take-home message is for the audience and what it is they should do as a result.

Anything else in the presentation that does not align to this message should be deleted, stripped out and banished. These days, what gets left out of a presentation is more important than what goes in.

Some people and companies are clearly better at this than others. Contrary to belief, sharing everything and blinding the audience with numbers is not the best way to be transparent and open. This will make everyone disengage, lose interest, and fast.

It is only by communicating clearly articulated messages that stakeholders buy-in on a new vision, or a new client and multi-million-dollar contract is won.

Leading academic Mary Barth from Stanford University recently found that good integrated reporting and presentations is positively associated with both stock liquidity and firm value. Clearly, this requires much more than just making presentation slides 'look pretty'.

Leaders and CEOs must invest the time and energy into putting together a powerful presentation with one clear message if they want their audience to invest the time and energy in them.

Emma Bannister is the founder and CEO of Presentation Studio,

www.presentationstudio.com

by Karen Gately

THE IMPACT OF REWARD AND RECOGNITION *on morale*

The truth is people are much more likely to strive to achieve the standards required of them, if they believe they are fairly recognised and rewarded. Conversely, when people feel a lack respect and reasonable reward from their employer they are less likely to invest the full strength of their potential in getting the job done.
For most people feeling trusted and appreciated has a profound influence on the strength of their spirit and ultimately depth of engagement.

Gallop research spanning four million employees worldwide, paints a clear and compelling picture of the link between reward and recognition, and organisational performance. Improved individual productivity, increased engagement among colleagues and staff retention are all reported benefits. As are higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers, better safety records and fewer accidents on the job.

According to Gallop, "Workplace recognition motivates, provides a sense of accomplishment and makes employees feel valued for their work. Recognition not only boosts individual employee engagement, but it also has been found to increase productivity and loyalty to the company, leading to higher retention."

For reward and recognition efforts to have a positive impact on people however, they need to be delivered well. It is especially true for example, that the younger generations working today, need regular and immediate feedback that allows them to feel a sense of not only achievement but also progress.

Among the most essential ingredients of a successful approach are fairness and consistency. The decisions made to reward and recognise one person or group send clear signals to the rest of the team about what is truly valued. Leaders are wise to make carefully considered decisions about the outcomes or behaviours recognised, or risk losing the confidence and engagement of other people across the team.

While financial rewards unquestionably play a role in inspiring a sense of personal value and commitment, far more important are the words of gratitude people need to hear, and acts of generosity they value. Leaders need to look for opportunities to vocalise their appreciation for the energy invested, talent leveraged and ultimately results achieved by people every day.

Research conducted by McKinsey & Company supports the view that non-financial incentives are more powerful motivators than money. Research consistently shows that for people who are satisfied with their salaries, non-financial rewards are more effective than more money when it comes to building long-term employee engagement.

According to McKinsey *"many financial rewards mainly generate short-term boosts of energy, which can have damaging unintended consequences."* Consider for a moment the undermining influence on team cohesion and morale, of reward systems that recognise individuals for the outcomes they achieve irrespective of the ways in which they choose to behave. Whether through reward or recognition never hold up as an example a member of the team who undermines the spirit and success of the group as a whole.

Optimising positive impact can in part be achieved by tailoring rewards to each individual. While understandably many organisations provide standard rewards or forms of recognition, people often appreciate the effort invested and personal nature of the reward more than the gift itself. With a little understanding of each member of their team, Leaders can provide rewards aligned with the personal interests of the individual.

Even the most talented and energised member of a team can disconnect over time if they fail to receive the recognition they believe they deserve. Leaders need to avoid the all too common mistake of focusing heavily on those letting the team down, while failing to let their high performers know they are valued. Taking the time to say thank you and well done, can go a long way to maintaining engagement through even the most challenging times.

Karen Gately, a founder of HR Consultancy Ryan Gately, is a leadership and people-management specialist. Karen works with leaders and HR teams to drive business results through the talent and energy of people. She is the author of The People Manager's Toolkit: A Practical guide to getting the best from people (Wiley) and The Corporate Dojo: Driving extraordinary results through spirited people. For more information visit www.ryangately.com.au or contact

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by Dr Amantha Imber

WHY YOU NEED TO STOP GIVING CASH FOR *great ideas*

Several years ago, I had a meeting with the head of innovation at a large government-owned organisation. She began to tell me about the organisation's burgeoning innovation program. She told me about an online suggestion box that had recently been launched and how the focus of the program was to collect as many ideas as possible.

I asked her how she was eliciting ideas from employees. *'We pay people $10 per idea'*, she *replied.*
'How many ideas do you have so far?' I asked.
'Hundreds. It's been an incredibly popular program so far.'

I then asked her about the quality of the ideas she had received.
'To be honest', she began, *'there are not a lot of great ideas there. People have suggested things such as having free fruit on Fridays and investing in thicker toilet paper in the staff bathrooms. I haven't seen anything yet that really promises to transform the organisation'*.

I wasn't surprised by what she told me, but I was curious as to what she thought about one other thing.

'What do you think would happen if you stopped giving employees $10 for every idea?' I asked.

She considered this for a moment and replied, 'We probably wouldn't get any more ideas'.

The research into the impact of financial rewards on innovation certainly backs up this experience—although the relationship is not completely straightforward. Yu Zhou, from the Renmin University of China, and his colleagues investigated the impact of financial rewards, such as pay rises, performance linked-bonuses, and team-based bonuses, on innovative behaviours.

Zhou and his colleagues found that financial rewards did lead to an increase in innovative behaviours—but only up to a point. They found a U-shaped relationship, in that innovative behaviours increased with some financial rewards, but as the financial rewards increased, innovation started to decrease. In contrast, the relationship between non-financial rewards, such as recognition, was a linear one. The greater the non-financial rewards, the greater the innovative behaviours.

Markus Baer, from the University of Illinois Urbana - Champaign, and his colleagues explored the impact of financial rewards on employee creativity, and whether this relationship was influenced by the complexity of an employee's job. Baer found that financial rewards had very different effects on creativity, depending on how complex and challenging a person's job was. For those with more complex jobs, an increase in financial rewards led to a decrease in innovation. However, for those in simple jobs, financial rewards increased the person's creative performance.

Indiana University Professor of Entrepreneurship Dean Shepherd and colleague Dawn DeTienne also explored the complex relationship between financial rewards and innovation. Shepherd and DeTienne were interested in examining how having a deep understanding of the customer and their frustrations relates to the effectiveness of financial rewards on innovation.

The experiment they set up involved people being briefed on problems that customers had experienced with footwear. One group was presented with a large range of issues and frustrations (presented as real quotes from focus groups), while the second group received a more limited set of customer problems. Participants were then instructed to generate ideas for solving these customer problems. In addition, they were told that there was a financial reward for the best solution generated. One group was told the reward was $50, while the other group was told the reward was a measly $1.

The amount of prior knowledge presented to participants had a significant impact on how motivated they were by the financial reward. The size of the reward was a big motivating factor for those with less knowledge about the customer and their problems. The offer of a $50 reward led to these participants generating significantly more ideas than the offer of a $1 reward. In addition, the $50 reward group's ideas were judged to be significantly more innovative than the $1 reward group's ideas.

In stark contrast, financial rewards had almost the opposite effect for participants with a comprehensive knowledge of customer problems. The size of the financial reward had no impact on the number of solutions generated. But, more importantly, the $50 reward group put forward solutions that were evaluated as being less innovative than those from the $1 reward group.

These results may seem surprising. Why would a bigger prize decrease innovation output? The researchers suggest that having a large amount of knowledge (and thus a high level of skill) is a motivator in and of itself, and the financial reward actually gets in the way of this motivation.

The single biggest problem with financial rewards, however, is that as soon as they are taken away, and if no intrinsic motivators (such as a sense of challenge and autonomy) are in place, motivation for innovation evaporates. After all, if you are only innovating to gain a financial reward, why would you continue to innovate when that reward gets taken away? As such, when given the choice between intrinsic rewards such as recognition, or extrinsic rewards, such as money, intrinsic rewards win every time.

Dr Amantha Imber is the Founder of Inventium, Australia's leading innovation consultancy. If you want to be a better innovator, Amantha has created a report that explains the six innovation mistakes almost every company makes. Avoid those mistakes by reading this ***https://amanthaimber.lpages.co/innovation-sp-v1/****.*

by Jeff Schwisow

the BUSINESS OF BUSYNESS

To survive in today's environment requires future-focused and activities that constantly adapt as conditions and events unfold. Yet, the 'business of busyness' – our obsession with being constantly productive – is a major obstacle in our need to do future-focused work.

As a result, the success rate for strategic plan implementation – the best measure of a business's ability to adapt to the future – is dismal. The percentage of failed implementations ranges anywhere from 63% to 90%, depending on the research cited. In fact, Robert Kaplan of Balanced Scorecard fame estimates that 90% of strategic failures are the direct result of poor execution.

The real enemy of business evolution is how 'now' cripples your ability to focus on 'next'.

Productivity is a simple concept. It's the relationship between the value we produce, and the input required to produce it. Its power lies in the important insights it provides into the 'effectiveness' of your business endeavours.

However, today, as the daily demand on people's time has increased, as the volume of information processing in our hyper-connected world places unprecedented pressure on the attention of business leaders, time and attention have become your business' most valuable commodities. This has shifted much of the focus on productivity from effectiveness to efficiency.

Our day-to-day activities are focused on maximising the immediate results from our actions – irrespective of the value those results deliver. This drives an emphasis on minimising the expenditure of time and attention on things that don't provide immediate value.

This can have some unintended consequences. Research on knowledge workers, conducted by Julian Birkinshaw of the London Business School, found an average of 41% of their time was spent on discretionary activities that offered little business value or could be handled competently by others. Similarly, research I conducted for a client showed that around 35% of engineers' time was spent on work that created no value or wasn't required to meet their business obligations.

This becomes a trap that the time- and attention-starved entrepreneur can easily fall into –busyness becomes a behaviour that's valued over the effective allocation of time and attention.

The traditional strategic approach encourages a focus on the immediate.

Time invested wisely in your business' long-term health rarely has a cause and effect relationship. Strategic action taken today might not manifest as business value for months or, perhaps, years to come. However, our traditional strategic approach, the very practices that should focus our thinking and activity on the future, will often conspire with this productivity obsession to keep us anchored in the present. A McKinsey study found that in 52% of companies, strategic decisions are made by a small senior group and poorly communicated to the rest of the organisation. This often makes your strategy a high-level concept that people struggle to relate to their day-to-day activities.

In addition, most organisations are not intentional about making future-focused work a part of their operational fabric. Their strategy, although rich in analysis and planning, often lacks a clear framework for turning their plans into action and activity. This same McKinsey study found that only 23% of companies use a formal process to operationalise their strategic plans.

Without a framework and the leadership necessary to drive the future-focused work of strategy, decisions on how your people spend their time becomes disconnected from strategic considerations. Your people will keep themselves busy with the operational activities that allow them to feel productive – revelling in the strong sense of

accomplishment from a day filled with solving problems, responding to requests or getting through their to-do list.

To bring the next into the now, take advantage of our affinity for the immediate.

To make strategy part of your business' day-to-day reality, bring the future into the present by taking advantage of how we naturally allocate our time and attention. Do this by translating the ethereal world of strategic aspiration into specific, outcome-focused initiatives – strategic projects – that move the business step-by-step toward your future goals.

Establish a strategic roadmap that makes the projects with the greatest strategic value a business imperative that has immediacy. This give your strategy-making priority.

Show that you're invested in the strategic value these projects offer. Create a project execution framework that empowers your people to leverage their knowledge and experience to deliver successful strategic outcomes.

Give these future-focused activities meaning for the entire organisation by recognising and celebrating the strategic progress that each project makes. By valuing progress toward your long-term goals, your motivating your people to generate more meaningful strategic progress.

For future-focused work to compete with the immediate and urgent, it needs to be given distinction and importance. Today's entrepreneurs need to create a culture where shaping the business for the future is an investment that's a consistent and persistent part of the present.

Jeff Schwisow is a Melbourne-based strategy specialist, speaker and the author of Projectify - How to use projects to engage your people in strategy that evolves your business. Jeff helps businesses use the power of projects to engage the very best of its people, consistently delight its clients and constantly evolve to generate exceptional business results.
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THE TRUE COST OF IGNORING BAD BEHAVIOUR *at work*

Bullying, racism and sexual harassment should have no place in the modern Australian workplace, yet bad behaviour is all too common. In 2016 research by Dr Lindsay McMillan, 14% of Australian workers described their workplace environment as ‘toxic’, and 20% had experienced major problems in communication with a co-worker or boss. A massive 50% had experienced serious incidents of conflict or negative conduct at work.

Experiencing bad behaviour in the workplace significantly impacts on individuals' morale, job satisfaction, and physical and psychological health. Employees who experience poor management are more likely to have a heart attack in the next decade. About 80% of women who've been harassed leave their jobs within two years. SafeWork Australia reports that depression, psychological distress and emotional exhaustion are common outcomes for bullied workers.

Toxic workers also have a damaging ripple effect on the broader team. A 2015 Harvard Business School report claims that having a toxic employee on the payroll costs the average business an additional $15,169 USD per year, primarily due to the departure of high performers who can no longer tolerate the negative team culture.

Even modest levels of unethical behaviour can cause major costs and lost opportunities to the employer organisation, including loss of customers, increased turnover and lessened legitimacy amongst external stakeholders. Toxic conduct pulls teams off track, creates unnecessary rifts, wastes management time and damages productivity. The reputational train wrecks of recent Royal Commissions provide further proof that good workplace conduct is a legitimate focus for employers.

The good news? Addressing bad behaviour in the workplace can generate huge benefits for workers, employers and the Australian economy, and there are clear actions that we all can take.
Firstly, all staff can learn to be 'upstanders', not bystanders, and recognise that the victim of toxic conduct often has the least power to do anything about it. Colleagues who witness aggression or sexualised behaviour can intervene, standing up for their co-worker and also for professionalism and respect in the workplace.

The many accounts that emerged in the recent #metoo movement showed that sophisticated bullies and sexual harassers often operate behind the scenes, when no witness is present. To counter this, employers can encourage concerns to be raised promptly and without fear of retribution. Create multiple communication channels, including regular employee surveys which address culture, values and risk-taking (as well as engagement), trusted human resources staff, the ability to make anonymous complaints, and forums which encourage employees to express their views constructively.
Front line managers can also hone their skills at identifying and addressing misconduct. Unethical behaviour should be addressed early and fearlessly, before it starts to contaminate the broader organisational culture. Managers can remind the whole team of its responsibility for building a good workplace culture.

Perhaps most importantly, leaders must 'walk the talk'. Boards and senior leaders should address any disconnect between the standards that the organisation says it believes in, and the operational reality. Ensure that values such as respect, equity and accountability are truly front and centre in the organisation's decisions and actions. Immediately act on behaviour that's 'toxic at the top', because as we all know, the conduct of leaders and managers sets the ethical tone for the rest of the organisation. Does the CEO need to have a quiet word with one of the executives? Could a coach help to build self-awareness and self-control in a 'rockstar' employee who misbehaves?

Correcting or removing a toxic worker from your team delivers twice the financial benefit of adding a 'superstar', so can you afford to leave bad behaviour unaddressed in the workplace?

Rose Bryant-Smith is a Director of workplace advisory firm Worklogic, and co-author of Fix Your Team

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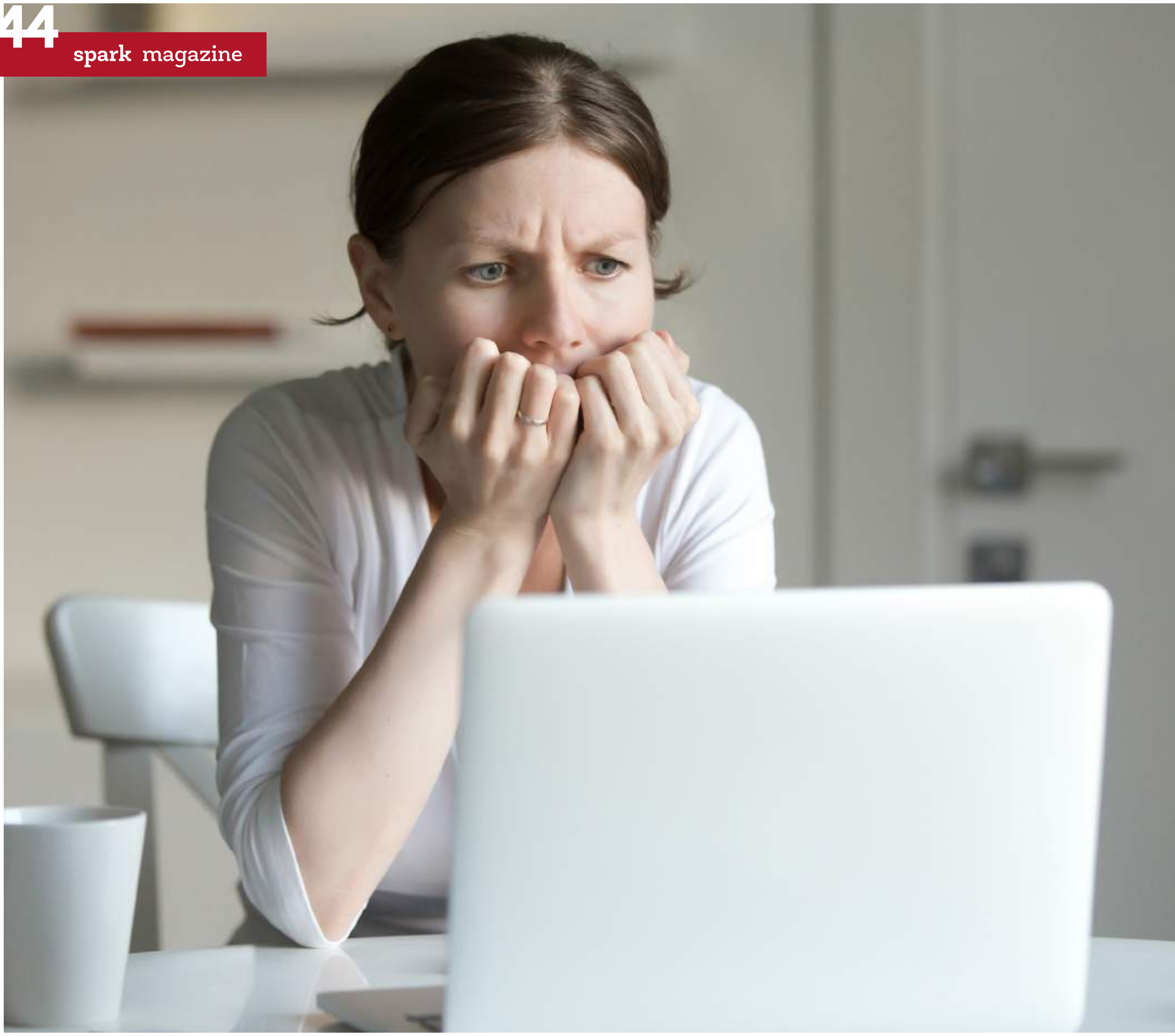

THE TRUTH ABOUT FAILURE - WHY IT'S NOT *all good*

by Dr Amantha Imber

Failure is the new black. In many fast-growing technology companies, if you are not failing, then you may as well pack your bags and go home. Conferences and events around the world are now dedicated to sharing stories of failure. Failure fetishists are all around us, eager to fail, and eager to hear about others who have failed.

But somewhere along the line, many of us have forgotten that not all failure is good. Nor should it be celebrated.

Sure, a love of failing opens us up to taking risks, often without consequence or punishment. But leaders who repeat the mantra of "fail fast, fail often" may be setting their team up for unhelpful behaviours.

When it comes to failure, we need to remember that sometimes it is productive, but other times, it is not. Here are three questions to ask yourself to make sure your failure is actually moving you forward, and not setting you back.

Did you learn something?

In the midst of our love of failure, many of us have forgotten why failure became popular in the first place – because it helps us learn and improve. We learn far more from our failures than we do from our successes.

Because we are told to fail quickly, we don't often spend enough time reflecting on what went wrong. We simply move onto the next experiment. To ensure you are milking as much benefit from your failures, set aside reflection time after every failure to make sure you are clear on the big lesson coming out of it.

Did you share those learnings widely?

Assuming that you did learn something from your failure, the next problem occurs if you kept those learnings to yourself. Not because you are selfish, but just because you are trying to move quickly and fail fast into the next experiment. If you failed to share your learnings outside of yourself or your team, you are missing a big opportunity.

Failure is most powerful when the stories and lessons are shared widely. Ideally, your company will have a method for sharing stories of failure to allow others to learn without having to experience the exact same failure.

Did you change your behaviour/product/thinking?

Behaviour change is hard. And because failure can be deflating, it doesn't really leave us in a great state of mind to change our behaviour. But for failure to have the biggest impact on future success, it needs to lead to change.

Sometimes this change will be in the form of iterating a product or service idea. But other times, it will be about changing our own behaviour. We might fail at sticking to a new exercise regime. We might fail at hitting an important deadline for a project. We might fail at clearly communicating our learnings to others at our company.

When this happens, we need to reflect on what caused our failure and iterate our own behaviour. It's through changing ourselves that will help failure lead to the biggest successes.

Dr Amantha Imber is the Founder of Inventium, Australia's leading innovation consultancy. Her latest book, The Innovation Formula, tackles the topic of how organisations can create a culture where innovation thrives.

by Donna McGeorge

WHY 25-MINUTE MEETINGS INCREASE ORGANISATIONAL *productivity*

A 2017 Harvard survey of 182 senior managers in a range of industries found that 33 per cent of meetings are actually useful or purposeful. In addition, 71 per cent of managers said meetings are unproductive and inefficient, and 62 per cent said that they miss opportunities to bring teams closer together.

According to Glass Door, a company that provides average salary information across a range of roles and industries, the average salary of a manager is $110 000. They say there are approximately 75 people at this level in a number of large organisations, and they spend between 35 per cent and 50 per cent of their time in meetings. This can equate to a loss of $5,775 per week due to time spent in wasteful meetings.

In addition, a 2014 Bain & Company study of time budgeting at large corporations found that a single weekly meeting of midlevel managers was costing one organisation $15 million a year.

It is such a big problem that Harvard Business Review has even developed a Meeting Cost Calculator app to help organisations figure out exactly how much meetings drain the bottom line.

This level of spending in any other context would be tightly controlled by the finance team. Yet someone as junior as a current intern can be responsible for setting up and running a weekly team meeting that consistently and constantly brings down teams, and the whole organisation, without any regulation.

In most organisations, an employee's success (or failure) is measured against key performance indicators (KPIs). There are no KPIs for 'attending ineffective meetings', yet there is an expectation that people will do just that, on top of getting their task-driven KPIs done.

This requirement to attend poorly executed meetings while also managing to get stuff done is what drives down employee engagement scores and drives up feelings of discouragement.

The issue is that most managers run meetings according to their default calendar app, which is automatically set to 60 minutes. Waiting for late comers, going off track, having an unclear agenda, watching mobile phones and wasting time fixing tech all contribute to wasted time in those meetings of that length. Yet doing work in short, focused bursts has long been supported as a way of efficiently using time and energy.

Parkinson's Law explains that 'work expands to fill the time available for its completion'. Hence, when you give people time to get stuff done, they will use whatever time you allow them.

That is what happens when managers default to 60-minute meetings, where in fact, they could get the same amount of work done in half that time.

As far back as 1911, Frederick Taylor Winslow, one of the very first management consultants, made the connection between productivity, effort, and rest or breaks. He found that people who gave a focused amount of effort for 25 minutes, and then spent the next 35 minutes resting, increased productivity by 600 per cent.

Francesco Cirillo's book The Pomodoro Technique centres around short bursts of work for 25 minutes at a time, followed by a short 5-minute break. This choice of 25 minutes was not arbitrary and was based on several different trials, experiments and iterations. When managers concentrate their efforts in shorter, controlled periods of time, they achieve more.

A 2002 study published in the Journal of the Association for Psychological Science showed that people who imposed strict deadlines on themselves for tasks performed far better (and more consistently) than those who didn't. More interestingly, they found that those who allotted too much (or ample) time to complete tasks often created more work for themselves.

When managers trim their meetings back to 25 minutes, they will find that the wasted time spent on tech issues and pointless chit-chat will be eradicated, too.

Donna McGeorge is the author of 'The 25-Minute Meeting: Half the Time, Double the Impact' (Wiley $24.95). She is a speaker, author and mentor who helps people make their work work.

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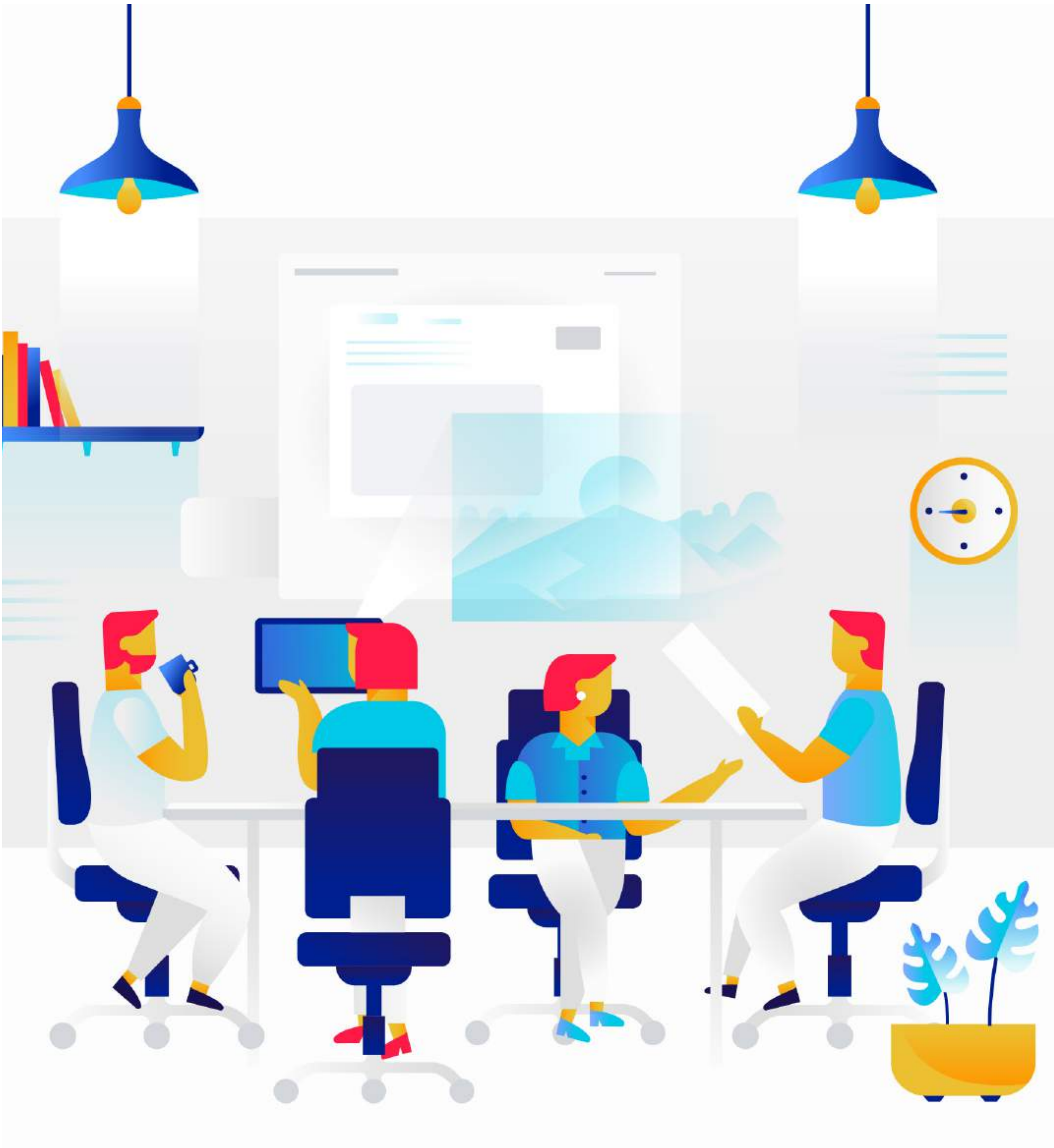


by Dr Amantha Imber

WHY INNOVATION TRAINING WON'T CHANGE *your culture*

Leaders mistakenly believe that putting a few people through a one-day training program about how to innovate will transform the culture. While people may learn a few new tools, expecting a training program to create an innovation culture is unrealistic.

To achieve true culture change, leaders need to consider several aspects of how their organisation works. Many companies are structured in a way that inadvertently kills innovation and avoids risk taking at all costs. Leaders make the mistake of asking staff to innovate but expecting them to do this as their "night job".

There are several changes organisations need to make to create a culture where innovation thrives. First, companies need to give people time to innovate. One of the most striking differences between Australia's Most Innovative Companies (as assessed by innovation consultancy Inventium as part of the Australian Financial Review's Most Innovative Companies list) is around how much time employees are able to dedicate to innovation.

At Australia's top 10 most innovative companies, 88% of staff say they are given adequate time to innovate. This drops to only 18% of staff saying they have sufficient time to innovate, in Australia's least innovative companies.
Leaders that call for innovation need to understand that innovation only happens if time is carved out. While companies such as Google and 3M offer staff between 15-20% of their time to work on self-set innovation projects, many organisations struggle with this model.

Some organisations have had success with seconding passionate and talented employees onto innovation projects for a period of weeks or even months. Other companies, such as Commonwealth Bank of Australia, allow anyone in the organisation to apply for a CANapult can, which gives people tools, time and money to innovate on a project of their choosing.

Second, leaders need to ensure employees are clear on the challenges that need solving. Ninety-seven percent of employees who work at Australia's most innovative companies report being clear on the business challenges that require creative thought. This drops down to 39% at their less innovative counterparts, who feel left in the dark.

Leaders need to clearly communicate to all staff what the most important challenges are that need solving. Providing staff with an avenue to submit their ideas and suggestions on how to solve these challenges should also be provided. If staff don't know what they should be solving, innovation efforts become unfocused and scattergun.

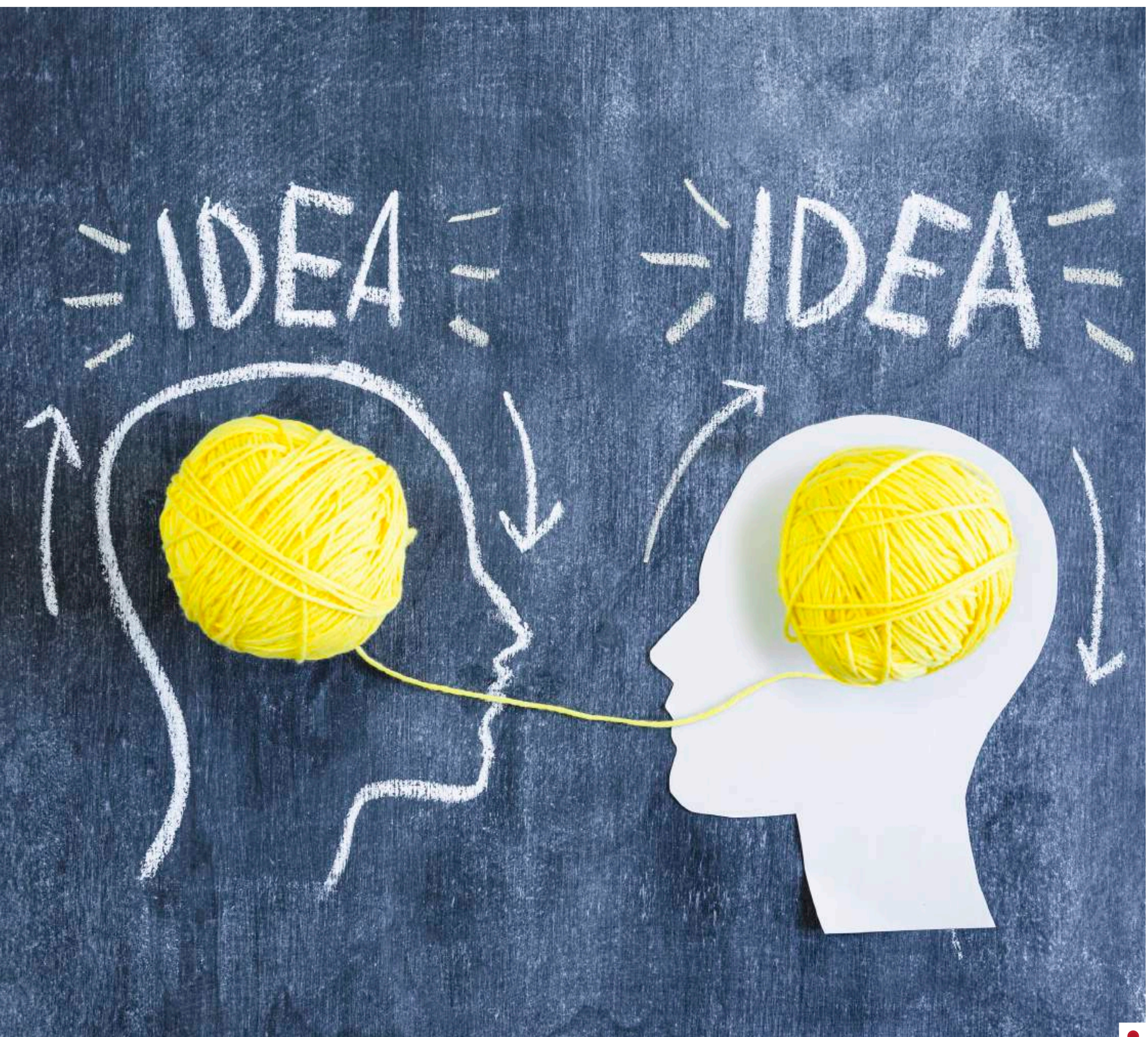
Finally, leaders need to encourage teams to run experiments to test ideas. Running experiments and testing ideas with customers is par for the course at Australia's most innovative companies. Ninety-two percent of employees say they are encouraged to experiment at Australia's top 10 most innovative companies. This drops down to 34% in less innovative companies.

While an effective innovation training program will teach people the skills of how to run an experiment, leaders need to create a culture of experimentation, whereby people are actively encouraged to test ideas. Leaders need to create an environment where employees feel safe to fail, given many experiments do just that.

Having a culture of experimentation leads to data-driven decisions, and breeds curiosity. Rather than relying on subjective opinion or having managers block ideas with no good reason, the results of experiments can speak for themselves. This helps progress the best ideas and leave ineffective ideas behind.

While innovation training will teach staff important skills, ensure that the culture is set up to support, not squash, what innovation training delivers.

Dr Amantha Imber is the founder of Inventium and author of The Innovation Formula


IDEA
IDEA

by Scott Stein

WHY LEADERS DON'T DELEGATE— AND WHAT TO DO *about it*

A leader can't possibly complete all the tasks required by their department themselves, but this doesn't stop many from trying. A Harvard Business Review study titled 'Why aren't you delegating?' found that almost 50% of the companies surveyed were concerned about their employees' delegation skills—and most of them didn't offer training on how to delegate.

Too often experienced leaders don't delegate to others. They falsely believe that they can do a task more quickly themselves, rather than taking the time to explain to their staff what they want done. Whilst this may be true at first, if a task needs to be repeated then the loss of time adds up quickly and too often a leader is losing time doing tasks that are below their pay grade.

According to a Fast Company article by Carson Tate, the most common obstacle to delegating is psychological—the need to do everything yourself. This can occur when a new leader is starting with staff and they are struggling to shift from doing to delegating or when an experienced leader is a perfectionist and doesn't trust their people to get the task done the right way.

The most common mistake a leader makes when delegating is they delegate the wrong way. They often just tell a staff member to do something without providing any context or information around expectations or how they want it completed. The result is that the task is not completed to the level that is required—or in the timeframe needed and the leader stops delegating. The unfortunate by-product of this situation is that after a while staff are not being developed and they realise that with a little bit of pushback their manager will do it themselves. After a while the leader also starts to get frustrated because of the increased workload.

Leaders need to start using a delegation hack. A simple way to delegate is to start by sharing the task and working with your direct report to create a one page plan together. Leaders need to start by asking their staff what steps they believe need to be taken to accomplish the task—not telling them! Once the staff member starts sharing ideas, the leader can also contribute and guide their staff member toward the best solution. After identifying the specific steps to be taken, the leader can next ask their staff what order they think the steps should be taken and coach them on the best sequence and the reasons why. This changes the entire dynamic of the relationship. This approach increases trust and creates a sense of engagement that is lacking in many workplaces.

For larger tasks during this planning conversation an effective leader can also ask their staff member to identify a couple of check-in meetings to see if there is anything else the leader can do to assist their staff member as well as ensure that their staff are still on track. By quickly taking a photo of the plan on a digital device a record is quickly captured for future reference.

Over time leaders can fast-track this delegation hack further by getting their people to develop their one-page plan independently, then seek out advice from the leader before they execute the plan. This allows the leader to share any additional insights or encouragement—and starts shifting this project management skillset to their people.

By taking 10-15 minutes one-on-one with their people, leaders can hack the way they delegate to one that empowers their people, lifts performance and saves time.

Scott Stein is a leadership pathfinder and author of Leadership Hacks.

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by Pamela Jabbour

HOW UNIFORMS CAN BOOST STAFF *engagement*

All business leaders want their staff to be passionate, committed and happy. According to Deloitte's 2016 Global Human Capital Trends report, nearly nine in 10 executives rated staff engagement as an important or very important priority for their organisations.
Yet one in five reported that their companies do not formally measure employee engagement.

Deloitte defines culture as the sense of “how things are done around here”, while engagement is “how employees feel about how things are done around here”.

Culture has a direct impact on staff engagement, and staff engagement has a direct impact on company success. Engaged employees show greater levels of commitment to the organisation and its ideals, leading to greater outputs and positive results. But achieving and maintaining engagement is an ongoing challenge as employees increasingly expect workplaces that are flexible, inclusive, creative and empowering.

Nearly every aspect of our jobs – from the daily commute to our physical work environment, the tools we use and the clothes we wear – has an impact on our level of engagement. Uniforms are a key piece of the engagement puzzle and play a major role in determining each employee’s sense of pride and satisfaction in their work.

A lazy outfit leads to lazy output and poor customer perception. Conversely, staff who take pride in their appearance take pride in their work, which positively impacts the customer experience. But it’s not just about perception.

A Cornell University study that examined the effect of uniforms on employee satisfaction in the hospitality industry revealed that uniform design affected not only employees’ attitudes, but their ability to do their jobs well. Employees had strong feelings about the uniforms they were made to wear, whether or not they performed customer-facing roles.

Employers should consider the positive psychological and behavioural impacts that a well-designed uniform can have on all employees – not just those on the front line.

Businesses need to thoroughly understand the who, why, when and where of their uniform design. Who is wearing the uniform, why are they wearing it, when and where? What are the needs of the staff member wearing the uniform and the customer who will be interacting with them? How can the uniform best support that interaction for a successful result?

Companies should brief a professional uniform designer who can design something fit-for-purpose that also meets the company’s branding requirements.

A uniform designer understands what works when it comes to colour, fabric and fit and will be able to select fabrics that are tried and tested in the relevant industry.

Rather than focusing on what works around the board room table, companies should engage with their staff and customers to find out what's important to them. Staff are the face of the brand and their uniforms are often the first thing customers see, so it is important staff identify with that the uniform is trying to achieve. Uniforms can add to an employee's sense of purpose and belonging, help them connect with key brand messages and lead to a great first impression.

A well-designed uniform is one whose wearer starts to feel good the minute they get dressed. It is comfortable, practical and fashion-forward. In other words, it looks great and does its job well. Ill-fitting, outdated uniforms inevitably disempower staff and turn off potential customers.

Businesses will perpetually ask themselves how they can achieve better staff engagement and there are many answers to that question. A well-designed uniform is one.

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