

Better Business Focus



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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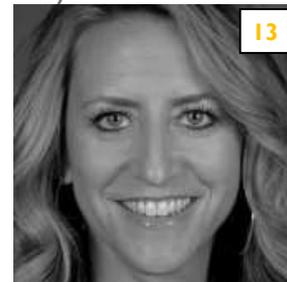
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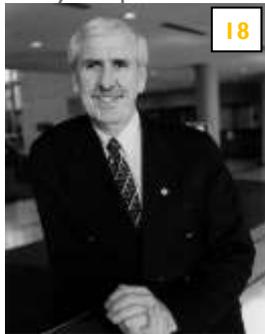
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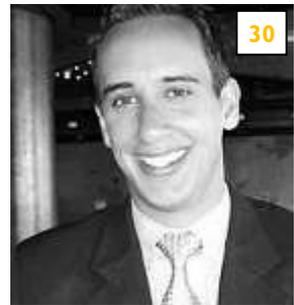
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The Human Brain: Use it, or Lose it



The term 'use it, or lose it' is a commonplace statement these days, particularly in senior circles. It can mean any number of things from taking regular exercise to learning new things.

This article is about learning new things. To do this, you need two things: a functional brain and willpower. Everyone has a brain – it's inside your skull and operates as the command centre of your nervous system and receives signals from your body's sensory organs and outputs information to your muscles. It has a number of interesting characteristics:

- It is the largest brain of all vertebrates relative to body size.
- It weighs about 3.3 lbs. (1.5 kilograms).
- It makes up about 2% of your body weight.
- The cerebrum part of your brain makes up 85% of your brain's weight.
- It contains about 86 billion nerve cells (neurons)
- The neurons are connected by trillions of connections, or synapses.

10 years ago, in March 2009, an article in Scientific American caught my eye and held my attention. It was titled: 'How To Save New Brain Cells' and was written by Tracey J. Shors. She had my attention straightaway as I read her opening text: *Fresh neurons arise in the adult brain every day. New research suggests that the cells ultimately help with learning*



complex tasks—and the more they are challenged, the more they flourish.

She explained that the brain can grow new neurons. That's good news but the bad news is that they disappear unless cognitively challenged. Apparently, fresh neurons arise in the brain every day and research carried out, albeit mostly on rats, indicates that learning enhances the survival of new neurons in the adult brain.

Here's the really exciting bit: **the more engaging and challenging the problem, the greater the number of neurons that stick around.**

These neurons are then available to help in situations that tax the mind. This is a case where the more taxing there is, the better you can become.

Apparently, in the 1990s, scientists awakened interest in the field of neurobiology with the startling news that the mature mammalian brain (every human has one) is capable of sprouting

new neurons. Previously, biologists had long believed that this talent for neurogenesis was reserved for young, developing minds and was lost with age. Now we know that new cells do arise in the adult brain—particularly in a region called the hippocampus, which is involved in learning and memory.

It may surprise people to know that in rats, between 5,000 and 10,000 new neurons arise in the hippocampus every day. With humans, we do not know how many. The new cells are not generated like clockwork but can be influenced by a number of different environmental factors. For example, alcohol can retard the generation of new brain cells, whereas exercise can increase the rate of production.

But don't get too excited. Yes, exercise and other actions may help produce extra brain cells. But those new cells don't necessarily hang around - most will disappear within just a few weeks of creation. We already know that

most cells do not survive indefinitely, but their quick demise is a bit of a puzzle. After all, why would the brain go to the trouble of producing new cells only to have them disappear rapidly? The answer seems to be that they are made 'just in case' – if your brain is cognitively challenged, your new brain cells will hang around but if your brain is in limbo, the new cells simply fade away.

Humans have Big Brains

David Christian¹ wrote on *Delanceyplace*² on 10th October 2018 that humans have big brains which are unusually large relative to their bodies. Not only that, the top front layer of the brain, the neocortex, is gigantic. In most mammal species, the cortex accounts for between 10% to 40% of brain size, whereas in humans it can be as much as 80%.

Next time you're feeling down in the dumps, remember this: humans are exceptional for the sheer number of their cortical neurons. They have about fifteen billion, or more than twice as many as chimpanzees (with about six billion). Whales and elephants, who are the next in line after humans on the most-cortical-neurons list, have about ten billion cortical neurons, but they have smaller brains than chimpanzees relative to body size. Having a large brain means you have the potential to acquire, store, and use information about the things that are going on in your world.

I know what you're going to ask: Aren't big brains obviously a good thing? Not necessarily, as they guzzle energy. They need up to twenty times as much energy as the equivalent amount of muscle tissue. In humans, the brain uses 16% of available energy, though the brain is only 2% of the body's mass. Our brains need energy to

manage the dexterity in our hands and feet. In processing images, the brain uses a large share of available energy.

Connecting Two Brains

Two scientists³ are the first to successfully allow one human brain to communicate an intention directly to another human brain. Technologies known as brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) are now beginning to allow paralyzed individuals to control, say, a computer cursor or a prosthetic limb with their brain signals. The scientists began to wonder if the same principle could be used to beam thoughts from one human brain to another. They decided to test their brain-to-brain interface by seeing if they could play a simple two-player video game. It worked - for the first time, a human brain had communicated an intention directly to another human brain, allowing the two brains to jointly complete a task⁴.

New Brain Cells Throughout Life

People keep making new brain cells throughout their lives (well at least until the age of 97), according to a study on human brains⁵ conducted by researchers at the University of Madrid. It's an idea that has been fiercely debated as it used to be thought we were born with all the brain cells we will ever have. But the research showed that the number of new brain cells tails off with age and falls dramatically in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease.

Most of our neurons (brain cells emitting electrical signals) are indeed in place by the time we are born.

Whilst studies on other mammals have found new brain cells forming later in life, the extent of "neurogenesis" in the human brain is still a source of considerable debate.

The study, published in *Nature Medicine*, looked at the brains of 58 dead people who were aged between 43 and 97. The focus was on the hippocampus - the part of the brain involved in memory and emotion. It is the part of the brain that you need, to remember where you parked your car or put your mobile phone or car keys.

Neurons do not emerge in a fully-formed brain but have to go through a process of growing and maturing. The researchers were able to spot immature or "new" neurons in the brains that they examined. In healthy brains there was a slight decrease in the amount of this neurogenesis with age. Researcher Dr Maria Llorens-Martin told BBC News: 'I believe we would be generating new neurons as long as we need to learn new things. And that occurs during every single second of our life.'

But there was a different story in the brains from Alzheimer's patients. The number of new neurons forming fell from 30,000 per millimetre to 20,000 per millimetre in people at the onset of Alzheimer's. Dr Llorens-Martin said: 'That's a 30% reduction in the very first stage of the disease. It's very surprising for us, it's even before the accumulation of amyloid beta [a hallmark of Alzheimer's] and probably before symptoms, it's very early.'

¹ Source: *A Big History of Everything*, Author: David Christian, Publisher: Little, Brown, Pages: 158-160.

² Delanceyplace is a brief daily email with an excerpt or quote viewed as interesting or noteworthy, offered with commentary to provide context. See: <https://delanceyplace.com/>

³ The two scientists are Rajesh P.N. Rao, Director of the NSF Center for Sensorimotor Neural Engineering (CSNE) and the Cheng Jia and Elizabeth Yun Hwang Professor of Computer Science and Engineering at the University of Washington in Seattle, and Andrea Stocco, Assistant Professor at the Department of Psychology and the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences,

⁴ Source: *When Two Brains Connect*, Authors: Rajesh P.N. Rao and Andrea Stocco, Publisher: Scientific America Mind, November/December 2011, Pages: 36 to 39.

⁵ Excerpted from an article by James Gallagher, Health and science correspondent, BBC News, 25 March 2019.

Dr Rosa Sancho, the head of research at Alzheimer's Research UK, said: 'While we start losing nerve cells in early adulthood, this research shows that we can continue to produce new ones even into our 90s. Alzheimer's radically accelerates the rate at which we lose nerve cells and this research provides convincing evidence that it also limits the creation of new nerve cells. Larger studies will need to confirm these findings and explore whether they could pave the way for an early test to flag those most at risk of the disease.'

Exercising Your Mind Becomes Even More Important In Old Age

Dawn C. Carr MGS, Ph.D. posted an interesting blog on *Psychology Today* on 5th May 2014. She says that, for several decades, people have used the term 'use it, or lose it' to aptly describe the best way to off-set the problems that come with aging. This is how she puts it: 'As overly simplistic as the idea sounds, scientific studies continue to show that if you disengage in later life, things fall apart. This has particular relevance when we're talking about cognitive performance.'

For years, we assumed that cognitive performance declined substantially as a part of normal aging. But recent research suggests, in fact, that is not the case. It is true that individuals with abnormal brain function who end up going on to get dementia show decline in cognition beginning as early as in their 40s and the decline during later life can be steep.

But for those with normal brain matter, function, and activity, the average person does experience cognitive decline but there is potential for this to be quite modest.



As we age, learning new, novel information takes a bit more effort and time than earlier in life, but our foundation of knowledge and wisdom is far greater allowing us to understand a deep level of complexity about subjects we know well. So what can we do to greatly reduce decline whether it be due to impending pathology or normal aging?

At present, there are no drugs to prevent you from getting Alzheimer's disease. But, there is quite a bit of evidence that lifestyle greatly modifies the downward trajectory of cognitive performance as you age. There is a significant decrease in cognitive performance that comes with retirement, which researchers suggest is because **when we stop engaging in cognitively complex tasks, the brain is no longer challenged enough to maintain cognitive function.** It has been proposed that retirement is problematic because it results in a shift in environment in which we are no longer using our brains at a high level on a frequent basis.

You can read the rest of Dawn C. Carr's blog at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/the-third-age/201405/use-it-or-lose-it>

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Martin Pollins is a Chartered Accountant and MBA with wide experience in corporate finance and business management. He has

served on the boards of several companies, including those listed on the London Stock Exchange, AIM and OFEX. He is Chairman and Founder of OneSmartPlace and was a Council member of the Institute of Chartered

Accountants in England and Wales from 1988 to 1996. He was managing partner of PRB Martin Pollins, based in Sussex, the first Accountancy firm to advertise on British television.

He went on to create and launch the CharterGroup Partnership (the UK's first Accountancy network) and then LawGroup UK (at the time, one of the largest networks of lawyers in the UK).

In recent years, he helped to raise several £millions to fund British films such as *The Da Vinci Code*, *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, *Head in the Clouds* and *Merchant of Venice* with actors such as Charlize Theron, Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, F. Murray Abraham, Kathy Bates, Gabriel Byrne, Geraldine Chaplin, Tom Hanks, Ian McKellen, Audrey Tautou, Penélope Cruz, Steven Berkoff, Lynn Collins, Jeremy Irons, Joseph Fiennes and many more.

He has written over 700 business publications (see Glossaries at <http://onesmartplace.com/resources/glossaries/>) and is editor of Better Business Focus (see <http://onesmartplace.com/resources/better-business-focus-magazine>). His Blog, on a wide range of subjects can be found at: <http://onesmartplace.com/blog/>

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John Carter

Getting to the root cause of project headaches

Scenario: a **product development** team at a medical device company had a testing phase that ran far longer than expected. This delay rippled throughout the project and had serious implications downstream. After the project was complete, the team leader wanted to go back and figure out why the test phase had not gone as planned. She received pushback from the team: *“The past is past; let’s just move on and do better next time!”*

But the team leader insisted that they team sit back down and try to figure out what happened and how future teams could avoid the mistake. By capturing that knowledge, the organization, as a whole, might benefit.

Too often we have heard – especially in Silicon Valley – that the past is meaningless and that teams just need to “move on.” We couldn’t disagree more. Post mortems and careful, after-the-fact analyses of both the successes and SNAFUs of your projects is necessary for organizational learning. Too often, we see teams making the same mistakes more than once. Or different teams within the same company repeat avoidable errors. This is costly, frustrating, and unnecessary.

The key to getting the benefit out of analysing past difficulties is to dig deep, below the surface. Getting to the real root causes of project issues is a task that requires a little knowledge and some skills. We’ve created a four-step process that can help.

The first step is to identify the problem by creating a clear statement of it. If you cannot reach a clear and unequivocal statement of the problem, it will be impossible to solve.

Example problem statements:

- What are the root causes of our changing requirements for the XYZ project?
- What are the root causes of our Project ABC’s time-to-market delays?
- What are the root causes that led our support costs to be so high in our 2.1 release?

Next, create categories, such as *people, processes, environment, management, external event*, that will help you categorize a set of proposed root causes. Categorizing the various causes ensures that nothing is omitted from your analysis. For instance, what might look like a *people* issue, say a skill set on the team that wasn’t as strong as anticipated, may actually be a *management* issue, or may have management implications. To get to *root* rather than *surface* causes, it’s necessary to look at your project in a very broad context, and this step helps you to define that context. If such broad categories are not helpful, then you may categorize suspected root causes by function (marketing, design quality, etc.), or by phase (concept, design, and testing, launch) or in some other manner that best fits your team’s situation.

The third step is to then take each proposed root cause and ask “why?” within each category. For example, if the skill set on the team was inadequate, ask *why this happened* on the level of the individual contributor (*people*), on the level of management, or on the level of internal processes, if applicable. Don’t be satisfied with easy answers. Keep *asking why* up to five times.

Some teams use an Ishikawa diagram to capture this data. Our approach is to use a spreadsheet-based tool called a **Root Cause Diagram**. This tool easily captures the proposed root causes, in their categories, and level of depth.

A cross-functional team implements the Root Cause Diagram, carrying out the previous steps: defining the problem, suggesting root causes and categorizing them by type, and then asking “Why?” more than once. Hold a first, one-hour session, for these steps. The fourth and final step in the process, where the team *comes to an agreement on the most likely or important root causes*, may follow in a second, one-hour session.

Using a spreadsheet tool facilitates the process because it is trivial to share and archive. This process also build consensus since it is cross-functional and collaborative. It also allows those who may have had grievances about the previous issue to air them and explain their side of the story. Above all, a process such as we have described eliminates “*who shot John?*” time-wasting and enables evidence-based management.

Category	May 11	May 12	May 13
Engineering	Lack of staff training	Lack of training	
Engineering		Lack of communication	Management does not respond promptly
Marketing	Customer requirements change	Customer will change	
Marketing	Changing product definition	Manage with 1.1 and through test phase	
Software Quality Assurance	Code review	Code review	
Software Quality Assurance	Software validation	Software validation	
Software Quality Assurance	Lack of communication with other	Software development is not a linear sequential process	
Finance	Quality assurance after design phase	Quality assurance is not a linear sequential process	
Finance	Finance is not involved in engineering		
Finance	Finance is not involved in engineering		
Finance	Finance is not involved in engineering		
Technology	Lack of communication	Lack of communication	
Technology	Lack of communication	Lack of communication	
Technology	Lack of communication	Lack of communication	

Whether teams use the simple process and tool we’ve described or some other one, it’s necessary for teams to have some way to enable improvement and ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated. It is worth far more than the couple of hours required to go through the process. Teams must not let past mistakes define their future as well.

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About the Author

John is the author of "**Innovate Products Faster**: Graphical Tools for Accelerating Product Development". As Founder and Principal of TCGen Inc., he has advised some of the most revered technology firms in the world:

- Abbott, Amazon, Apple
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- HP, IBM, Roche

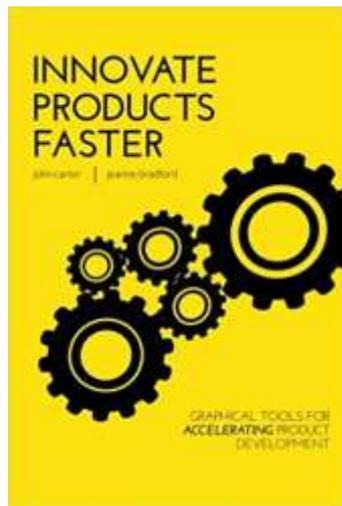
He specialises in the value creating aspects of product development – from the strategy and innovation processes, through product definition, execution and launch. He has helped companies cut time to market, rapidly scale their product program, and improve innovation with customer led insights which has led to greater profitability, reduced costs, and improved customer satisfaction.

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Shelly Greenway

Ideation Pitfalls Part 2: The Not Normal Issue



It may surprise you to learn that you and your team are not the best people to be judging potential innovations generated at the ideation stage. Why?

So, I hate to be the one to tell you...but you, and many people in your business, are not normal!

The Not Normal Issue

Just in the UK, the disciplines that make up the vast majority of the wider field of innovation equate to just 0.85% of the adult working population. These include:

- Marketing
- Graphic design
- Product design
- Advertising
- Website design
- Website development

And therefore, due to the job you do, you don't think or behave like an average person. This is because you will:

- Make more effort to search out and try new things
- Try harder to understand new things
- Dissect marketing communications and advertising with lightning speed
- Be able to navigate websites more efficiently

These, and many other nuances, mean you approach new ideas and innovation very differently.

And we haven't even taken account of the lifestyle you may

lead in comparison to many of your customers. For example, if you earn £70,000 or over then you are in just 5% of the British population. Or how about the fact that 35% of the UK population eat in fast food restaurants at least one a week (Statista). How often do you go?

Thus, it is important to recognise that people within your organisation cannot narrow down a selection of raw or new ideas on the basis of their personal opinion and general knowledge.

Instead; tools and methodologies are required to introduce structured, impartial measurement to eliminate personal bias.

In A Nutshell

- Good ideas often get sabotaged as often they don't even make it out of the ideation stage.
- Instead, a lesser idea gets the backing and resources due the lack of impartial measurement criteria setting.
- Strategies have to be employed to take account of the to the herd affect (see Ideation Pitfalls Part 1: The Herd Effect) and the fact that the people who evaluate the ideas are nothing like their customers.

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Shelly Greenway is a front-end innovation strategist and partner at The Strategy Distillery – a brand innovation consultancy that specializes in opportunity hunting and proposition development.

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Tom Koulopoulos

Simple mind game shows how fast technology is accelerating

We're not wired to think exponentially, and this trivial thought experiment will prove just how hard it is.

We most often get the future wrong because, to paraphrase economist Paul Romer, "Opportunities don't add up, they multiply." Stick with me for a few minutes because the math behind that isn't as straight forward as it appears to be.

So much of the promise of technologies such as Artificial intelligence seems to be at the very outer edge of a very distant future. It's not. If there is one sentiment shared equally with everyone I've interviewed for an upcoming book, *Revealing The Invisible* (June 2018), it's that the future is coming at us much faster than we are able to comprehend.

You've likely heard about accelerated exponential change or the singularity. I wrote about both in my recent Inc.com article, *According to Peter Diamandis and Ray Kurzweil, These Are the Most Dangerous and Disruptive Ideas*. Diamandis and Kurzweil regularly point out that understanding that rate of technology change may well be one of our biggest obstacles in adapting to it and building businesses that can take advantage of it.

Advances in artificial intelligence are not progressing in a linear fashion, and that represents a huge challenge for humans who are inherently linear thinkers. Trying to grasp non-linear change that is geometric or exponential is just not how we are wired. We think in linear terms because that is what we've observed in how the natural world operates. But that creates a huge disconnect between our intuition and the implications of the actual rate of change. And that disconnect only

grows as we add accelerated exponential growth.

For instance, consider this following thought experiment.

Take Me To The Moon

Imagine that I've just given you a super ball that has the ability to bounce to an unlimited height (we'll suspend the laws of physics for this). I then ask you to start bouncing the ball, with the knowledge that each bounce will be twice as high as the previous one. If the first bounce is 10 feet off the ground how high will it go on the 10th bounce? The answer is that it will have topped a small mountain of about 5000 feet. That's high but it doesn't seem extraordinary, and your intuitive guess was probably pretty close. However, how high will it be after four more bounces? By the 14th bounce it will have crested the Summit of Everest and be approaching the ceiling of commercial air traffic.

That's a bit more impressive, but let's not stop there. After all, I said that it can reach an unlimited height. So, how high would the ball have bounced after 21, 29, 37, and 45 bounces? The answers now start to stretch our ability to comprehend the distances involved.

"Technology advances no longer add up; they multiply—in the case of AI, by increasingly larger exponential multipliers."

At 21 bounces our ball is approaching low earth orbit, after 29 we've passed by Earth's moon, another eight bounces and we're zipping by Mars, and then on the 45th bounce NASA might pick up its faint signal as it whizzes past the first Voyager spacecraft nearly 17 billion miles into deep space. After 88 bounces you'll never see the ball again since it would now be outside of the visible universe.

Still not impressed? I expected that you might not be, after all, we've become somewhat immune to large numbers when it comes to projecting the trajectory of technology. Congratulations you're starting to think exponentially. But wait, I need to make a confession. I'm really not trying to impress you with how fast a doubling phenomenon can scale. That's so 20th Century. My objective is something else altogether, how we perceive accelerated exponential growth.

Objects In The Future Are Closer Than They May Appear

So, try just one more question. If you had purchased a discount super ball that bounced only one inch, instead of 10 feet, (In other words less than one percent of the 10 foot bounce from our full-price super ball) but it bounced three times as high each time (instead of two times as high), at what height do you think it will have bounced past the earlier ball that started at 10 feet? Don't do the math, just take a guess. Will it have caught up by Everest, low Earth orbit, the Moon, Mars, or Voyager? Incredibly our discount super ball, that starts off with only a minuscule one-inch bounce, will have caught up by the time it reaches Everest, after only 14 bounces!

In fact, if you'd started with a ball that bounced a full mile the first time (528 times as much as your original super ball and 6,336 times as much as our discount one-inch super ball) the discount one-inch-bounce super ball would catch up with the one-mile-bounce super ball just after passing the moon! This makes sense when you stop to do the math but it's far from intuitive.

The reason I'm making this point is to show that linear growth (the actual increase in the initial bounce from 10 feet to one mile) and exponential growth (the doubling effect) both pale in comparison to

the accelerated exponential growth of our discount super ball that starts off with just a one-inch bounce. When anything progresses with accelerating exponential growth you very quickly get to a stage where the acceleration of change is so great that it just doesn't matter where you start.

The same is true of how quickly technologies such as AI are evolving by learning at accelerated rates that have no precedent in the way humans learn. A simple artificial intelligence engine can learn overnight how to play the classic computer game of Space Invaders better than any human can.

Like our discount super ball, AI is accelerating in its exponential rate of evolution. We can argue how incipient or immature it is today but it will soon make no difference. The trajectory we are on will lead us to the future much faster than any of us think it will. Technology advances no longer add up; they multiply—in the case of AI, by increasingly larger exponential multipliers.

Given that trajectory, within just five to ten years I confidently expect that machines with human-level intelligence will be well entrenched within the mainstream of our lives and businesses.

Naive thinking? It's only naive if you focus on adding up the challenges, rather than multiplying the opportunities.

This article originally appeared on Innovation Excellence:
<https://www.innovationexcellence.com/blog/2019/03/17/simple-mind-game-shows-how-fast-technology-is-accelerating/>

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About the Author

Tom Koulopoulos is the author of 10 books and founder of the **Delphi Group**, a 25-year-old Boston-based think tank and a past Inc. 500 company that focuses on innovation and the future of business.

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Consider for a moment these self-contradictory innovations:

- The solar-powered torch (flashlight)
- The inflatable dartboard
- The underwater hairdryer
- The waterproof teabag
- The concrete life raft

At first sight they look silly but each contains the germ of an interesting idea.

- You can charge up a solar-powered torch in daylight and then take it into a cave.
- The inflatable dartboard is easy to transport and works well with velcro darts.
- A hairdryer in a submarine is an underwater hairdryer.
- A teabag which stayed waterproof at room temperatures but let in boiling water would stay fresher for longer.
- You could make a concrete life raft if it had large air pockets.

I recently heard about a contradictory innovation which has become popular – **the silent disco**. It sounds ridiculous. But the dancers wear headphones – each with their own favourite tracks – while onlookers can chat without being drowned out. It is a clever innovation.

Try this brainstorm method; the Contradictory Innovation – also known as the Waterproof Teabag method. Take your leading product or service and everyone has to describe a version which completely undermines or contradicts one of the main properties of the item. The more ridiculous the better. Then you take each useless idea and see if it leads anywhere useful. Like a silent disco.

Dulux make white paint. They thought of a contradictory idea –

Paul Sloane

Try this brainstorm method – the contradictory innovation

pink white paint. They came up with a **paint which is pink** when you apply it but which dries to a beautiful white. So, it is easier to see where you have applied the paint as you go over an older white background.

The contradictory innovation brainstorm method is lateral thinking in action. It challenges your basic beliefs and assumptions and then takes you into unexplored possibilities. Let's develop some waterproof teabags and inflatable dartboards!

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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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Greg Satell

Here's how investors are adapting to the new era of innovation

In recent decades, innovation has become almost synonymous with digital technology. That wasn't always true, of course. Long before the microchip was invented, we built an industrial economy based on electricity and internal combustion, harnessed the power of the atom and developed life-saving cures.

Nevertheless, lately everything seems to be digital. Entrepreneurs who create software apps and consumer gadgets can find themselves zillionaires in a matter of just a few years — or even a matter of months. Investors, not surprisingly, search far and wide to find the next Facebook or Google.

Today, however, we are entering a **new era of innovation**. The basic technology that powered the digital revolution is nearing its theoretical limits and the most exciting opportunities lie in new technologies. Many of these will be rooted in the physical world, as we learn to **use bits to transform atoms**. Some investors are already making the shift to a new model.

Mitigating Technical Risk

The military build-up after World War II brought massive investment to northern California. Bright young engineers migrated in droves to take advantage of good paying jobs and a significant portion of them ended up starting their own companies. Some got rich and began to invest in other engineers. That's how the modern venture capital industry was born.

However, and this is a crucial point, the Silicon Valley model is, perhaps not surprisingly, largely geared to technologies developed in Silicon Valley. That has been key to its success. Because technical factors are well understood, risk is limited to whether there is a market for the product, the strength of the competition and the talents of the entrepreneurial team.

"The [traditional] venture capital model works well when the primary risk is finance risk — as the entrepreneurial team works to scale their business model — but it's doesn't work so well when technological risk and market risk coincide," Errol Arkilic, an investor that specializes in hard tech ventures told me. "There are just too many unknowns and that requires a different approach."

However, there is a growing trend of early seed investors who focus on mitigating specific areas of technical risk. They offer entrepreneurs more than capital, but also lab space, scientific expertise and business mentorship. "This is part of a general trend toward specialization in venture," Scott Lenet, President of **Touchdown Ventures** told me. "If you're not building a specific advantage, you might be speculating, not investing."

Arvind Gupta, Founder of **IndieBio**, believes there is real opportunity in flipping the traditional VC model. "We are taking technical risk, not market risk. For example, one of our

companies, **Prellis**, is 3D printing organs. We know there's a market for that. The question is whether you can make it work. So we focus on mitigating that kind of risk," he says.

An Evolving Ecosystem

When the founders at **Opus 12**, a clean tech start-up that invented a process for converting carbon emissions into useful chemicals, began looking for investors in 2011, they found little interest. Almost by chance, they were introduced to **Cyclotron Road**, a new program at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory specifically geared to entrepreneurs like them.

Since then, the Department of Energy has established two more such centres, **Chain Reaction** at Argonne and **Innovation Crossroads** at Oak Ridge. Yet when I sat down earlier this year with the newest cohort at Oak Ridge, their experience was decidedly different than Opus 12's. Rather than stumbling over the program by chance, every single one had come through a feeder program. That's an enormous shift in just seven years.

Another key part of the ecosystem that's emerging is universities. Traditionally, they have tried to commercialize discoveries in their labs through traditional technology transfer programs. More recently, however, they have shifted their focus to helping scientists become entrepreneurs themselves.

“From a university perspective, we’re seeing a huge demand from students for more entrepreneurial resources. So things have shifted very quickly in the last five or six years to meet that demand, providing mentorship programs, partnering with companies and setting up incubators with affiliate venture funds,” says **Regis Kelly**, Executive Director at **QB3**.

Weaving A Network Of Deep Expertise

One of the things I heard constantly from investors who focus on so called “hard tech” companies that seek to commercialize scientific discoveries is how important the human element is. Unlike digital start-ups, the expertise they need to make decisions is not centered in Silicon Valley, but widely distributed at a number of universities and research centers as well as a small cadre of entrepreneurs that previously built hard tech start-ups. “This is a very ‘high touch’ business,” Conrad Burke, who heads up the **ISF Incubator** told me. “You’re not going to find the talent you need online. You have to constantly get out there, attend events, meet people one-on-one and constantly network to build the relationships that will enable you to make sound decisions.”

Kate McAndrew, a Principal at **Bolt.io** agrees. “There are plenty of places to get cheap money. Those who want to play in the seed space need to offer something over and above capital. You need to be ready to help entrepreneurs build real businesses,” she says. She also pointed out that the more entrepreneurs they help become successful, the bigger her firm’s network of expertise becomes.

Touchdown’s Scott Lenet believes that the rising sophistication of seed and pre-seed investors makes it incumbent on more traditional investors to reach out.

“Increasingly, good VCs are developing relationships in the ecosystems where they want to specialize, including incubators, accelerators, university entrepreneurship programs and corporations with the scientific expertise to help source and validate deals.”

Think Globally, Act Locally

One key difference between the digital era and the new era of innovation that is now emerging is that, while the digital revolution was largely a national phenomenon centred in the Bay Area and a few other places, this new era will be considerably more regional. So we can expect state and local governments and institutions to play a much larger role.

For example, I visited a facility in Detroit funded by the state government, Michigan State University and the automobile industry in partnership with two manufacturing hubs, one focused on **composite materials** and the other on **lightweight metals**. Because of the auto industry’s importance to the local economy, the investment makes good economic sense.

Over the past five or six years, similar facilities seem to be popping up everywhere. The **Delaware Innovation Space**, located at DuPont’s legendary Experimental Station, offers 100,000 square feet of multi-use lab space for local entrepreneurs. **UI Labs** and **mHub** in Chicago support manufacturing based start-ups. The list goes on and it’s growing quickly.

Over the last few decades, the Silicon Valley model of venture-funded entrepreneurship has been extraordinarily successful. So successful, in fact, that we often forget that there’s any other way to fund start-ups. As **the digital era comes to an end**, we need to get beyond **the Silicon Valley myth** and learn to adapt to a new era of innovation.

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About the Author

Greg Satell is a popular author, speaker, and innovation adviser whose recent book, **Mapping Innovation**, was selected as one of the best business books of 2017. His new book, **Cascades: How to Create a Movement that Drives Transformational Change**, will be published by McGraw-Hill in April 2019.

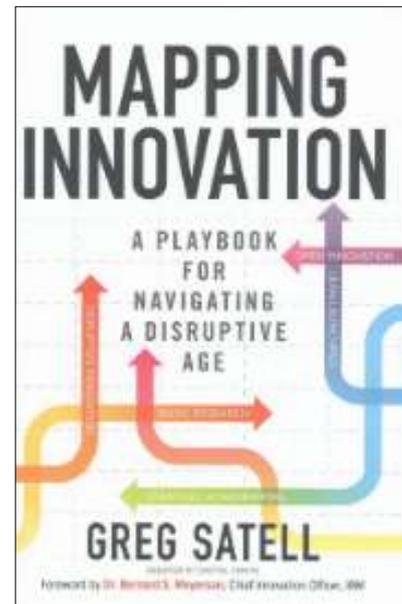
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Gavin Ingham

Are your sales teams full of saboteurs & passengers?

I realise that this is a bit in your face but what is your reality right now? Generally speaking, my clients split into four easily recognisable groups...

1. Failing.
2. Surviving.
3. Performing.
4. Winning.

Each group has four instantly recognisable sales teams...

The first, I call Saboteurs.

They are mostly (or all) under target. Sometimes, so far under their targets that they have forgotten what they look like! Their teams have poor morale and if you leave them alone for long they will be moaning about the economy, Brexit, the company, their lack of support, their leaders, their clients, their tools... I could go on; I am sure that you get the point. We have all met teams like these.

Saboteurs, not surprisingly, have low activity levels and are reactive. They respond, with varying degrees of sloth-like-actions to stimuli but will rarely (read never) be the ones taking the initiative.

I would categorise a Saboteur's mental toughness levels as "lacking".

The second group, I call Passengers.

Passengers can be benign in your business. They do not do much harm but they are not doing much good either. Sometimes, just to confuse things, they can be fun to have around... Hey! Who doesn't enjoy a day out and an ice cream?!

The results in teams full of Passengers are varied, usually under target, and wildly inconsistent. Morale goes up and down and

managing it feels like you are painting the Forth Bridge (never ending).

Activity is inconsistent and individuals are often busy on the "wrong" things. Passengers are easily derailed; the slightest thing can knock them off track whether it is an economic issue, office politics, an unwanted email, or, sometimes, just the weather.

I would categorise a Passenger's mental toughness as "inconsistent."

The third group, I call Players.

Players are in the game. They want to do well and for some/much of the time they do. Sales results are mostly on target although still prone to inconsistency.

Sales morale is generally good and office banter positive and individuals spend significant amounts of time on proactive activity.

Teams of Players are generally good to manage but there is always this frustration that things are not as consistent as they might be and an underlying feeling that they could achieve more.

I would categorise a Player's mental toughness as "consistent."

The fourth group, I call Winners.

Winners are the top performers. They are on top of their game. They consistently better their targets; sometimes, significantly.

Teams made primarily of Winners produce world-class sales cultures. They have high productivity and are constantly seeking to sharpen the saw - both in their own approach and in the services that they provide for your clients. Teams of Winners are, not surprisingly, the Holy Grail. I would categorise a Winner's mental toughness as "world-class"

You will have a blend... but, as with good coffee, the blend matters.

Teams are never made up of one category and most teams have a blend of all four but it is this blend and what your plan is for dealing with it that determines whether you are going to move up or down the failing, surviving, performing or winning pyramid.

So, and I like the tough questions, which category do your teams fall into? And what are you going to do about it?

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About the Author

Gavin Ingham is a speaker and author on mental toughness and will help you to Be More, Do More & Have More in your business and in your life. He is the author of three books and numerous multi-media programmes including the groundbreaking "Sales Juice". Gavin is the founder of the "I am 10" success philosophy and his insights, tips and advice are shared by high-performing professionals, business leaders and organisations around the world to achieve commercial success. His blog is one of the top 25 sales blogs in the world and he has contributed to leading industry magazines such as the ISMM's Winning Edge magazine, the national press (including the Guardian and the Financial Times) and TV.

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Amy Vetter

Right Brain, Bright Future

As technology advances and we become more comfortable with computers and machines doing much of the arithmetic and data-entry the workforce has traditionally done for ourselves, it's hard to imagine what the future of work will hold for us, and how we can adapt our skills and education to the new environment.

If you look at some philosophical predictions, people in the future will have more time to pursue creative interests and spiritual practice — technology will fulfil the world's needs with the speed of production. But we're not quite there yet. What we're seeing now is not a lack of work due to robotics producing everything we need, but rather a lack of knowing how to use the qualities that make us most human to serve people in ways technology cannot.

"A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future" by Daniel H. Pink discusses the importance of building up our creative (or right-brained) skills in what he coins the "Conceptual Age" where human innovation is more valuable than ever. While more logic-centric thinking will still have its place, Pink argues that the left-brained skills will be overshadowed by outsourcing and automation. The more artistic and big-picture right-brained individuals will need to teach and share these skills with those who are more left-brain learning, and those left-brainers will have to flex their creativity to maintain a competitive edge in business.

Computers, and even when we get into the exciting discoveries while endlessly useful and important to carry out operations in an increasingly complex world,

do not have an imagination. They do not have emotional intelligence, and they do not have a spirit that moves them to connect with others the way humans do. So, what can people who are inherently more left-brained, or detail-oriented and analytical, do with this information? It's all about flexing and learning and understanding that while your skills will not be invaluable in the future, you may need to practice alternative ways of interacting with the world and your work.

The abilities to strive for to create a stronger creative mind

I've always been a big proponent of balancing your business with your bliss, or whatever it is that makes feeds your mind, body, and soul. But this idea is becoming more important than ever, as tech has made the personal, creative, and innovative more of a desirable trait for individuals and professionals in today's economic environment. Pink might call tapping into this balance the practice of strengthening your right brain. In his book, he outlines six practices anyone can do to enhance the creative mind and make that right-brained part of each of us stand out and shine.

One example I love from this method is "design." Practicing design doesn't mean you have to become a graphic designer or stylist. Flexing this particular muscle simply means thinking in terms of the way the world is designed. Think about the layout of your local grocery store, the way the controls in a car are placed, and the order in which items on a menu appear. Once you begin noticing the way things are designed, you will start to think more curiously about the physical world around you.

It's not that economists and thinkers were wrong when they predicted we'd be so bored with lack of work in the future that we'd be begging for creative outlets. They simply didn't take into account just how much our brains will have adapted to computers, and how tapping back into those creative parts of our mind would be more of a process than a direct shift.

Anybody can be a more innovative person. Training yourself to connect all parts of your mind will be a hugely important part of the future, as creative thinking becomes the most desired skill set we can possess.

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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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Drayton Bird

Inside secrets of a copy billionaire



Do you know who is the world's richest copywriter?

Many people - even many copywriters - don't.

It's not Dan Kennedy or Clayton Makepeace or Bob Bly...

And it's certainly not me.

It is Bill Bonner - the founder of Agora.

He's a billionaire.

His success is such that he owns homes all over the globe.

They include a chateau in Normandy, a ranch in Argentina, a place in Ireland, one in Baltimore and somewhere in Delray Beach, Florida, where some of his acolytes and associates live.

Only a rare few understand this sales secret

A while ago Bonner bought Money Week - the UK's most successful financial magazine.

I wondered what he would do with it.

He almost doubled the price...

... although it's about half the length of its companion publication The Week.

You can learn a priceless lesson from this which startlingly few appreciate.

It isn't twice as hard to sell something that's twice as expensive.

It almost always pays to set a high price.

That's because it's very easy to slash a high price without improving what you sell, but very hard to raise a low one without adding something extra that costs you money.

Bill Bonner's success started with just one sales letter.

The letter that led to billions

You can see the start of that amazing letter in a splendid new book by one of his most able disciples, Glenn Fisher.

I got roaring drunk with Glenn about 4 or 5 years ago when I went to speak at the AWAI Copywriters Convention in Delray Beach.

Glenn is English and he's written a fascinating book called "The Art of the Click".

That title is highly relevant to you because "The Click" online often determines the difference between success and failure. **If you don't get the clicks you won't get the sales.**

But I also urge you to read it because it reveals the secrets behind the extraordinary success of so many who worked with Bonner.

Actually even if you only read one thing and take notes you should buy this book.

It is a very long masterly letter by Glenn.

Copy ignoramuses often debate whether long or short works better, and the answer is - unless you're selling something very simple - long copy always works better.

Glenn's example goes on for page after page after page.

After a while you may say "I'm not interested".

And you may not be: because you are not the prospect for what he is selling.

But if you were, believe me, you'd keep going. And with every line you'd be more inclined to buy.

Why much successful copy goes on and on ... and on

You and I may never have met, but I know you are almost certainly seriously interested in copy.

You know it costs no more to run good copy than bad - yet the

difference in sales can be phenomenal.

So, here's another lesson from Bonner

I don't know how many online newsletters he owns but I follow one called The Daily Reckoning. (Yes: it's called that because it's emailed out every day.)

I once counted the words in one issue...

There were 2,187.

If you took the trouble as I have, to study all the online offerings from the Bonner stable, or those I've subscribed to find, they all use long copy.

I won't bore you any more with this save to say there are only two situations where long copy doesn't work better.

One is where it's badly written (and this book tells you how to avoid that with a prodigious amount of down-to-earth easily-followed advice.)

The other is when the subject is so simple it's almost impossible to write much about it.

(Though David Ogilvy once wrote a whole page crammed full of copy for Shell Oil - not the most thrilling subject).

So you see, there's no such thing as dull copy; only dull writers.

How do you avoid being dull? You write better.

Go here and see how.

You're up against it next year. Arm yourself!

If you want to do well in 2019 you're up against it.

You're up against it for many reasons beyond your control.

The world's economies are balanced perilously between boom and bust.

We will be paying for the chaos of Brexit, the oddities of Trump and

the printing of trillions of fake money for years to come.

The chickens are coming home to roost.

So, here's my simple advice.

Get this book and read it before you write another word.

Once you've read the book and taken notes apply what you learn.

Do it as soon as you can. January is the best time to make hay.

Your investment is tiny. Less than the price of three drinks in a bar. But the rewards could be huge.

But only if you go here and see how.

Best,

Drayton

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About the Author

In 2003, the Chartered Institute of Marketing named Drayton Bird one of 50 living individuals who have shaped today's marketing. He has spoken in 53 countries for many organisations, and much of what he discusses derive from his work with many of the world's greatest brands. These include American Express, Audi, Bentley, British Airways, Cisco, Deutsche Post, Ford, IBM, McKinsey, Mercedes, Microsoft, Nestle, Philips, Procter & Gamble, Toyota, Unilever, Visa and Volkswagen. In various capacities – mostly as a writer – Drayton has helped sell everything from Airbus planes to Peppa Pig. His book, *Commonsense Direct and Digital Marketing*, out in 17 languages, has been the UK's best seller on the subject every year since 1982.

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Quotes by Mark Twain

Samuel Langhorne Clemens may be a name you don't recognise but you'll certainly know him by his pen name - Mark Twain, the American writer, humourist, entrepreneur, publisher, and lecturer. His novels include *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and its sequel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Here are some of his best-known quotations:

Whenever you find that you are on the side of the majority, it is time to reform.

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing you can do is keep your mind young.

Virtue has never been as respectable as money.

If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.

There are many scapegoats for our sins, but the most popular is providence.

There are two times in a man's life when he should not speculate: when he can't afford it, and when he can.

An Englishman is a person who does things because they have been done before. An American is a person who does things because they haven't been done before.

A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval.

Always acknowledge a fault. This will throw those in authority off their guard and give you an opportunity to commit more.

Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.

Eric Olive

How playgrounds crush innovation and what to do about it



Disruption, strategic initiatives, and bleeding edge technology are just a few of the buzzwords business leaders spout to demonstrate their commitment to innovation. This sincere intention is not always matched by the ability to foster innovation.

A momentary return to childhood offers insights into why innovation is often lauded but rarely achieved.

How the New Child's Play Inhibits Innovation

Playgrounds were not always the ultra-safe outdoor "padded rooms" we see today. 10-foot tall jungle gyms were filled with kids teetering over asphalt or concrete. Merry-go-rounds were the go-to thrill ride in local parks with kids running like mad to spin. And yes, many a child scraped arms and legs when falling before they could jump onto the merry-go-round.



Playground: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/79157069@N03/30110207103/>

The 1980s saw the advent of safer playgrounds with covered slides surrounded by plastic spaceships or palm trees. Gone were the merry-go-rounds and seesaws replaced instead by low climbing structures and ladders with sturdy and evenly spaced rungs. The slides were plastic to prevent kids from descending too quickly. Too quickly? Where's the fun in that?



Of course, play should be fun. As it happens, play is also serious business not least because it has long-term implications for kids' physical and emotional growth. Development psychologists have started to discuss the downsides of contemporary playgrounds. As it happens, some of these downsides are directly related to innovation:

- **Imagination**—By telling kids, "This is a beach," we are constraining their imagination. If the structure looks like a box or no particular shape, kids will use their imagination

to decide whether to play a beach game, a space game, or any number of games. Kids can handle abstraction. Their minds will fill in the blanks. Sounds like good practice for innovation.

- **Risk Taking**—Seesaws and merry-go-rounds are considered too risky for 21st century kids. Yet, eliminating risk from a child's environment make it less likely that they will learn how to take risks later in life.
- **Mastery**—If children are always given a ladder to the slide and the same distance between the rungs, they don't learn climbing skills. Kids need the opportunity to make decisions. What will be hard now but easier later with practice? Without the opportunity to make those decisions, kids will be less likely to develop a sense of mastery.

Just as playground designers tell kids, "This is a spaceship so don't bother using your imagination," so too do managers and product owners. Often, we don't really design new products. Rather, someone in the organization decides that the next product "will harness the existing synergies with the company's existing product

lines.” What does that actually mean?

It’s corporate speak for “we’ll pretend to innovate, but what we’ll really do is more of the same because that’s our comfort zone.”

In other words, innovators, designers, analysts, and others are constrained from Day 1. Rather than start with a problem or challenge, designers are told what to design with the meaningless addendum “think outside the box.”

What the bosses are really saying is “stay in the box and don’t you dare draw outside the lines.”

Too harsh? Consider the following true story and ask yourself if it sounds familiar.

A Fortune 500 company planned to overhaul all public-facing web and mobile sites to better meet customers’ evolving needs. Upper management urged employees to innovate with designs that reflected busy customers constantly on the move.

Sounds good, right? As it happens, I was brought in to teach a course about UX Research and Design. When students mentioned the new design initiative, I asked how they were going to address users’ varying needs depending on context and the device literally at hand, a tablet in the kitchen versus a phone on the train, for example. The reply: “Our VP instructed us to address these issues by making everything responsive.” Responsive design refers to a single design that adjusts to laptops, tablets, and smartphones. “Well,” I replied, “Do you have any data to indicate whether customers will use their smartphones to sign up for service, pay bills, or modify their service plans?” “It doesn’t matter because everything will be responsive,” And round and round we went.

Responsive design is a powerful technique, but it should not be used as a one-size-fits all solution to every business challenge.

The point is that innovation was never in the cards. Whether

consciously, or unconsciously, the VP was afraid to take a risk. Employees were not able to draw on customer research, identify possibly diverging needs based on context and other factors, and ultimately use their imagination to meet these intriguing challenges.

Solutions

Yet, imagination and risk, coupled with mastery, are precisely what is needed if innovation is to take hold.

Harness the imagination

Unlike the ultra-safe playgrounds describe above, Slide Hill Park in New York City presents an environment where kids are encouraged to use their imagination. The slides are part of the landscape, and kids can get to the slides on rocks, from the woods, or on a path. More aspects of the experience are fun and playful rather than prescribed (*The Design of Childhood* by Alexandra Lange).

Businesses could benefit from a similar approach. Rather than prescribe a specific direction or product design, leaders should encourage virtual and literal exploration. It’s not about thinking outside the box; it’s about leaving the box behind and seeing where imagination leads.

Mastery

Psychologists define mastery as a force that motivates individuals to attempt to solve a problem or tackle a skill in a focused and persistent manner. The idea behind mastery is challenge. Not surprisingly, rising to the challenge brings a sense of accomplishment.

Just like the kid who gradually works up to climbing an extremely tall jungle gym, professionals who gradually work up to solving a difficult problem achieve a sense of mastery. Mastery leads to confidence, which, in turn leads to a higher level of comfort with taking risks.

Encourage risk taking

Paediatric occupational therapist Angela Hanscom explains the physical and cognitive value for children who take risks: “Merry-go-rounds, teeter-totters, tall swings, and slides all help children

establish strong balance systems. They give us our ‘center’ and allow us to move through space safely. By taking these away, we are limiting children’s exposure to sensory input that actually helps children become sturdy on their feet and prepares them for learning.” (**Rethinking ‘ultra-safe’ playgrounds: Why it’s time to bring back ‘thrill-provoking’ equipment for kids**).

Instead, writes Hanscom, “We need to start providing equipment that actually challenges, stimulates growth, and prepares the brain for learning.”

The same point applies to business innovation. The good news is that some organizations genuinely encourage and even reward risk taking. Lean design methodologies and the fail fast mentality are steps in the right direction as long as they do not result in wildly unrealistic timelines. The bad news is that despite lip service to innovation, leaders in many organizations fear risk or the wrath of the board or shareholders. These concerns are reasonable and understandable. Yet, just as failure to make a decision is itself a decision, unwillingness to take risk is risky.

This article originally appeared on www.innovationexcellence.com/blog/2018/11/04/how-playgrounds-crush-innovation-and-what-to-do-about-it/



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About the Author:

Eric Olive is a writer, speaker, teacher, and UX researcher and the founder of **UI UX Training**. He has taught and conducted research for many Fortune 500 companies in the finance, insurance, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and telecommunication sectors.

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Barry Urquhart

Fired with enthusiasm or, be fired, with enthusiasm



Good intentions. Questionable execution.

A recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported about a letter distributed to Optus staff members by the Chief Executive Officer.

The message was succinct and pointed. In essence, it declared that those staff members who made customers unhappy would be sacked, if and when it was referred to the boss.

There appeared to be six degrees of separation with the mythical statement made by a Roman centurion:

The whippings will continue until morale improves

WAS IT NECESSARY?

The need for such communication was questionable, – if the “right” people had been recruited, inducted into a universal, supportive team ambience – and then trained, developed and inculcated into a positive service excellence corporate culture.

It is a challenge. Some 24% of the adult Australian workforce has the appropriate psychological profile and attributes to be great service providers. Identifying, isolating, recruiting, inducting, celebrating and

rewarding them is imperative.

Such individuals are self-monitors and consistent enforcers of the service standards of peers, and among their own internal customers.

“We don’t do things that way” is a very powerful statement of values, intent and self-worth. It comes naturally to a “driven” service provider.

CAUSE, EFFECT OR VICTIM

Telecommunication campaigns rank second highest among client (corporate) and customer (consumer) complaints received by regulatory authorities, after banks.

Everyone, it seems, has a story – or an experience – to share about a bank and/or a telco.

Significantly, in both sets of instances, policies, processes, procedures and technology are primary causes of annoyance, frustration, exasperation and yes, “unhappiness”.

In short, the cause and issue are often determined and experienced before personal interactions with a service provider. Indeed, they too may well be a victim of the operating business model which has been formulated, implemented and measured by the Chief Executive Officer, and the senior management

team.

In facilitating interactive workshops for in-house sessions of “Service that Satisfies SELLS”, care is taken to explain the context and content when dealing with the typical “customer from hell”.

The issue at hand is often not the issue at hand is a key and fundamental principle.

Condescending and personal outbursts are often the consequences of unrelated, precedent experiences. In-store perceived or real deficiencies can be a trigger that compounds an earlier instance of road rage, a domestic argument or difficulty in finding a parking bay.

Sometimes, minor shortcomings and infractions are the trigger that “breaks the camel’s back”.

COMPOUNDING ACCELERATORS

The current Australian finance, insurance and service sector Royal Commission has revealed, highlighted, and forensically analysed appalling instances of the neglect, abuse and contempt of customers.

Deficient and inappropriate corporate cultures and staff member reward systems have been uncovered and roundly criticised.

Employment contracts have been terminated, and career paths shattered. Moreover, consumer rights have been profiled, and accordingly, expectations and demands have been heightened, sharpened and are being pursued by a more sensitised customer and client base. There has been a recorded 35% increase in complaints submitted to the telecommunications industry regulatory authority.

Clearly, for all and sundry, there is no place to hide. Service excellence is a non-negotiable performance indicator.

Fine-print provisions are no protection. Simplicity, focus, transparency and accountability are dominant driving forces in a challenging and challenged marketplace.

Concerns about the surging increments in the costs of power and public utility services including water, sewerage and rubbish removal... are being addressed by politicians, governments and regulatory authorities. Comparative cost charts are being drafted, distributed and applied to the advantage of the consuming public and business sectors. However, consumers' satisfaction languishes.

Some 25 years ago Cathay Pacific, the Hong Kong-based international airline, learnt about and profited from the advantages of simplifying the value-package and retail cost offerings.

Little wonder, the success is in delivery.

The promise:

“32 European destinations | price”

Brilliant

Easy to comprehend, to assess value and to be satisfied. No-one was going to get a better deal.

FOLLOW-UP, FOLLOW-THROUGH

A major concern and annoyance to customers is the lack of follow-up and follow-through once a sale or service issue has been successfully concluded.

A personal expression of “thank you” is a strikingly effective relationship enhancer.

Such sentiments and emotions are noticeably absent in the many transaction experiences that typify the prevailing digital marketplace.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

For most entities there are eight to ten matrices that define a total positive customer experience (read: great customer service).

These arise before the initial face-to-face (voice-to-voice) interaction, and then evolve following the conclusion of the transaction or issue resolution.

Appropriately and consequentially applied, these factors ensure customer satisfaction and negate the need to distribute letters threatening the sack for infractions which, supposedly, result in customers being “unhappy”.

Structure, discipline, belief and enthusiasm contribute to a corporate culture which provides delight for all ... Chief Executive Officers included.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

1. Document a detailed job description – specified duties.
2. Script a job specification – outline essential human attributes.
3. Recruit discerningly – match profiles with individuals.
4. Induct into a comprehensive service culture.
5. Support, reinforce and celebrate consistent service delivery.
6. Empower. Delegate authority to self-monitor and self-regulate behaviours.
7. Reward consistent standards.
8. Embrace P.R.I.D.E. – personal responsibility for delivering excellence.
9. Insist on “one-touch” service.
10. Provide on-going customer feedback, and training.

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About the Author:

Barry Urquhart, Managing Director, Marketing Focus, Perth, is an inspiring speaker, author of Australia's top two selling books on customer service and an international consultant on dynamic innovation and creativity. Barry is author of six books, including the two largest selling publications on service excellence in Australasia. He is a regular commentator of consumer issues on ABC radio, is featured on a series of interview topics on “Today Tonight” and contributes articles to 47 magazines throughout the world.

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

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Ron Kaufman

What is your responsibility in the “Fourth Humanitarian Revolution”?



Revolutions change what is possible and how we live together.

We live today in **The Fourth Industrial Revolution**; the historic transformation from steam power, to electricity, to computers, to the global convergence of data, devices, access, and analytics.

Industrial revolutions are driven by technology, but a **Fourth Humanitarian Revolution** is now rising by necessity. Segments of our society are not keeping pace with the overall rise in global prosperity, and our earlier means of addressing these problems are no longer up to the task.

In the *First Humanitarian Revolution*, faith communities took care of those in dire need. Churches, mosques, temples, and other religious organizations raised charity for the poor, provided support for widows and orphans, gave food, shelter, and clothing to those lacking bare essentials.

In the *Second Humanitarian Revolution*, government programs expanded to address many of these social issues with a safety net of welfare and other programs, including basic education for children and improved security for elders.

In the *Third Humanitarian Revolution*, non-profit organizations gathered charitable contributions and volunteers to conserve nature, empower minorities, house the homeless, and contribute to disaster relief.

Today, in the **Fourth Humanitarian Revolution** businesses are taking direct responsibility to help solve our pressing social problems.

This is not merely altruism, philanthropy, or an increase in existing corporate social (CSR) programs. It is a revolution in the purpose and value of business itself; to improve society at fundamental levels while succeeding in the traditional metrics of business.

It's easier to grow your business when your customer base is growing. It's easier to retain a motivated workforce when employees feel good about how they contribute to the community. And it's easier to flourish over time when the ecosystem you depend on is nourished by the practices of your business.

This level of commercial and social revolution is not going to happen through faith communities, government agencies, and non-profits on their own. *The Fourth Humanitarian*

Revolution requires the full creative power of enterprising minds and commercial organizations working together to improve society now – and for the future.

The Guardian says that social enterprise is when businesses address traditional economic failings by using market forces to achieve a social impact. This differentiates them from other organizations and corporations.

Given the economic and environmental difficulties we struggle with in the world today, what other organizations and corporations can we possibly sustain?

The Fourth Humanitarian Revolution goes beyond “giving back”, which begs the awkward question(s): Giving back after taking what? After taking something away? After receiving more than you feel comfortable taking? After achieving your financial goals but leaving society in a more unstable condition?

The Fourth Humanitarian Revolution is a clarion call out for business to build communities where all of us can prosper. And many companies are already moving in this direction.

In San Francisco at the annual **Dreamforce** event, Salesforce Chairman and Co-Founder Marc Benioff, declared, “**The business of business is improving the state of the world.**” These words are backed by company-wide action with **1% of equity, product, and employees’ time** dedicated to improving communities through technology, grants, and other programs. This is good for business, as customers appreciate companies that innovate to improve the world around them. According to the **State of the Connected Customer** report, 56% of customers actively seek to buy from the most innovative companies.

In underserved communities, **PepUp Tech** gives less privileged students access to tools and mentors, building skills that secure jobs, enrich families, and stabilize communities. Technology companies who support the effort also win by gaining access to a growing pool of diverse technology talent.

In Mexico, Cemex created **Patrimonio Hoy** a unique savings and home-building program to improve communities, families, and futures. This award-winning innovation increased sales, profits, company reputation, and customer pride by delivering sustainable results for everyone.

In Mauritius, **Salt of Palmar** resort connects guests from around the world with local people and places. “Skills Swaps” enable visitors to contribute their time and talent to participate with local community organizations. “Cooking with Salt” lets every guest savour the native cuisine – from selecting vegetables on the organic farm, to preparing with local chefs in the kitchen, to serving their own family members at the dinner table. Guests return home with local spices, great recipes, wonderful memories, and genuine local relationships.

All over the world, business and community collaboration is rising. Your organization can contribute to this wave of business-enabled social change through:

1. **Creating a bridge from education to employment**

Devote resources to teaching those not-yet-employed the skills they need to succeed in your industry. This contributes to the labour force you need while building goodwill to help you attract and retain the best.

2. **Connecting employees with their communities**

Your workforce may be local, national, or global, but everyone lives in communities, both physical and online. Our connections and contributions in these communities add richness and meaning to our lives. Align your company’s social efforts to support the project and causes your employees care most about.

3. **Integrating with your environment**

Take responsibility for the physical world by assessing your impact, reducing your footprint, and providing alternatives to restore, refresh, and recreate a sustainable ecology for all of us. The Dreamforce event removed beef from the menu and proudly announced this one decision had **saved ten million gallons of water.**

4. **Working on the system, not just the symptoms**

Charity and philanthropy must be continued as relief can always be supported by generous donors. But the underlying systemic issues can also be improved through greater collaboration between businesses, government agencies, civic and faith organizations. Everyone gains when we work together to solve social problems, mend broken lives, and uplift the poorest and weakest among us.

5. **Asking important social questions**

What social issues do you care about? What social issues do your colleagues care about? How can a business like yours help to solve a persistent social problem? Who must be involved so that your ideas and improvements become sustainable? How can your business profit from contributing more to the community?

The Fourth Humanitarian Revolution makes business and social sense.

For companies to gain new customers, increase profits, and attract great employees, they must exist in stable communities where customers are flourishing, new wealth is being created, and great talent is growing fast. This calls for new levels of commitment and contribution.

What can you do to make this happen where you work?

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About the Author

Ron Kaufman is author of *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Amazon.com* bestseller, “Uplifting Service! A Proven Path to Delighting Your Customers, Colleagues and Everyone Else You Meet” and 14 other books on service, business and inspiration. He is also the founder of UP! Your Service, a company that enables organizations to build Uplifting Service cultures and enjoy a sustainable advantage.

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Linda Rosdahl

6 things you should know about your product

What is your reason to exist?

Relevance is the road to customers' hearts. You need to understand why, oh why, should anyone care about your product or brand. By understanding yourself, your competitors and your business arena, you increase the chance of shooting right on target with your product and brand. I am focusing on B2B in this text.

So, here are 6 things you should know about your B2B product or brand.

1. Superpowers & Weak Spots

Many companies are great at listing their strengths. And you should. Communication around your products should be based on real strength. And if you can build it on unique qualities, you have a great way of differentiating yourself from competitors. Just beware of making too long lists, you'll risk diluting the message. Focus on uniqueness, if possible.

Pinpointing your weak spots is also essential. It allows you to find strategies to navigate around and maybe even turning them into strengths. Nevertheless, sales will want to know the weak elements so that they are not caught with their pants down in customer meetings.

To list the weaknesses of competitors is a favourite sport in many companies. We love to dwell on whatever the competitors are **not** as good at. The eagerness to list competitor strengths is normally not as intense. But probably more important. Internal competitor bashing often hinders us from seeing the real strength of our competitors. But if we

don't acknowledge (and learn from) what the competitors are great at, there is a risk of missing opportunities or that competitors are passing us by on their way to new business.

2. Who Are You Being Compared With?

Well, who are your competitors? This might seem like asking an obvious question. But it's not always that straightforward, especially in B2B. It's understanding who you are being compared with when a customer is deciding to buy your product.

There are probably obvious direct competitors offering the same type of product or technologies as you. But you also need to take into consideration and differentiate yourself from indirect competitors: other types of products or technologies that are solving the same problems as your product is solving. This especially applies if you are offering new technology or innovative "new" products and there already is an infrastructure for those other type of indirect competitor products. This affects your strategies and argumentation.

3. What Market Positions are Your Competitors Occupying?

So, what market position is your competitors claiming today and how are they perceived among customers and partners? This is essential to understand in order to develop your own positioning strategy for your product or brand. It will allow you to create a map of your market to see where your product or brand, with its strengths and weaknesses, fits in best.

Trying to claim a market position that a competitor already is occupying is time-consuming and costly. And it's not very differentiating to do so. You

should build your positioning strategy on your own qualities.

4. Market Landscape

So, what's happening in your part of town? You should know. Many industries are under total make-over due to disruptive new business models where new technology is turning upside-down on everything that we know. Make sure you keep up to date with what's happening and that this knowledge is shared within the organization.

No-one can foresee all major market developments but by staying up to date, you will optimize your chances of picking up new market trends before it's too late. And it might even help you generate some new business or product ideas along the way.

5. Who are You Addressing?

Well, you should always address the customers. But in B2B, it's not always that simple and you need to pass several obstacles from supplier to end-customer. The sales chain varies from industry to industry. You have distributors and partners. There might be technical people you need to pass on the way such as installers or integrators. There might be end-customers such as companies who pay for your product and end-users such as employees who only use your product.

The B2B sales chain is often complex and there might be several bottlenecks on your way to a sales opportunity. It's important that you know your product's journey in the sales chain to identify the obstacles along the way. It allows you to develop communication strategies to relevant people that might be stopping your product – no matter if those people are installers, purchasers or management decision makers.

6. True Reasons to Buy

Well, I don't want to tell you that everything you have read so far is irrelevant. It's not. As long as you also ask this question: What are the true motivational drivers for customers buying my product.

The rich and famous don't buy expensive cars because of kick-ass horse powers. They buy expensive cars because it grants them status and they become subjects of admiration. People will not buy your product because of the techie features or dedicated service – they will buy your products because of the value they experience when your techie features or dedicated service help solve the challenges that they are facing.

So, interview your customers and partners and ask smart questions. Ask "why" over and over again to get under their skin and understand their true motivational drivers.

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About the Author

Linda Rosdahl runs Curious Cone and is based in Malmö, Sweden. With extensive experience from international B2B marketing, Linda supports with market insight analysis and brand strategies to ensure that products and messages are relevant to the people you wish to address.

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Anthony Mills

Five reasons companies fail at customer experience delivery



In my discussions with business leaders around the world, I continue to be impressed with the growing recognition of Customer Experience as an engine of sustainable growth. Well-conceived, well-designed, and well-delivered customer experiences are the core foundation for achieving the sort of marketplace leadership that has become the hallmark of companies like Amazon, Apple, Disney, Southwest Airlines, and Zappos.

Their relentless pursuit of great customer experiences has been the one thing that has propelled them to the forefront of their respective markets and yielded significantly higher margins than their competitors who have chosen to compete on other basis such as cost. Indeed, in his book *The Curve Ahead: Discovering the Path to Unlimited Growth*, author Dave Power goes so far as to state "Customer Experience Is the New IP".

And yet, far too many companies struggle with how to conceive, design, and deliver really great customer experiences. It's no wonder that it seems an out-of-reach elusive mystery to many. But it doesn't have to. Below are five very important reasons we've seen that companies fail to deliver meaningfully differentiating customer experiences, and what to do about it.

As a brief primer to anyone new to this area, the points highlighted below all derive from practices known as Customer Experience Design (CXD) and Customer Experience Management (CEM).

By way of analogy, one can think of delivering an experience as not unlike staging a theatrical performance—specifically one intended to deliver delight. As such, there are front-stage actors and backstage supporters, and their combined efforts must be choreographed (designed) and subsequently managed if they are to in fact succeed at creating delight. CX Design is facilitated by, amongst other tools, a process known as *Customer Experience Journey Mapping (CXJM)*, or sometimes just *Customer Journey Mapping*.

CXJM attempts to map out the *touchpoints* between the customer and the artefacts of the experience, capturing the critical thoughts, actions, and emotions of the experience.

This builds upon a field of psychology known as *experience psychology*—understanding what thoughts and emotions customers are experiencing at each touchpoint, which often arise out of whether needs and expectations are met, exceeded,

unmet, or grossly unmet. Understanding—and shaping—these thoughts, actions, and emotions is critically important if one is to deliver a delightful customer experience.

Failure Number One—No Design

Companies fail to be intentional about Customer Experience by not investing the time and effort to explicitly design the experience. This is akin to relying on “improv”, which some are good at, but most aren’t. There is now a relatively good body of knowledge and toolset available for designing customer experiences.

Most of these have evolved from *Design Methods*—the tools associated with Design Thinking (which, when applied to the design of service experiences, has given rise to the phrase *Service Design Thinking*). If companies want to ensure they are delivering truly differentiating experiences—as seen from the viewpoint of customers—then they will be intentional about this and will so design their experiences. This is quite often the launching point for organisations to become truly *customer-centric*.

Failure Number Two—Limited or No Insights

Companies fail to collect and integrate the right customer insights when designing experiences. Customer insights come into play in a number of ways. First, for each touchpoint, we need to understand the needs and expectations of the customer, so that we can design to those. Secondly, and very importantly, for existing (or surrogate) experiences, we need to understand two things... which of the many touchpoints are the most important to the customer (and why), and which have the highest levels of pain / frustration / roadblocks associated with them.

This latter information—specifically identifying which of the touchpoints have the highest combination of importance and pain—allows the organization to prioritize their efforts in terms of how best to use their limited resources to deliver the optimal experience by dialling in the most critical touchpoints.

Failure Number Three—Missing Stakeholders

Companies fail to involve all the stakeholders in the design of the experience. The delivery of any given experience is the culmination of many efforts by many different parties both inside and often outside the organization. We call these the stakeholders, and each such stakeholder has certain “levers” they must pull—some harder than others—in order to deliver the experience.

Some stakeholders are acting backstage (IT for example) and others are acting up on front stage (Sales or Customer Service staff for example), but all are important and have to work in harmony if they are to deliver the desired experience. When designing the experience, it is critically important to have the entire cross-functional team represented in the process, because each function has to sign up to deliver on their part of the experience. Full involvement and commitment are an absolute must for success here.

Failure Number Four—Missing the Business Side

Companies fail to capture the business side of Customer Experience. This actually has two parts—what’s in it for the business, and what does the business need to have in order to deliver the experience. This first part is very important, as there has to be tangible and measurable business KPIs associated with delivering the experience so that the whole effort has a positive ROI for the business. The second part is just as important and is about the ability to deliver a particular experience.

As previously mentioned, the ability to deliver a given experience requires a number of “levers” to be pulled by a number of different parties. But if the company does not understand all of these levers, and to what extent each must be pulled, along with how that does or does not fit with their existing processes, then they are likely to stumble.

After all, anyone can put down on paper a great experience design, but not anyone can deliver that particular experience. Doing so requires having the right people, processes, infrastructures, and business ecosystems in place and operational. If those things aren’t present and orchestrated such that they are in the right place at the right time, then the organization will not be able to deliver the experience they otherwise painstakingly designed. Ensuring the right supporting systems and processes are in place is a go or no-go for successful CX delivery.

One rather intentional way to address this failing is to undertake the mirrored flipside of CX Design, which is Business Experience (BX) Design. This means looking at the design from the inside-out rather than the outside-in. When both the CX Design and the BX Design are aligned, there can be high confidence in the ability to deliver it (and to do so well). This also segues into CX Management, which is focused on, amongst other things, ensuring these ecosystems and processes continue to function as intended over time so as to deliver the experience consistently time after time.

Failure Number Five—Missing the Attribute Translation

Companies fail to translate touchpoint attributes into corresponding product attributes—a necessity wherever products are a part of the experience. For whatever reason, this tends to be a particularly problematic area. It might be failing to consider the product experience, an organizational divide between Experience

Designers and Product Designers, or some other reason. Regardless, Product Designers need the CX Design information in order to ensure the product itself delivers its part of the overall customer experience (and, indeed, should be considered stakeholders in the CX Design process).

To address and overcome this, we recommend taking an approach to Product Design called the *Desired Experience Model*. With this approach, delivering a desired product experience is part and parcel to the Product Design process, and as such, Product Design cannot proceed, let alone be considered “complete”, without first incorporating these considerations. As such, the Desired Experience Model is overarching and inherently forces these two worlds to work together.

These are the five reasons we’ve seen companies fail to deliver meaningfully differentiating customer experiences, and in each case, what to do about it. When these are properly and adequately addressed, businesses can in fact deliver the sort of game-changing experiences that have made companies like Amazon, Apple, Disney, Southwest Airlines, and Zappos the outlying winners in their markets.

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About the Author

Anthony Mills is one of the world's foremost authorities on strategic innovation and hyper-growth strategies. He has taught, consulted, written, and lectured on these all over the world.

Anthony is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Legacy Innovation Group, a strategic innovation consulting firm serving clients from all over the world. Legacy Innovation helps companies tackle their biggest and most pressing growth challenges and become relentless innovators.

Anthony also serves as the Executive Director of the Global Innovation Institute (GInI), the world's foremost accreditation and standards body in the field of business innovation. GInI provides certifications globally to individuals and businesses whose lives depend on making innovation work in the real world.

Anthony's work builds on 30 years of leadership in business, design, product development, marketing, engineering, and manufacturing.

He remains deeply embedded in each of these worlds, giving him a broad and holistic perspective that is rare among business leaders. He knows how to bridge these disciplines to deliver innovations that have a lasting impact on the business and its markets.

Anthony also knows how to build and drive winning innovation strategies. In his work, he uses strategic innovation to ensure the ongoing relevance and long-term resilience of businesses. Equally important, he knows how to transform businesses into human-centred networks capable of constantly delivering new value to their markets. His methods for strategy, culture, and process have enabled business leaders all over the world to make lasting transformations in their businesses.

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FREE: "A Guide to Google Tools, Tips & Tricks You Can't Live Without"

This FREE comprehensive guide of tips, tricks and hacks via TradePub will help you make better use of the Google services you use.

Whether you're a student, educator, executive or a scientist, Google offers online services and products that help everyone remain as productive as possible. There are many Google services that have come and gone through the years, but a few of them like Gmail, Google Drive and of course Google Search — stay even more relevant as time goes on.

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- Google Search Hacks and Tips
- Google Drive Like You've Never Seen It
- Google Keep – What is It?
- Google Calendar – Not Just For Appointments
- Gmail – A Communication Powerhouse
- Making Use of Google Tools

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Debra Murphy

Simple marketing – eliminate confusion and win new customers

In this complex and noisy world of too many choices, a small business can stand out from the competition with simple marketing. Simple marketing also helps business owners eliminate the marketing overwhelm due to the rapidly changing digital landscape.

Marketing Overwhelm creates paralysis, guaranteeing that nothing gets done. Plus, those activities that do are often random and ineffective.

Customers are looking for simple solutions to their complex problems

No one has time to sort through complex messages, confusing web design or too many options in order to find what they need.

Customers are looking for simplified experiences throughout the buyer's journey. The business that can deliver their solution with clear messages and a simple pricing and packaging model will win the customer.

Business owners are looking for simple marketing activities to create visibility for their businesses

Online marketing requires action on a regular basis. You can no longer just place an ad in the Yellow Pages and then go about their daily business activities. To implement a successful **inbound marketing strategy**, content needs to be continually created, optimized and promoted.

With all the options available, small business owners feel totally overwhelmed. Plus, they redirect

their efforts every time something new catches their attention.

Here are 6 tips to simplify your marketing and help your business uniquely stand out from the competition:

1. Focus on one specific target market

Picking the right target market enables you to become laser focused on addressing their particular challenges.

If you try to market your products and services to an undefined audience, you most likely will fail. Many business owners avoid making a decision to target a specific market niche. They try and be "all things to all people" because not making a decision feels less risky. That is far from reality.

Being clear about who you work with increases efficiency, eliminating wasted time and money on activities that are random and unfocused. And despite being a prominent marketing myth, defining a target market will **not** limit your business. Directing your marketing efforts towards a specific market increases the clarity of your message and heightens your visibility to a much broader market.

2. Create a simple marketing plan

Creating a simple marketing plan helps you choose strategies that are focused on attracting your ideal client within your target market.

Without a **simple marketing plan**, you may be selecting marketing

activities as you would food from a Chinese menu. However, when it comes to marketing, the Chinese menu approach does not work and usually results in a bad case of heartburn.

With so much distraction in our day-to-day activities, we need to put structure around our marketing so we remain focused on our goals. We have only so much time to devote to marketing, so let's use that time wisely.

3. Simplify your message

Crafting messages that are simple, compelling and focused on the problem you solve for your ideal client creates visibility across a wider market.

Too many companies create complex messaging. Figure out what your ideal client wants and focus on the most important point that you want to communicate. Let your audience know what problem you solve for them and why they should work with your business.

Avoid drowning your prospects with too much information about what you offer. Remember that your potential customer only cares about what you can do for them. Present your solutions simply and **in their language** so it is easy for them to make a decision. Clear messages can help them move swiftly through the sales process.

4. Create an action plan

Developing an action plan helps you define a realistic set of activities based on your resource limitations.

A marketing action plan eliminates random activities that create haphazard results. It takes your marketing plan one step further and assigns dates, topics and other activities to each activity so that it eliminates the guess work and ensures you always know what you should be doing and when.

5. Clean up your website

Simplifying your website to clearly guide your visitor helps them find what they are looking for and helps you convert them into a lead.

Most **small business websites** focus too much on how wonderful they are. They don't tell the visitor why they are the right choice to solve their problem. Some also have a complex design that detracts from its usability.

Your web site needs to lead your visitors through the site with the purpose of helping them decide what action to take. If you let the visitor wander without a clear path, you run the risk of them getting confused, frustrated and leaving without ever knowing how you can help them.

- Make your website design is clean and easy to navigate.
- If you use a slider or other carousel features, make sure your message doesn't get missed. Look for a better way to project your message.
- Write the homepage content so that it clearly speaks to your ideal client. This will help them understand how you can help them solve their biggest challenge.

6. Select your social media wisely

Selecting and then dominating the right social media channels is more effective than trying to create a strong presence across them all.

You do not have to be on every social platform in order to make an impact in your business. You

hear about how businesses use Pinterest or Twitter to grow their business and you feel you need to do the same. But your strategy is going to look different than others, even against your competition. You need to decide which platforms make sense for you.

Take some time to figure out where your target market hangs out and make sure you have a strong social presence there. When you successfully build a strong presence on the more appropriate social channels, you can decide when or if it makes sense to add another to your online presence.

What are you waiting for?

Simple marketing has benefits for both your customers and your business. Keep your marketing simple and help your ideal clients understand why they will benefit from working with you.

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About the Author

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

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

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FREE: “Design Strategies to Help You Capture Mobile Clicks”

Mobile subscribers are less engaged because they are being forced through an experience that is not optimized to help them take the action marketers are asking them to. It's daunting, as a marketer, to figure out how to address this growing challenge. This FREE guide, available [here](#), walks you through where to begin and provides some design strategies to help you capture those clicks.

On average, about 40 per cent of e-mail opens come from mobile devices and tablets. Unfortunately, all the work done to ensure e-mails render flawlessly on the desktop doesn't take into account the subscribers trying to read e-mails on a tiny screen.

Often, the mobile experience is disappointing, forcing the subscriber to wait for images to download, scroll endlessly to read a sentence, or zoom in to click a link, and then dropping them on a website with a similar experience.

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Yoram Solomon

What you mean, think, and believe

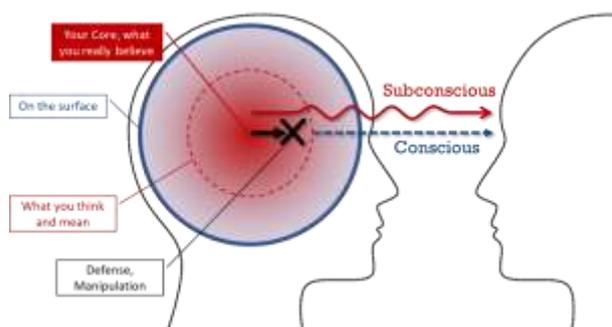


Part of trust building takes place during every interaction between two people. Trust is being built as a function of the time spent together, the intimacy of that time, and the positivity.

The "standard" level of intimacy is the answer to the question: How much of what I think and mean was I successful in conveying? Albest Mehrabian, in his 1971 book *Silent Messages*, claimed that 7% of that would be conveyed through words, 38% through the tone of voice, and 55% through body language.

However, there is a deeper level of intimacy than conveying what I think and mean, even with 100% accuracy. This one would answer this question:

How much of what I really believe did I convey to the other person?



What I believe is deeper than what I mean. Sometimes I don't

even know myself, consciously.

Strong communicators, highly trustworthy, are those who can consciously convey to the other person what they believe. They translate what they believe into what they think and mean, and then are successful in conveying that through words, tone of voice, and body language.

Others will subconsciously convey what they really believe, and consciously convey only what they think and mean.

If what you believe and what you think and mean are the same, that's not a problem. But sometimes, as a defence mechanism, or as a way of manipulation, we mean, think, and consciously convey something different than what we really believe. That's when we are fake and disingenuous.

However, as Malcolm Gladwell so eloquently described in his book *Blink--The power of thinking without thinking*, we can subconsciously sense what you subconsciously conveyed, even if you didn't intend to. If what we consciously sense through your words, tone, and body language is different than what we subconsciously sense from you otherwise (maybe partly through your tone and body language), we lose trust in you.

We are pretty good at that. So if you are conveying something different than what you really

believe, just know that you are losing trust. Don't do it.

Trustworthiness is the most important quality for your success.
Trust me.

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About the Author

Yoram can often be found speaking in different venues, from University Graduate business schools to Rotary Clubs, the Association for Strategic Planning National Conference, DEMO, and many more. He is an engaging speaker who was said to make people think afterwards. He is a professional member of the National Speakers Association.

Dr. Solomon published 7 books: "Un-Kill Creativity", "Blueprints for the Next Big Thing", "Bowling with a Crystal Ball (two editions)", "Business Plan through Investors' Eyes", "From Startup to Maturity," and "Worst Diet Ever." He authored numerous articles, many of them published at Inc. Magazine, Innovation Excellence, and his blog on this website.

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Paul Matthews

Is learning the right focus for Learning & Development people?



The goal of the learning and development person is to help people learn. That makes sense doesn't it? After all that is their job title.

But what does the organisation really need?

Organisations need more than people who just know lots. They need people who are capable of doing the jobs that the organisation needs to be done.

If you have the choice, which would you prefer; an employee who knows lots about the job, or an employee who is capable of doing the job?

Most people would opt for the capable employee. The worth of most employees to an organisation is based far more on their capability to do their job than on their knowledge of things relating to the job. Of course, part of capability is having the right knowledge, but it is only part.

My suggestion is that the role of anybody responsible for learning and development within an organisation needs to be much broader. It needs to encompass all that is needed to ensure that employees are capable at their point of work.

It is interesting to note that in a number of progressive businesses (for example Nestle, Tesco, Lloyds Bank) the role of Learning and Development Manager has been replaced with the role of Capability Manager. This is far more than just a change in job title. This change in emphasis on the role from learning to capability has quite a profound

effect on how people in these roles do their job.

How would this change of role change your thinking?

What would happen within your organisation if someone is focused on ensuring that all employees are capable of doing the job they are employed to do?

I would bet that much more effort would be put into performance support. That is, making sure that employees have to hand the information and tools they need to get their jobs done. This would be apparent in better intranet resources that are easy to access and intensely practical. It would show up in the provision of simple job aids and crib sheets. People would be able to connect more quickly to experts to get immediate questions answered.

Beyond these 'information' based performance support aids, there would also be a focus on what is stopping people from getting the job done, what is stopping them being capable at the point of work. So many times people are unable to do their jobs well due to inadequate tools or dysfunctional systems. These operational issues are also part of the capability agenda.

So, don't just think learning as the answer to improving performance. Think capability.

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About the Author

Paul Matthews, is an expert in informal learning, enabling capability, performance consultancy, learning transfer, workflow learning and how L&D can be a valuable partner in achieving business goals.

He is the author of three bestselling books. 'Informal Learning at Work: How to Boost Performance in Tough Times', praised as a thought provoking practical book with ideas and insightful examples which challenges us all to embrace informal learning. His 2014 book 'Capability at Work: How to Solve the Performance Puzzle' explores the root causes of peoples' poor performance and how to seize the opportunity of the changing nature of L&D. Paul kept saying that two Learning & Development books are enough but learning transfer turned out to be too big and important and 'Learning Transfer at Work: How to Ensure Training >>>

Performance' was published in October 2018. The feedback from many L&D professionals is that it is a must read!

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Evan Carmichael

Passion – it's the essential ingredient for success

When I sold my first business, I was searching for something to do. I didn't need to work but I wanted to. Selling my business was like losing a part of me. I was looking for my next big thing to do.

I spoke with my local YMCA and asked if I could present to their entrepreneur group.

Give back and share.

They said yes and for the next few weeks I went to work creating a great presentation.

It was my best stuff.

Everything I had learned from the past couple years in building a business from making \$300 a month to international success and being acquired.

I spent the next few weeks promoting my free event.

The YMCA also promoted it to their audience.

The big day comes.

I remember walking into the building and my heart was pounding.

I spent so much time on this and I wanted it to be perfect.

I get in the elevator and am going over my presentation in my head, hoping I don't make any mistakes. I get off the elevator, walk to the room where I'm presenting, enter inside...

I stop breathing.

Only 3 people had shown up. I spent weeks preparing and promoting.

I created some life changing content that I was excited to present.

And it was free.

And only 3 people came to listen.

The show must go on.

What could I do?

I wasn't going to cancel.

So, I gave my presentation and got to know the 3 entrepreneurs who came.

It was amazing.

All 3 of them walked out as new people.

They had confidence in their business again.

They had a plan for what to do next.

Their lives were, forever, changed.

Failure?

Most people would look at this and say it was a huge failure.

All that time spent in creating the content and promoting the event. Weeks of my life that I'll never get back.

How can you turn this into a business if you can only get 3 people to come to an event that was free?

This idea didn't work so I should go do something else, right?

Wrong.

I LOVED helping those 3 people. I knew I had to do more. I knew I had to do it again.

I didn't care if only 3 people came out to each of my presentations. As long as someone came, I was going to do my best to help them. Even if I couldn't make a single dollar from this venture...

Even if I ran out of money and had to go do something else to support myself...

I had to find a way to keep doing it.

Because I loved it.

That's all that matters.

If you love your business, you'll find a way to make it work.

It's going to be the hardest thing you've ever done in your life. People will tell you you're crazy and you should go get a job.

"Be realistic."

But it's the love of what you're doing that's going to push you through.

It's that passion that's going to make you succeed, no matter what.

Passion.

So many entrepreneurs start a business just trying to make money.

If that's your only goal, you won't have success.

I don't care how "hot" the market is right now.

You can make money in any industry.

Any industry.

But only if you're passionate about what you're doing and are committed to seeing this through.

Success.

If you look at any successful entrepreneur...

Look at how they got started. Look at why they did what they did.

It was never for the money.

It was because they had a deep passion for their work.

They wanted to change the way things were done in their industry.

You need to find your passion.

If you want to have similar success you need to build your business around something that you are deeply passionate about.

Something that you're prepared to fight for when your friends and family tell you you're crazy.

Something that even if you run out of money and have to go get a job you'll keep doing because you love it so much.

You have to find a way to keep going.

Every day, keep going.

If you don't have that passion, you won't make it.

But if you do, the world will eventually open itself up to you if you can hang in there.

Believe.

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About the Author

Evan Carmichael helps entrepreneurs. At 19, he built then sold a biotech software company. At 22 he was a venture capitalist helping raise between \$500,000 and \$15 million. He now runs EvanCarmichael.com, one of the world's most popular websites for entrepreneurs. His goal is to help 1 billion entrepreneurs. He has helped set 2 world records, works 20 hours per week, uses a stand-up desk, rides a Vespa, raises funds for Kiva, and created a line of Entrepreneur trading cards. He graduated from the University of Toronto and enjoys salsa dancing, being a DJ, and the Toronto Blue Jays.

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Finish with Humour

