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June 2019

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on the power of a
common tongue



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From the CEO

Professor Gary Martin FAIM
Chief Executive Officer, AIM WA

The open secret in our workplaces?

Anyone who has worked in an office over the past few decades would have witnessed the rise and fall of any number of wicked workplace fads which have been seized upon by stressed and troubled bosses trying to find a cheap and quick fix to often intractable problems.

You may remember dabbling in a spot of process engineering, participating in quality circles, being part of the learning organisation movement or even engaging in 'best practice'.

The fact is fad-surfing bosses have often left workers marinating in misery as they struggle to keep up with their managers' extraordinary flights of fanciful thinking.

Of all the workplace fads that inspire grumbling, none has spawned more acrimony than the open-plan office design – or should that be the open-plan office debacle. Think of those amazing architectural gifts with large, airy, open floor plans where workers sit across from one another sharing their views on the latest Netflix series and commenting on their colleagues' lunch.

Not only was the open-plan work place credited with reducing real estate costs, it was said to have stimulated interaction among workers to promote more collaboration, job satisfaction, productivity and support.

But open-plan office insiders – and almost 60 per cent of the Australian workforce is operating in an open-plan office – have pointed to new research out of Harvard Business School that has cast significant doubt on the merits of what is arguably the biggest and boldest workplace fad of this century.

The Harvard research concluded switching to an open-plan office arrangement actually resulted in substantially less face-to-face interaction yet increased the use of email communication and instant messaging – the exact opposite of what open-plan designs were meant to inspire.

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pinging, sneezing
and laughing all
result in sensory
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off any semblance of
productivity.**

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In many ways the Harvard research merely highlighted what has been an open secret in many open-plan workplaces for years.

But for fear of getting the boss offside or being labelled a poor team player, many workers were reluctant to call out the limitations of workplace set-ups that insiders claim are much more disruptive than the Harvard research suggests.

For a start, the insiders will say, open-plan designs sabotage a worker's ability to focus. Chattering, ringing, pinging, sneezing and laughing all result in sensory overload that wards off any semblance of productivity, reduces overall quality and often leaves a worker highly agitated.

Others will liken open-plan offices to being on a nudist beach – there is no place for privacy. Working in an open-plan office, for example, can generate angst at the thought your boss and colleagues tallying the frequency and duration of your bathroom visits, awkwardness that all and sundry can monitor your social media and internet browsing habits and annoyance that anyone can listen in on your phone calls.


And how distracting is it when you are trying to write a sensitive performance review while wedged between one colleague who is making an appointment with a urologist and another who is picking the anchovies out of a tuna salad.

The lack of a physical barrier makes it impossible to protect yourself from a toxic, difficult or harassing colleague – and during cold and flu season colleagues fall like dominoes.

However, unlike other office fads, killing off the open-plan design is not an option, not least because the cost of running an open-plan office is about one-third that of a conventional closed-off workplace comprising individual offices.

But it is possible to put in place measures to make the open-plan workplace more effective, productive and enjoyable for the workforce.

At the very minimum those measures ought to include the creation of more private working areas.

And perhaps bosses should consider piggybacking on another rapidly growing trend by allowing workers to beat the distraction of the open-plan office by working from home on a more regular basis. 

For more Thought Leadership insights visit **aimwa.com**

Follow Professor Gary Martin at  [linkedin.com/in/professorgarymartin/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/professorgarymartin/)

An extra push towards innovation

Innovators from across Western Australia came together to discuss the merits and challenges in Western Australia's push for innovation at the first AIM WA-*WestBusiness* CEO Voice Boardroom Series lunch for 2019.

by Chris Thurmott, photography *The West Australian*

There was once a time when innovation helped a company stand out from others in the market. More recently however, the need to innovate has become more about surviving.

While this is a fairly big shift, Western Australia might have another barrier in its way of being able to innovate successfully in the future – its history.

It was noted during the first AIM WA *WestBusiness* CEO Voice Boardroom Series lunch this year that while WA has innovation in its DNA, evidenced by exceptional gains in the state's globally significant resources sector, this success might lead to complacency.

"We do have innovation in our DNA and people think it's something that just happens, which I think we all know is not true," Deloitte Managing Partner Michael McNulty FAIM said.

"Innovation is happening in Queensland and multiple areas around the world off the back of huge amounts of capital, which is needed for expansion."

The question of the right funding for innovation was also broached during the discussion, with Spacecubed Managing Director Brodie McCulloch providing some statistics around how much, or how little, money is being put into innovation in WA.

"The State Government provides funding of around \$3 million towards innovation, but this figure is probably not going to cut it to transform what we're doing in WA," he said.

"Then you have companies like the RAC, which puts money into start-ups and other programs and projects towards the state's innovation ecosystem which, along with Federal support, raises investment in innovation to around \$7 million, and that won't do a lot really.

"There's a long way for WA to go."

Showcasing the disparity in investment towards innovation across the country, Artrya Co-Founder and Director John Barrington FAIM said \$650 million had been invested into innovation projects in Queensland.

"Brisbane City Council is paying start-ups \$5000 to come and take up free office space in the city," Mr Barrington said. "If you get that ecosystem with all these people doing innovative things that you can learn from and feed off and leverage, then you get great momentum.

"While WA has innovation in its DNA, we're at risk of falling behind what the other states are doing."

The creation of an ecosystem – one geared towards creating and cultivating innovation – was a hotly supported topic in the discussion and there were a number of suggestions put forward for how it will come about in WA, with a lot of focus on creating the right culture.

City of Canning Chief Innovation Officer Jemma Greene FAIM said local governments had a critical role to play in creating a culture suited for businesses to thrive.

"I think we need to focus a lot of our internal culture building so we can effectively support externally as well," she said. "That's definitely something we've been focusing on at the City of Canning, building that culture of innovation and changing that mindset and the skillsets of our staff so we can effectively support the entire ecosystem."

When it comes to the need for innovation to bring WA into the future with guns blazing, resistance is futile.

While local governments have a responsibility for engineering a culture of innovation, Navigating Innovation CEO Erica Haddon FAIM said the onus was on traditional organisations to shake off potential fears around innovation.

"Shifting the culture within these traditional organisations that might be fearful of innovation or start-ups will help them understand and embrace foreign elements into an organisation which will enrich the ecosystem across the board," she said.

No matter how much the culture is changed, there is a handbrake in the way of innovation in WA, according to Multiplex Chief Executive Officer Chris Palandri FAIM who admitted he has been guilty of trying to de-risk innovation too much because of the scarcity of work available.

"Within the construction industry, especially with large-scale projects such as Optus Stadium, there just isn't the regularity of work to truly explore the opportunities," he said.

"The high-flying graduates with the best ideas are going to be drawn to the areas of innovation and technology, but with the construction industry there is a propensity to being resistant to innovation because outcomes and opportunities are not always there."

Adding to this is the possibility that no matter how much WA tries, it will always struggle to really embrace innovation unless it starts to be prouder in itself and its achievements, according to Visagio Managing Director Wilson Casado FAIM.

He said Australia as a whole was worlds away from other countries in terms of innovation and the way to change that was with pride and being able to showcase the excellent work WA has done.

One person who backs this idea is Fortescue Metals Group Chief Operating Officer Greg Lilleyman, who was keen to showcase how far ahead WA was in the resources sector compared to the rest of the world.



He pointed out 99 per cent of the world's automated haul trucks were found in WA, 95 per cent of the world's mining software was developed in WA and the software used to design minesites the world over was developed in WA.

"Where our strengths lie we are absolutely in front," Mr Lilleyman said. "We have got to be risk-takers, but for me, running a good business is the starting point for innovation to work. If you try to automate a poorly run mine, for example, you don't end up with a well-run mine, you just end up with an automated poorly run mine."

"You absolutely have to get on top of your core business and then you can innovate and enhance the value that is there."

"Start with the good idea, build the business then look to innovate, otherwise the innovation won't help."

Regardless of where you stand on the topic of innovation and whether WA is there yet or not, there have clearly been some excellent success stories to come out of the state. Building on these successes relies on being more tolerant of failure, according to Mr McNulty.

Don't put the cart before the horse – run your business well first then think of enhancing it through innovation.

He said the public sector in WA was particularly guilty of being intolerant towards failure.

"You often get what you deserve because the behaviour you encourage reflects the results you get," he said.

"The really successful organisations are the ones that can innovate and have worked out how to celebrate having a go and not actually punishing those who have a go and fail."

"I fear for people in the public sector who can't get that idea off the ground because they're under intense pressure not to fail." ●

Participants at the AIM WA-*WestBusiness* CEO Voice Boardroom Series lunch from left to right:

Wilson Casado FAIM, Managing Director, Visagio,
Erica Haddon FAIM, Chief Executive Officer, Navigating Innovation,
Michael McNulty FAIM, Managing Partner, Deloitte,
Professor Gary Martin FAIM, Chief Executive Officer, AIM WA,
Brodie McCulloch, Managing Director, Spacecubed,
Dr Marcus Tan, Chief Executive Officer, HealthEngine,
Dr Alison Gaines FAIM, Chief Executive Officer, Gerard Daniels,
Chris Palandri FAIM, Chief Executive Officer, Multiplex,
Justin Eve, Partner, PwC,
Greg Lilleyman, Chief Executive Officer, Fortescue Metals Group,
Jemma Greene FAIM, Chief Innovation Officer, City of Canning,
Janet Barnes FAIM, Regional Australia Executive, Telstra,
John Barrington FAIM, Co-Founder & Director, Artraya,
Alec Coles, Chief Executive Officer, WA Museum.

Watch for pivotal events

An excerpt from *One Small Step... for Leaders*

by Dr Shaun Ridley FAIM

Intelligent leaders have a finely tuned sense of what's important and what's not. This is especially true of pivotal events in the life of the organisation or the life of an individual staff member. Every Chief Financial Officer knows the Annual General Meeting is a pivotal event in the calendar. It is the time to double check everything because a mistake at the AGM could be fatal for the organisation and severely career limiting for them personally.

Although they are less regular and less predictable, there are equally important events in the lives of individual staff. If you know your staff well or have good sources of information about them, you will be in a good position to judge which events are pivotal. For example, funerals can be events to avoid or to attend depending on the staff member. For some, this occasion is very private and kept well away from work relationships. For others, the presence and support of their leader at a funeral can have a profound positive impact. Your ability to sense and respond appropriately in these circumstances will be observed closely by all your staff.

Similarly, your response to key events involving customers can send a powerful message. The adage that you should pay attention to the things your boss pays attention to is always sound advice. What messages are you sending to your staff by the things you are paying attention to? What do you do when your sales team is bidding for a major contract? Do you rally all the key staff around the task to lend support, provide content and contribute to the bid plan? Or do you sit back and watch from a distance?

If you lack confidence in your ability to sense and respond to these pivotal events, call on your trusted advisors within the organisation. There will always be someone within the senior team who has good intuition on the significance of an issue, event or occasion.



Dr Shaun Ridley FAIM
AIM WA Deputy Chief
Executive Officer, Learning
and Development Division.

One Small Step... for Leaders by Dr Shaun Ridley is a collection of practical actions to make you a better leader today than you were yesterday. To gain insight into other practical actions, order your copy today at by calling +61 8 9383 8000.

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If you lack confidence in your ability to sense and respond to pivotal events in the lives of yours staff, call on your trusted advisors within the organisation.

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ONE SMALL STEP – in the next 24 hours

Raise your antenna to be more tuned in to the pivotal events in the lives of your staff. This is not interfering – this is caring. If you are unsure how best to respond, trust your instincts and ask the individual. Your genuine interest will be appreciated, regardless of the level of your involvement in the event itself.

If you are unsure of what to do for a staff member, then ask permission before acting. For example;

I'd like to come to the funeral on Friday, would that be okay with you?

I hear you have just completed you Bachelor's Degree, congratulations. Would you feel comfortable if I organised a morning tea with the staff to celebrate? ●



A FRIENDLY CONUNDRUM

The double-edged sword that is socialising at work

More than half of the respondents in the latest **AIM WA Members Pulse Survey** indicated they socialised with work colleagues at lunchtime at least a few times per month. Fewer than 10% never socialised with work colleagues at lunchtime. Socialisers were evident in every demographic category except for CEO/Managing Directors and those aged between 56 and 65.

Overall, the frequency with which people socialised at lunchtime was recorded as follows:



It would appear we are much less enthusiastic about socialising with those same colleagues outside of working hours, yet the frequency is still significant.

Approximately **one quarter (24%)** indicated they socialised with work colleagues outside of normal working hours **a few times per month or more**.



The interesting issue for organisational leaders is the potential impact of this socialising.

*Whilst **83% of men and 78% of women** indicated at least some positive outcomes from this socialising, there appears to be a potential for significant downsides.*

***36% of men and 49% of women** said there had been negative outcomes from colleagues socialising with each other.*



Organisational leaders face a dilemma over whether or not it is appropriate to intervene in social behaviour between staff, especially if these negative outcomes directly impact on the performance of the organisation. Most respondents felt it was not appropriate for the organisation to attempt to influence this behaviour.

*Only **one in five respondents (19%)** felt it was appropriate or highly appropriate for the organisation to have a clear policy or set of guidelines relating to colleagues socialising with each other.*

The popularity and prevalence of work colleagues socialising with each other suggests it is unlikely to go away. However, with one-third of people having experienced negative outcomes from this behaviour, organisations may well be wise to be vigilant to ensure these negative outcomes do not escalate and impact on overall performance.

Please call on +61 8 9383 8000 if you would like more information.

Found in translation

Diversity and keeping up with changes in the language of business are key to finding global opportunities in the 21st century.

by Michael Roberts



Professor Tsedal Neeley speaks at AIM WA's High Performing Teams Seminar. Photography Callum Smith.

Professor Gary Martin FAIM
and Professor Tsedal Neeley at
AIM WA's High Performing Teams Seminar.

Tsedal Neeley has long understood the power of language.

Growing up in a family that travelled internationally for work, the Harvard Business School Professor regularly found herself in the position of being the “different girl in class with the funny name and the curly hair”.

But unlike a lot of young kids, being different never seemed to bother Professor Neeley – she was confident in her own skin. Adapting to new environments and learning about other people and their cultures was a challenge she embraced.

Professor Neeley realised in these formative years that language had the power to either exclude or include her, and she wouldn't let a simple matter like linguistics get in the way.

Although life settled as an adolescent when her family moved to Boston, Massachusetts, those early years travelling the world would help shape Professor Neeley's deep interest in human behaviour and communication.

Today, she speaks four different languages fluently, although you won't hear her bragging about it.

This interest in human behaviour and communication has been the driving force behind Professor Neeley's seminal work on language in organisations and her industry-leading research into the rising influence of technology on business and the changing dynamics of teams in the workplace.

In the early 2000s Professor Neeley was part of a PhD group at Stanford University which sought to understand the challenges and opportunities of team work in globally-facing organisations.

Language, and the ability or inability of teams within organisations to communicate in a lingua franca or ‘common tongue’, became the focal point of her research.

“Language was all over the place – it overwhelmed us,” Professor Neeley told *Leader* during her recent visit to Perth for AIM WA's High Performing Teams Seminar.

“People we interviewed called it one of the most isolating or divisive experiences they've had. We were stunned; I was stunned.”

Professor Neeley desperately wanted to learn more about the impact of language in global organisations, but found there wasn't a single research-based article written on the topic.

Fully engrossed, she decided to carve out a field in management and business that espoused the importance of language, beginning a journey that would see her write about this phenomenon for the next 15 years.



Looking over the mountain and anticipating the future

In 2010, Japan's largest e-commerce company, Rakuten, made a bold decision that would transform the online retailer into the global powerhouse it is today.

In an announcement that shocked his 7000-strong local workforce, company founder and CEO Hiroshi Mikitani revealed Rakuten would be changing its working language from Japanese to English – and employees had only two years to become proficient or risk demotion.

As the business language of the world, Mr Mikitani believed adopting English as his company's lingua franca was vital to its global expansion agenda.

A few months after making the decision public, Mr Mikitani reached out to Professor Neeley to help implement what he called an ‘Englishnisation’.

Professor Neeley gained unrestricted access to Rakuten and went on to write a book chronicling five years of the transformation.

As Professor Neeley put it, the local Japanese workforce was understandably anxious when the language change came into effect.

“Imagine going to work tomorrow and suddenly the news is that everything you do from now on is in Mandarin,” she said. “If that happened in my institution I would be rendered mute.”

“His employees experienced shock – language shock, culture shock. Many didn't have strong buy-in.”

There were also those within the Japanese business community who questioned the move. Then Honda CEO Takanobu Ito publicly criticised Mr Mikitani.

“He said it was a stupid idea, why would a Japanese company with mainly Japanese employees only use English?,” Professor Neeley said.

“But guess what? That reaction was in 2010, but in 2015 he was gone and Honda has since initiated the same language strategy. Now they're hustling to catch up.”

Mr Mikitani ended up proving all the critics wrong. Rakuten went from having 200 million users to more than 1.3 billion users in seven years and, according to Professor Neeley, the ‘Englishnisation’ was a big part of that tremendous success.

A measure of that corporate triumph is the fact today you will find Rakuten's logo on two of the world's biggest sporting brands – Spanish football giants Barcelona and NBA champions Golden State Warriors.

In addition to the e-commerce company's greater global presence, it has garnered more diversity across all levels of the workplace.

“When I first visited Rakuten and I was walking through the office spaces, I was diversity – me; that's it,” Professor Neeley said.

"It was a very homogenous environment, but now in their Tokyo offices alone they have 91 nationalities represented.

"Today, 80 per cent of the engineers they hire are non-Japanese. They've been able to tap this international talent pool in an extraordinary way."

Professor Neeley said Mr Mikitani, who is often referred to as the Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos of Japan, had showed extraordinary leadership in developing Rakuten into a worldwide force.

"What he has achieved since Rakuten came to be 22 years ago is incredible," she said. "It's no different to what you have seen companies do in a hundred years.

"What impressed me about him is how bold and courageous he is. He's such a visionary. He has the ability to see around the corner, or as he says to me, to look over the mountain and anticipate the future."

In a world where globalisation is "not something businesses can even afford to take their eye off", Professor Neeley said Australian companies could learn a lot from Rakuten's meteoric rise.

"The location of Australia and its self-contained aspect leads to a much more domestic mindset for business, and it works efficiently for many organisations, but imagine the opportunities that could be had if there was much more of a global agenda," she said.

"Companies are reinventing themselves and going through major transformations.

"What's happening now is companies from all over the world that are born digital and born global are giving incumbents a run for their money when it comes to using data and how they leverage this AI economy.

"It would be great for Australian companies to think about how they participate in this digital transformation economy."

Leadership and teams in the 21st century

For Professor Neeley, team dynamics within the workplace are changing as the business world goes through the fastest technological shift since the first industrial revolution.

She said one of the growing trends in business was to have smaller, agile teams that are fast, flexible, cross-functional and autonomous – meaning they manage their own process.

"They are, in a very disciplined way, following methodologies which require them to get constant feedback from their stakeholders and customers," Professor Neeley said.

"It's more of an incremental, iterative model where the clients are shaping what these teams are doing.

"These teams are achieving their goals at lighting speeds, but it requires the ability to work well together, collaborate together, work fast, to have frequent interactions and check-ins and to rapidly prototype new ideas."

Professor Neeley said leadership was evolving in the midst of the information revolution. What it takes to be a great leader in the 21st century is closely related to understanding the digital economy, she said.

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Leadership is serious work for serious people, because leaders have the power to shape economies and organisations – Professor Tsedal Neeley.
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This change can be seen in how coding is quickly becoming the next universal language of the corporate world, according to Professor Neeley, who believes leaders need to jump on board or risk getting left behind.

"I am firmly convinced leaders need to develop some key skills around data and digital technology," she said. "Data is now at the centre of how people need to strategise and how people need to think.

"The smart leaders will become digital leaders by developing skills and learning the language of data.

"You don't need to sit there and program in code in R or Python, but you need to understand statistical models, you need to understand data and you need to understand the limits of computing."

Professor Neeley cited French information technology company Atos as an industry trailblazer in this space, where CEO Thierry Breton has strongly encouraged his roughly 120,000 employees to upskill themselves in a digital learning program.

It's a move Professor Neeley believes will help Atos out-compete a lot of rival businesses. Since the program started in 2016, the company has digitally certified 70,000 workers.

But when it came down to the nuts and bolts of strong leadership, Professor Neeley said complacency at the top level of management was the ultimate downfall of many.

"Leadership is serious work for serious people, because leaders have the power to shape economies and organisations," she said.

"I consider the role of leaders as such an important, privileged position that every leader needs to take very seriously and earn every single day." ●



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Emma Leys FAIM

Working in a close-knit family environment has benefited Emma Leys FAIM throughout her career.

Fellow Q&A by Chris Thurmott



Emma spoke with *Leader* to share her experiences and what it means to be the head of one of Perth's longest-standing law firms in its centenary year.

You have worked at Kott Gunning for more than 20 years. What would you say are the benefits of not moving around, for the organisation and yourself?

Kott Gunning has a number of team members who have worked together at the firm for many years. Some of my colleagues, both lawyers and our support team members, have been working with Kott Gunning for over 40 years.

Through working together for so many years, we've become like family members for each other. We look out for and support each other, both professionally and personally, in a way that is possibly fairly rare in many workplaces. It helps us to create a genuinely caring and friendly team culture.

This longevity of service by so many of our team members has enabled us to build longstanding and valuable connections and working relationships with our clients and referral sources and offer them stability and continuity of service from a team they know really well, trust and depend upon.

The management structure of a partnership is a bit different to that of a company. What would you say are the main challenges of a partnership structure?

Every type of business structure has its pros and cons. Leaving aside the differences from a liability or tax perspective for example, from a management perspective one of the main challenges for a partnership structure can be the decision-making process.

Every business needs to be able to act upon or respond to issues quickly, without requiring the entire partnership to be involved in, for example, every day-to-day decision.

We've found it's preferable to avoid a situation of 'management by committee'. Instead, enable just one or two partners to have decision-making powers for certain operational or management issues, and have that trust in each other to do so.

Ultimately, strong communication and aligned core values and vision for the business are key to overcoming any business challenges, regardless of structure.

A number of Western Australia's leaders, including Malcolm McCusker AC CVO QC and The Hon John R Quigley LLB JP MLA, Attorney General of WA, have worked at Kott Gunning at some point in their careers. What is it about Kott Gunning that has made this possible?

The firm has an enduring reputation for quality and stability in providing legal services to the Western Australian community over the last 100 years.

bio

Emma Leys FAIM

Role Managing Partner at Kott Gunning

Studied Murdoch University

Worked 1994-1999:

Solicitor at Taylor Smart and then solicitor at Murcia Pestell Hillard.

1999 to current date:

Solicitor then Partner (since 2005) at Kott Gunning.

Member Since 2018.

We encourage our team members to make the most of every opportunity, to grow as individuals, to continue learning and acquiring new skills and knowledge and to be the best they can be.

How much of an honour was it to become managing partner during Kott Gunning's centenary year and what is your vision for the future?

It's a really exciting opportunity, particularly this year while our firm celebrates such a wonderful milestone.

Although it's a time to celebrate our firm's long history, it's also a time to really look forward and plan for the firm's future beyond 100 years.

Succession planning is obviously a priority as some of our partners are near retirement. My vision for Kott Gunning's future is to grow the team with people who share our values, continue to encourage and empower our team members to be their best, and promote a culture that focuses on people – both our team and our clients.

What are some of the best leadership lessons you have learned throughout your career?

There are so many ... be authentic – be yourself; be empathetic and be nice to people. Be fair, be humble, be a team player; empower and encourage others. Don't micro-manage, talk less, listen more – really get to know your team, what they do, and listen to them. Learn from mistakes; don't stress or lose sleep about the things you can't change. Look after your health – focus on the things that matter and where you can help to really make a difference. And enjoy what you do. 🍷

Strategy execution: Use a traditional or agile project approach?

A step-by-step guide to effective project management.

Fellow opinion piece by Todd Hutchison FAIM



Strategy is executed through projects. Selecting an appropriate project approach is essential to making execution successful. There is a lot of talk about being 'agile', which as a word represents being flexible, adaptive and nimble.

Many people are touting the phrase 'agile projects' as an excuse to avoid project planning; however, agile project management practices are the opposite of that. It is effectively delivering projects in cycles and planning the detail only for the immediate work being progressed.

Agile project management is a philosophy formalised in 2001 through the 'Agile Manifesto' as a set of principles and values. The 'scrum agile' methodology has become the most commonly used approach. Scrum gets its name from the rugby game, following the concept that whoever has the ball keeps it moving during the sprint to the end zone.

Where the traditional project approach is to plan the project completely, identify the schedule, budget and resources upfront and then execute to the plan, agile scrum projects are done in cycles called 'sprints'. This means the complete scope, budget and schedule may not be known upfront as work can start as soon as there are enough items to start a sprint. A sprint typically comprises of a standardised one to four-week period.

The biggest challenge with an agile approach for executives is the inability to present a total budget and schedule upfront, which can only be identified when all the 'to-do' items are known.

Work is broken up into 'to-do' items that are consistently reviewed and prioritised, 'doing' items that are being executed in the sprint, and 'done' items that have been finished. The work items are called 'stories' that reflect required products, product components or functions.

Stories are written in the form "As – I need – so that". For example, a story for a student management system may be presented as "As a student, I need to check my module marks to determine if I have passed, so that I can enrol in my next module". This highlights the need for a reporting function for student marks and an ability to self-enrol.

Each story is given a comparative point value known as 'story sizing'. The schedule is determined by the number of points on the 'to-do' list and the number of sprints required to complete that number of points. This requires the scrum team to determine how many points they can do in a sprint, which they refer to as the 'velocity'.

The budget is determined by the cost of the human resources in a sprint and any materials, equipment or consumable expenses.

As the team is expected to be fixed, the human resource budget can be determined by the number of people involved multiplied by the number of days in a sprint and their rates.



Todd Hutchison FAIM

Roles Global CEO of Peopleistic; Chair, International Institute of Legal Project Management; Chair, Business Education Institute; Chair, Film My Video; Board Director, Leadership WA.

Studied Deakin University; Curtin University.

Member Since 2013.


There is no project manager in an agile scrum. Instead it promotes a self-organised and cross-functional project team, recommending a fulltime and co-located team that comprises three to nine people with three defined roles.

The 'product owner' acts between the traditional project sponsor function and a business analyst, determining the prioritised 'to-do' list. The 'scrum master' is a facilitator and coach of process who helps source resources and eliminates any barriers for the team. The 'scrum team' (development team) are the actual project team members undertaking the work. Large project teams are created by multiples of scrum teams, as it is believed teams need to remain small and focused.

Each day the teams meet in a 'daily scrum', where each member presents what they did yesterday, what they are doing today and any obstacles they envisage.

When determining a traditional or agile approach, projects that can be well defined, like construction projects, are best to be managed using a traditional method. A lot of projects needing points of review can also be planned and delivered in stages anyway.

An agile approach is best suited to projects that have a lot of uncertainty that may require a different direction at the end of each sprint, such as election campaigns, marketing campaigns and software development.

Agile scrum comes with its own jargon. For example, 'ceremony' for a meeting, an 'artefact' for a tool, a 'story' for a feature and 'information radiators' for a report. Those contemplating moving to an agile approach should determine what elements work for their environment. What is often missing in organisations using traditional projects is their lack of responsive variation (change) management, lack of stakeholder engagement and ineffective communications. Fixing these may result in becoming more 'agile' anyway. 

Events and Networking

CEO Voice – Innovation in WA – Are we there yet?

Taking place in March, the first CEO Voice Series luncheon for 2019 focused on the idea of innovation in WA and asked the question *are we there yet?* Key figures from a variety of organisations attended and there were some interesting insights into the state of innovation in WA at the moment.

From left: Erica Haddon FAIM, Jemma Greene FAIM; Greg Lilleyman, John Barrington FAIM, Janet Barnes FAIM.



Clockwise from top: Erica Mathiesen AIMM, Katie Mathiesen AIMM, Sarah Adams AIMM, Karen Livey AFAIM, April Ashley AFAIM, Richard Vaughan AFAIM, Neil Hunt, Travis Earl, Andrea Candy; Bruce Gaw, Callum Cowell FAIM.



Professional Development Sundowner – Vital Leadership Jeremy Watkins

This event looked at the challenges and benefits of maintaining sustainable performance at work in an energetic and activity-filled evening with Jeremy Watkins.



Inspirational Leader Series– Royal Flying Doctor Service WA CEO Rebecca Tomkinson FAIM

On a pleasant March morning, Royal Flying Doctor Service WA CEO Rebecca Tomkinson FAIM shared her journey to finding her own voice and independence with AIM WA members at an Inspirational Leader Series event.

Clockwise from top:
Mel Gordon AFAIM,
Angela Newland;
Margaret Waller FAIM,
Tanya Kay AFAIM,
Peter Kay;
Andrea Walters FAIM,
Rebecca Tomkinson FAIM;
Bill Delaney FAIM,
Lisa McCarthy FAIM.



Tom Peters – Your search for excellence is over

In today's rapidly changing business environment, the need to put people first is paramount.

Dedicated to excellence in management and leadership, AIM WA invited author Tom Peters to speak at the recent signature leadership seminar, which took place in March at the Hyatt Regency, Perth.

Best known for his book *In Search of Excellence*, Tom Peters discussed the simple and actionable guidelines for success any business leader can immediately implement.



Clockwise from top: Tom Peters signing copies of his book at the event; Keely Law AFAIM, Tina Kircher; Shaun Stevenson, Shayne Silcox FAIM; Emily Birch AFAIM, Ian Andrews.



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Helping everyone kick goals

Football West CEO James Curtis AFAIM speaks of the power of sport to unite a community.

Professional Member Profile by Penelope Thomas



bio

James Curtis AFAIM

Role CEO of Football West.

Studied The University of Western Australia; Curtin University.

Worked Executive director for Community Development with the WA State Government; senior management consultant; member of UWA's Sports Advisory Board.

Member Since 2017.

With a strong track record for designing and developing strategy, Football West CEO James Curtis AFAIM gets a kick out of bringing people together regardless of age, gender or ethnicity.

Prior to taking on the role at Football West, the governing body for soccer in Western Australia, Mr Curtis worked at the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in various roles and was the Executive Director of Community Development.

Speaking to *Leader*, Mr Curtis said his career had not taken a conventional track.

"I started off working in financial trading straight out of university, which provided me with great experience across Perth's and Sydney's trading platforms," he said.

His keen interest in soccer eventually led him to becoming the Director of Grasshopper Soccer North West Coast, where he provided strategic direction for the growth of operations at the organisation.

"I did that because I enjoyed coaching and teaching kids by engaging them with sport," Mr Curtis said.

As his career developed, Mr Curtis journeyed away from football and became a senior management consultant for state and Commonwealth government agencies.

Mr Curtis noted that whilst his career had varied over the years, his work generally centred around strategy and performance.

When asked for his philosophy on leadership, Mr Curtis said he looked at it in its simplest terms.

"A leader who is engaged with themselves and honest with their performance and approach is important," he said. "Humility is important.

"I prefer to take a strengths-based attitude to leadership rather than a cookie-cutter approach. Some of the key aspects of the role are to redefine the strategy of the organisation.

"From focusing on increasing revenue and partnerships to improving the women's league and facilities, the role is very much about strategy and reform."

Unlike other sport associations, Football West runs and delivers all soccer competitions across the state and represents all levels of development and coaching in metropolitan and regional areas.

With more than 230,000 players under the Football West banner, Mr Curtis said the organisation was committed to improving all levels of soccer, from community leagues to high-performance teams.

"Due to the cultural diversity of the game, Football West has a very complex stakeholder group," he said. The CEO admitted one of his biggest challenges was trying to please everyone.

"You don't need to sell passion in this space," he said. "It is more about creating a narrative, which is about progressing the game forward and bringing revenue into the game to improve its accessibility."

Mr Curtis said any organisation trying to implement change would face challenges.

"To me, leadership is about balancing the positives and negatives by finding the right pace to effect long-term change," he said.

"Sometimes people aren't going to see the benefit of change immediately, or they might not be the current priority group. But just like a tax system in government, maybe later down the track they will receive the shared benefits."

Mr Curtis said he enjoyed seeing communities come together for sport.


"Sport has a unique ability to make people feel part of something," he said. "It creates an even playing field, regardless of what you might do for a living – it is neutral and fair."

A few years ago, Football West began a futsal program – a variation of soccer usually played indoors on a hard court – with Banksia Detention Centre. The aim was to provide a positive social experience while educating players about the game.

"It's great to see kids continue to grow and play football," Mr Curtis said. "However, it is even better to see how a whole community can come together with the sport."

In 2010 Mr Curtis won the Australasian Evaluation Society Award of Excellence for a review into the youth justice system in WA.

The study involved reading a number of case files that included stories about some individuals who had had difficult lives.

"To make the emotional connection and get recognition for the review was a big achievement for me," he said. 



The 2018/19 Pinnacle Award winners.

Power to the people

Each year the Pinnacle Awards unveil the considerable depth of leadership excellence present in Western Australia.

by Jack McGinn

"I don't think leaders these days have defining moments," former Water Corporation Chief Executive Sue Murphy FAIM told the audience on her joint-acceptance of the WA Business Leader of the Year award at the 2018/19 AIM WA Pinnacle Awards in March.

"I think the days of waiting for the hero on the white horse to save us all are long gone," she said. "Leadership these days is about making sure everyone who works for you has got the chance to be the best they can be.

"I've been blessed to work with amazing people who are passionate about what they do. This is just me basking in their reflective glory."

Alongside Ms Murphy on stage at The Westin Perth Hotel was Mineral Resources boss Chris Ellison. The pair had just become the first in the history of the Pinnacles to share the esteemed award, and while their respective careers have been forged in very different fields of work there was a commonality in the way each spoke on leadership.

Both came back to people – through life and work; surrounding yourself with the very best you could find.

"If you pick the people you mix with you become the company you keep," Mr Ellison said when asked by MC Monika Kos what his key lesson would be for the next generation of leaders.

"Surround yourself with the best people you can afford to and the best company you can in life."

Given this rhetoric, it was fitting the two judged the very best by their peers stood side-by-side at the Pinnacle Awards. Both leaders had demonstrated their nous in their respective fields over many years – Ms Murphy in the world of water through an outstanding decade fronting the Water Corporation, and Mr Ellison since leaving school at age 15 to join the field of mining and resources.

On Ms Murphy's watch, the Water Corporation closed the water cycle – an achievement she considers her finest.

"We have large scale indirect potable recycling, so the water goes down your tap, plug hole, shower or toilet and is recycled to very pure levels, injected into aquifers below our feet," she said.

"It's then sucked out again, treated again, and you're drinking it. Eighty per cent of Perth think that's a good idea, and 80 per cent of Perth don't agree on anything."

The appointment of leak detecting springer spaniel Kep was also highlighted.

"The dog is unashamedly my favourite employee," Ms Murphy said.

Mr Ellison said while the Pinnacle Awards were among his proudest achievements in leadership, a number of pivotal moments stood out from the years gone by.



(L-R) Sue Murphy FAIM,
Professor Gary Martin FAIM
and Chris Ellison.

He recalled sitting in front of a bank manager in 1982 trying to justify the \$190,000 overdraft he'd racked up with nine staff on his books, no money coming in and, in his own words, 'no idea'.

"He looked at me and said 'how do you propose you're going to repay this?'," Mr Ellison said.

"I said 'out of profits'."

Just 90 days later, Mr Ellison was running the supply base for Woodside, had a payroll of 140 and was earning half a million dollars a month.


"I still had no idea, but a lot of cash coming in," he said.

While Ms Murphy and Mr Ellison topped the 2018/19 Business Person of the Year class, the Pinnacle Awards celebrate much more than just individual leaders, with eight further categories announced on the night in recognition of outstanding achievement.

"The diverse nature of the Pinnacle Awards allows a broad range of leadership achievements to be recognised, and each year at AIM WA we are reassured by the wealth of leadership talent that exists in the state," AIM WA President Alison Gaines FAIM said.

"I think it's fair to say the call for leadership across all facets of our community has become louder and louder, which is why it is so satisfying to all of us at the Institute to be able to present and honour such wonderful examples of leadership."

In a bid to build and sustain leadership success, winners of each Pinnacle Awards category received a \$20,000 leadership and management training prize to donate to a charity of their choice.

The Pinnacle Awards audience of more than 450 people included State Premier Mark McGowan MLA, who addressed the event, and Federal Finance Minister Mathias Cormann. 

The winners of each category were as follows:

Winner: Rio Tinto

HAWAIIAN Corporate Social Responsibility Excellence Award

Recognised for its work in improving literacy outcomes for Western Australian families, Rio Tinto has funded the Better Beginnings literacy program for 15 years in partnership with the State Library of Western Australia. The program has provided more than 700,000 reading packs for children from birth to kindergarten throughout the state.

Winner: WA Country Health Service (WACHS)

SRG GROUP Customer Service Excellence Award

Delivering health services to more than half a million people at more than 100 sites spanning 2.5 million kilometres, WACHS has some challenges. Its *Consumer Engagement in the 21st Century* initiative identified gaps in the consumer feedback process. WACHS implemented a feedback program with strong uptake and engagement from its diverse client base.

Winner: Appbot

KOTT GUNNING LAWYERS Emerging Business Excellence Award

Started in 2011, Appbot allows developers and marketers to see how their app is performing in all app stores and has become the premier provider of app review analysis and reporting in the world. More than 35 per cent of the world's top-charting apps use Appbot.

Winner: Rottneest Island Authority

RAC Green Business Excellence Award

Rottneest Island Authority's commitment to environmental initiatives has led to it becoming one of just 10 Earth Check-certified sustainable destinations in the world. Moving away from diesel-powered generators, the self-powered island is a global leader and innovator in renewable energy.

Winner: VisAbility

PEOPLE2PEOPLE Human Resource Management Excellence Award

The National Disability Insurance Scheme and aged care reforms means now is a time of great change in the disability sector. VisAbility has worked to position itself as an employer of choice. The organisation has done away with annual performance reviews in favour of a focus on workforce development and transparency. A reward scheme for employees involving professional development has received great feedback from team satisfaction surveys.

Winner: P&N Bank

CURTIN UNIVERSITY Innovation Excellence Award

At a time when banks are being heavily scrutinised, P&N Bank has managed to stand out from its larger competitors through its approach to innovation. Its instant digital card technology was first to market in Australia and achieved huge uptake.

Winner: Cockburn Aquatic & Recreation Centre (ARC)


PRINTSYNC Marketing Excellence Award

The City of Cockburn rose to considerable challenges in the lead up to opening its ARC facility in Perth's southern corridor in May 2017. Lacking brand awareness in a market where 12 similar providers operated within a 5km radius, Cockburn ARC created a unique, standalone brand. The facility opened with 3500 members and doubled that number the next year.

Winner: Black Swan State Theatre Company

PERDAMAN Workplace Diversity Excellence Award

Black Swan State Theatre Company achieved gender parity across its 2018 season for directors, writers and actors, with four of its eight productions written by women.

Pinnacle Award category winners will be featured in greater detail in coming editions of *Leader* magazine. 

Championing opportunity

Palmerston Association
Aboriginal Community
Worker Wayne Ryder and
Professor Gary Martin FAIM.

In helping not-for-profits to access its courses, AIM WA hopes to lend a helping hand to those in charge of our community's integral resources.

by Sandra Argese

AIM WA's Annual Scholarship Program has nurtured the development of professionals across the community for a quarter of a century.

Driven by the pursuit of management, leadership and organisational excellence, the program recognises and supports the work of the not-for-profit (NFP) sector.

The Institute awarded 32 scholarships to a wide range of not-for-profit organisations and three individuals earlier this year.

Rise Network Youth Activities Coordinator Skye Groenveld won the Ben Scott Young Professional Award.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award winners were Melanie Howard (Aurora Education Foundation Project Officer) and Wayne Ryder (Palmerston Association Aboriginal Community Worker).

Organisations to win scholarships included Foodbank of Western Australia, Access Housing, Perth Netball Association, Perth Children's Hospital Foundation, Volunteering WA, Inclusion WA and Edge Employment Solutions.

"The Institute's vision is to be an international leader shaping management, leadership and organisational excellence in Australia and our region," AIM WA Chief Executive Officer Gary Martin FAIM said.

"By providing these scholarships to local NFPs we hope they will be assisted in improving their performance in an area that might not otherwise be accessible."

Leading professionals down the path of growth and development, the scholarships provide organisations and individuals with the funds to attend a selection of open programs by AIM WA.

Influencing growth

Perth Children's Hospital Foundation Chief Executive Officer Carrick Robinson said the program made first-class training available to those who might not have been able to benefit otherwise.

"Our team looks forward to selecting programs which will benefit them personally as well as the foundation so we can help transform the health care of Western Australia's sick children and young people," he said.

A recipient of the AIM WA Scholarship for the past decade, The Smith Family has used the funds to underwrite the training of its work, health and safety representatives, support staff and new managers in leadership, communications and budgeting.

AIM WA's Scholarship Program underlines the organisation's vision to shape management, leadership and organisational excellence in Australia.



"Coming into leadership a number of years ago I was fortunate enough to be the recipient of a scholarship which enabled me to do the New Manager course," The Smith Family Regional Programs Manager WA Anita Bowyer said. "The skills I learned have proven invaluable."

Foodbank WA Human Resources Manager David Warren attended two courses relating to human resources and industrial law and said both were relevant and insightful.

"Five years later I still refer to the subject matter of both courses during my day-to-day work," he said. "The time I spent at AIM WA was a great top-up for my existing qualifications."

Foodbank WA Pilbara Team Lead Leisha Aberle, who has participated in a number of AIM WA courses, said the facilitators were engaging and professional and understood the challenges of the modern working world.

"The practical skills I've gained from the AIM WA courses have been endlessly helpful in my role at Foodbank WA, particularly in leading my team and delivering a complex and multifaceted project in remote WA," she said.

"I'm currently working towards completion of the Diploma of Project Management and I'm already excited and inspired by the opportunities to embed my learnings into the work we do here at Foodbank WA."

By attending the Time Management: Organising Yourself course at AIM WA in November 2018, Foodbank WA Public Health Nutritionist Michelle McIntosh was able to breathe new life into her time management skills.

"My primary takeaway was to plan and schedule when I am going to start tasks rather than just working back from the timeline, and to add any new tasks to my to-do list as soon as I get them," she said. ●



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Crisis management in the age of social media

The right game plan can make all the difference between recovery and ruin.

by Jack McGinn

With social media and a 24-hour news cycle ever-present in the modern business climate, managing public image is a leadership challenge with broader implications than ever.

One only needs to look at the recent issues which have plagued a number of prominent organisations – from Cricket Australia to Australia's big banks to Facebook – to get a feel for the scale with which public outrage can hit when things go wrong.

These are big examples, but it's not just big business that is open to the ire of critics in a fast-paced information landscape. Where smaller businesses or those operating away from the public eye may once have avoided the wrath of news media, even they are now susceptible to scrutiny by virtue of social media, according to Clarity Communications Managing Director Anthony Hasluck.

Clarity is a Perth-based brand communications, public relations and issues management firm with experience in advising business big and small.

"Twenty years ago, someone with a strong opinion might be sitting in their living room and voice their opinion to their family by yelling at the TV," Mr Hasluck said. "Now they can easily go online and give their opinion, and even if they are factually incorrect in what they're saying, it can still be picked up, shared and promoted by a lot of people.

"Peoples' views now spread in a way that they never did before."

Mr Hasluck said the nature of the information environment in 2019 had changed the way business leaders needed to think about issues and image management, with even very small companies needing to give thought to a course of action should they come under fire.

"Previously, very large companies with very large resources or industrial operations had crisis plans in place," he said. "But now, even small manufacturing companies need some form of crisis plan. It may be a smaller plan but it still needs to be there.

"For example, I worked on a food product recall recently for a small food manufacturer – someone had alleged there was a problem with one of the products on social media and the information spread across the internet like wildfire. It's not a big company, but they needed a plan in place."

Planning makes perfect

The first step in any response is to establish whether the problem you're responding to is an issue or a crisis, according to Mr Hasluck.

"Determining whether you're dealing with an issue or a crisis essentially determines the scale of your response, particularly the resources you allocate," he said.

"There are quite a lot of organisations which aren't used to being in the public eye and therefore, when a media issue comes up, they tend to overreact and think they're dealing with a crisis when they're not."

By Mr Hasluck's definition, an issue allows time to gather information on a problem, which can then be solved in a planned and measured way via normal consultation and decision-making processes.

A crisis is a situation where the luxury of time is not afforded.

"In a crisis you should be dropping all peripheral activities, and leaders should be getting on the front foot," Mr Hasluck said.

"They need to get all the advice and resources they need in place to handle the crisis. If you understand it's an issue then you've got time to deal with it in a planned and measured way, even if it's in the media. A crisis is something you approach with a very different mindset."

Left unchecked or poorly managed, an issue or the build-up of multiple issues can soon become a crisis.

Anthony Hasluck.



Reputation restoration

The breaking of a crisis is often just the beginning, with business reputation dependent on how a response is communicated to stakeholders.

Mr Hasluck said there were some key areas to consider in terms of messaging, firstly when a crisis breaks and then in leading reputational recovery – speed, clarity and authenticity of communication. "If as the result of a crisis you want to be seen in an ongoing way as open, honest and transparent about what happened and your solution, you essentially need to live that," he said.

"You have to demonstrate your intentions through your actions – you have to communicate regularly, clearly and effectively about what you're doing to set things right and make improvements for the future.

"You can't say 'we're going to be a better organisation, we're going to be more open and honest and transparent in the future' and then not do that as a CEO or senior management. If you don't live your values you'll be open to charges of hypocrisy and your reputation will be further diminished."

Leadership in time of crisis

Do:

- Act fast.
- Confirm you are dealing with a crisis and not an issue.
- Be proactive and get on the front foot.
- Implement crisis plans.
- Get required additional resources.

Don't:

- Assume the crisis will sort itself out.
- Focus only on operational issues – communication is critical.
- Wait until after the crisis is resolved to comment.
- Forget to communicate with staff and stakeholders. ●

At a glance

Australia's economy
in a snapshot



Seasonally adjusted unemployment
edged up to

5.2%

in **April** from an upwardly revised
5.1% per cent in the previous month,
slightly above market expectations.

Male unemployment **increased by
11,400** and female unemployment
rose by 9800.



Youth Unemployment rose to

11.8%

in **April** from **11.7%**
the month before.



Consumer confidence increased by

0.6%

month-over-month to **101.3** in May
from 100.7 in the previous month.



Western Australia's wage price
index increased by

2.3%

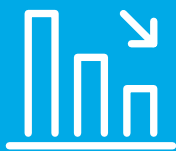
year-on-year in the three
months to **March 2019**, matching
market expectations.



The business confidence index in
Australia edged up to

0

in April **from a downwardly revised -1** in
March, missing **market consensus of 1**
and staying **below its average of 6**
for the seventh straight month.



Jobs fell

0.1%

month-on-month in **April**,
after a **1.7** percent decline
in the previous month.



The Reserve Bank of Australia kept
the cash rate at a record low of

1.5%

in April.

The cash rate **has not moved since
August 2016**.



Australian new home sales dropped

0.1%

month-over-month in March,
following a **1% gain** in the
previous month.

Western Australia saw a **2.3% gain**.

*Information correct at time of going to print

Royal Flying Doctor Service (WA) CEO Rebecca Tomkinson FAIM,
Silver Chain CEO Dale Fisher and
St John Ambulance WA CEO Michelle Fyfe FAIM.



Finding yourself along the way

The importance of knowing what you want and working out how to get it.

Inspirational Leadership story

by Rhys Prka, photography *The West Australian*

For Ms Tomkinson, the revelation that she was the only one concerned with her advancement was pivotal.

“When I graduated Northam Senior High School I had a moment when one of my classmates put their arm around my shoulder and I caught our reflection in the classroom window and noticed I was head and shoulders smaller than everybody else.”

This is how Royal Flying Doctor Service (WA) CEO Rebecca Tomkinson FAIM described an early revelation about herself and her position in society.

“I was absolutely astonished that I truly was little,” she continued.

“It never occurred to me this was how the world saw me, and it also never occurred to me I could only do certain things because I was a girl.

“It was a genuine sense of naivety that I had.”

Not one to let her size (or lack of it) deter her, Ms Tomkinson participated in a local Police and Community Youth Centres (PCYC) gymnastics competition as a child – and won a silver medal.

This experience cemented for Ms Tomkinson the importance of institutions such as PCYC to local communities, something that would serve her well in her future career.

The win also underlined how determined she was even at a young age.

“It didn’t occur to me back then just how much strength there was in that small person and how important the ability to develop that capacity was,” Ms Tomkinson said.

Talking of her working life to date, Ms Tomkinson recalled some advice she received from her father.

“My dad said, ‘you are going to work for a really long time, you should find something you like doing,’” she said. “I think that is the most eloquent piece of advice I have ever been given.”

Of course, doing what you love is but one part of the puzzle. Ms Tomkinson highlighted an early experience that taught her an invaluable lesson about leadership and upward mobility.

“Back in the day I was working in a kitchen, so I started very humbly,” she said. “I worked really hard and on one occasion there was a vacancy for the next level up. I thought it would be me because I was working so hard.

"To my surprise I didn't secure the job. I was utterly devastated; I couldn't understand why on earth I had been overlooked.

"When I got the courage to go up to the manager at the time, I said 'why was it not me?'.
 "She said to me, 'I didn't know you were interested, you didn't ask'.

"As an 18-year-old I realised I needed to be able to understand what I wanted and how I would go about achieving it.

"It was quite shocking to me that the entire world wasn't thinking about how I could advance myself; they were not sitting around thinking about what was going to happen next for Ms Tomkinson. And if Rebecca didn't know what was going to happen next, how could anyone else?"

Learning to ask for what she wants has now become part of the fabric of her role at RFDS – which is most importantly to raise the funds to keep the essential service going.

Appointed in January 2018, she is accountable for the sustainability and success of the iconic WA service that provides life-saving aero medical care to the people of Western Australia.

"I am so privileged to lead an organisation that I actually believe in to the very bottom of my heart," she said. "It means something to me on a daily basis."

In an interview with *The West Australian*, Ms Tomkinson said: "My job is to take on our innovation baton into the next era. For me this is about disrupting assumptions about charity and not-for-profit services like the RFDS."

Another defining moment in Ms Tomkinson's early career came during her time working in local government, where she was placed in charge of a toy library project.

"I went about meeting the community at the toy library and they said, 'we are really upset because everyone uses this community space; we work really hard to keep the toys nice and clean, then they just come in and mess them around and it isn't okay for the kids,'" she said.

"This had been a longstanding argument over more than a couple of years and I thought, 'we are going to resolve this, we are going to find a solution'.

"The solution to that was very simple – installing some cupboards with locks."

This early experience demonstrating her leadership style of getting things done, would go on to impact Ms Tomkinson's career in a way she could not have predicted.

"Several years later I was applying for a leadership role within the council; it was my next big step," she said.

As Ms Tomkinson was an internal candidate, the council hired an independent panel from outside the organisation which happened to include the Chair of the toy library.

"I had no idea I would be sitting in front of this individual two years later looking for that next opportunity," she said.

Ms Tomkinson said she learned from this how important one's conduct and engagement with others was "because frankly you just never know who might play a role in your future development".

"There is serendipity in the authenticity that I brought to the relationship with the toy library and a beautiful reciprocity that comes from understanding you are just not sure what is going to happen next," she said.

Since those formative leadership lessons, Ms Tomkinson has continued to hone her leadership skills during a period of unprecedented change, delivering transformative organisational initiatives across private, public and non-for-profit sectors.

Rebecca Tomkinson FAIM with an RFDS plane at Jandakot Airport.



bio

Rebecca Tomkinson FAIM

Role CEO at Royal Flying Doctor Service (WA); Chair of Wheatbelt Development Commission; Board Member at Perth Zoo.

Studied Edith Cowan University; Murdoch University; The University of Western Australia; Leadership Western Australia; Australian Institute of Company Directors; Harvard Business School Executive Education.

Worked Various managerial positions for UnitingCare Australia, Bankwest and Baptistcare.

Member since 2019.

Ms Tomkinson holds key strategic advisory roles across a number of sectors and is deeply committed to the development of regional Western Australia – where she was raised and educated.

Ms Tomkinson said her husband had also played a significant part in her career, stepping back from the formal work environment so she could pursue the role.

"It has been just as hard for him to take an unorthodox path," she said.

"I was nine months pregnant in my toy library management interview. I wouldn't be sitting here today if it wasn't for who my husband is.

"He made the generous decision to be with the children through this period because I was all in. I'm going to be honest about that because I couldn't give that level of commitment without his decision to support me.

"Socially, that is still challenging."


According to Ms Tomkinson, being a leader is about being accessible. "I hope my team would describe me as having their back and that we are truly collaborating," she said.

"I want everyone in my leadership team to be able to do my job if I leave."

She summed up her career so far as an exploration and discovery of self. "I spent a lot of time really understanding who I was," she said.

"What was it that I genuinely wanted to do – not what people told me I should do, not what I thought I was good at, but actually what did I really bring to the world?"

"I spent a lot of time moving through programs at AIM WA and went through my own personal journey to get a sense of who I was. For a long time I looked for others to lead me.

"What I discovered was that I had to forge my own path. There have been many extraordinary people who have assisted me to find that, but first you must know who you are on that journey." 

A nudge in the right direction

What do you do when you have implemented a policy for your staff's benefit but they are reluctant to adopt it?

by Jack McGinn

When UK-based photography company Triggertrap introduced unlimited paid holiday leave for its staff in 2014, something remarkable happened.

Despite natural concerns from management that such a system would result in people taking huge periods of leave, the opposite proved true – staff took less than their legally entitled leave allocation and the move, for all intents and purposes, backfired.

By December that year, Triggertrap Founder Haje Jan Kamps reported on his blog of a team run ragged – exhausted despite having access to a policy which allowed staff all the time they needed to avoid such burnout.

The Triggertrap experience is one Behavioural Economics Consultant Bri Williams leans on when explaining one of the more perplexing challenges facing leaders – that human behaviours aren't always rational.

"Triggertrap is an illustration of the fact people don't always do what you expect them to," she told *Leader*.

"You would expect everyone to go on leave, but no-one went on leave – they weren't taking leave because they felt they were letting the team down."

To address the problem, Triggertrap introduced a number of strategies to push staff to adopt the practice.

They started publically tracking holidays to show people weren't abusing the system, encouraged dialogue between staff to make sure people were taking enough leave and doing so at times convenient with their colleagues and brought in cash bonuses for those who took their leave.

The result was improved leave uptake.

The Triggertrap example demonstrates how small changes – nudging people in a direction without being forceful – can have a big impact on the thoughts or actions of staff in a workplace setting.

Getting people to do what we would like them to is an essential but often misunderstood part of business.

Nudging is a behavioural economics technique pioneered by US Economist Richard Thaler, who went on to receive a Nobel Prize in economics for his work which looked at how the technique could be used to encourage better choices from a largely irrational public.

Despite its best intentions, Ms Williams said Triggertrap ran into difficulty in leave uptake because it hadn't considered people were more complex than face value would suggest.

She said such issues were common and leaders needed to think differently about how they enacted workplace change.

"Anyone in business should think about their job as being a behaviour change specialist," she said.

"You might not go to work thinking of yourself like that, you might be a finance manager or an HR manager or whatever you happen to be, but ultimately everything we do in business relies on us being able to get other people to do what we would like them to do."

"We receive very little training in school and life around how people actually make decisions. We're in a workplace and we're very competent at our jobs, but we still don't get a recipe book for how to get people to do what we would like them to."

"That's the role of behavioural economics – it can be a framework to make leaders more effective."

Behavioural Economics Consultant
Bri Williams.



Removing resistance

When explaining how behavioural economics can be used to influence change, Ms Williams recommends a simple framework – moving staff from their current behaviour at point A to the desired behaviour at point B.

"You start by asking 'what am I trying to get people to do,'" she said. "How you get people from point A to point B is your second question."

"You can then anticipate three points of resistance – apathy, paralysis and anxiety."

Under Ms Williams' framework, apathy refers to staff who simply can't be bothered, while paralysis reflects those who might get confused by what you're asking and anxiety takes hold when nerves get in the way of a commitment to change.

"It's really about bringing things back to those basics – working out if apathy, paralysis or anxiety are going to prevent people from getting to point B from point A," she said.

"Going through that as a framework flushes out the reasons people may be resisting change at a subconscious level."

Once the reasons for resistance are established, behavioural techniques like nudging can be used to gently guide staff in the right direction.

It's simple in theory, but Ms Williams said behavioural economics principles were far from commonplace in the Australian workforce.

"Businesses at the moment are relying on what they're hearing their staff saying, but the problem with those interactions is you're getting responses that might not equal real behaviour," she said. ●

Putting people first

Emotional intelligence and the soft skills it encompasses have proved invaluable to some of the world's biggest companies because at their core they support the most valuable resource – people.

by Penelope Thomas

A Navy serviceman turned one of the world's bestselling business authors, Tom Peters is a witty man with a simple message; If you take care of your people they will take care of you.

Best known for his book *In Search of Excellence*, which he co-authored with Robert H. Waterman Jr, the 76-year-old recently visited Perth to present The Excellence Dividend at AIM WA's signature leadership seminar.

As one of the world's most influential and respected business thinkers over the past 40 years, Mr Peters demonstrated his relentless pursuit of excellence by speaking to event attendees in a profoundly honest way that was straightforward and engaging.

Sharing his simple, actionable guidelines for success, the once-in-a-generation global thinker said age had brought with it perspective.

"There is some beauty about being 76, I don't give two hoots about repeat business," he said. "Because, the only thing you will be remembered by is the people you help."

Quite simply, Mr Peters' mantra is all about putting people first.

Highlighting the importance of good business management, Mr Peters echoed the thoughts of Virgin Group Founder Sir Richard Branson, known for his position that business needs to give people enriching, rewarding lives or it is simply not worth doing.

"In today's business environment, this message is more important than ever," he said.

Mr Peters said good leaders developed their people.

"When most people talk about leadership, they focus on authenticity and vision," he said.

"But what they need to start talking about is what leaders do on a day-to-day basis: hire people, listen, evaluate and promote."

Spanning four decades, Mr Peters said the majority of his work could be summarised in just six words, "hard is soft. Soft is hard".

"Soft skills are actually hard, because it's all about relationships," he said.

Mr Peters identified Google as a leading organisation that understood the value of soft skills. In 2008, the tech giant launched an internal research project dubbed Project Oxygen.

"Project Oxygen shocked everyone by concluding that among the eight most important qualities of Google's top employees, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) expertise came in dead last," he said. "The seven top characteristics of success at Google are all soft skills."

Some of the most important skills for ensuring business success are unquantifiable.



Tom Peters

Roles Started out as a civil engineer; Partner at McKinsey & Company; Co-Author of *In Search of Excellence*.

Studied Cornell University; Stanford Business School; holds honorary doctorates from institutions ranging from the University of San Francisco to the State University of Management in Moscow.

Worked United States Navy (1966-1970); White House/OMB drug-abuse advisor (1973-1974); Over the last 38 years he has given 2500 presentations in 50 American states and 67 countries to over 5 million people. His 17 books have sold more than 10 million copies.



Some of the soft skills Mr Peters was referring to included being a good coach, communicating and listening well, possessing insights into others – including their values and points of view, having empathy toward and being supportive of one's colleagues, being a good critical thinker and problem solver and being able to make connections across complex ideas.

"Those traits sound more like what one gets as an English or theatre major than as a programmer," he said.


In 2017 Google conducted a second project called Project Aristotle, which further supported the importance of soft skills. The data analysis revealed the company's most important and productive ideas came from 'B-teams' comprised of employees from successful executives through to middle managers with few professional accomplishments.

"Project Aristotle shows the best teams at Google exhibit a range of soft skills," Mr Peters said. "Equality, generosity, curiosity toward the ideas of your teammates, empathy and emotional intelligence – and topping the list, emotional safety; no bullying."

Mr Peters noted many companies invested too little time and money in their soft-edge excellence. The three main reasons for this mistake included: the hard-edge is easier to quantify, successful hard-edge investment provides a faster return and top chief operators and board directors speak the language of finance.

In addition, Mr Peters said people could look at leadership and management in two ways.

"You can look at it as a pain in the ass or the pinnacle of human achievement," he said.

"Mid-to-long-term success is no more and no less than a function of one's dedication to and effectiveness at helping team members grow as individuals and as contributing members to an energetic, self-renewing organisation dedicated to the pursuit of excellence." 



Do people rise to their incompetency?

Identifying an organisation's top performers is one thing; figuring out the appropriate career advancement is another.

by Rhys Prka

It's a gripe many of us have heard colleagues express from time to time – that those in management positions above them have no idea what they are doing. Not all managers are the best at their job, but why is this?

Dr Laurence J Peter, in his 1969 satirical piece *The Peter Principle*, claimed he had found the root cause of all managerial incompetency. "In a hierarchy, every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence," he wrote.

Essentially, the Peter Principle is the idea that given enough time everyone in an organisation will rise through the ranks until they reach their level of incompetency. But while it has persevered in popular culture, is there any truth to it? Or is it just a joke?

One recent study seems to have lent the notion some credence.

Three professors – Alan Benson of the University of Minnesota, Danielle Li of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Kelly Shue of Yale University – recently released the results of a study in a paper titled *Promotions and the Peter Principle*.

In the paper they examined the performance of salespeople and their managers across 214 firms from 2005 to 2011, totalling more than 53,000 employees, of which 1531 were promoted to become sales managers.

bio

Andrew R. Timming

Roles Associate Professor of Human Resource Management and Director of Business and Community Engagement at The University of Western Australia Business School.

Studied University of Cambridge.

Worked University of St Andrews and Manchester Business School.

"Consistent with the Peter Principle, we find promotion decisions place more weight on current performance than would be justified if firms only tried to promote the best potential managers," the report stated.

"The most productive worker is not always the best candidate for manager, and yet firms are significantly more likely to promote top frontline sales workers into managerial positions."

The University of Western Australia Human Resource Management Associate Professor Andrew Timming said while there was some truth to the Peter Principle, it had problems.

"On the one hand I do see some validity in the principle, but on the other hand I think it gets a lot of things wrong," he said.

"Primarily that it assumes the competency of an employee is a fixed asset, and that is not true. People aren't very good at some types of skills, but that doesn't mean they can't develop those skills.

"Rather than the principle being the cause of the problem I see the real cause is companies frankly are not very good at identifying their high performers – it all comes down to whether or not you have an effective performance appraisal system in place.

"Unfortunately performance appraisals are one of those managerial functions that are not done well in many organisations.

"It is a difficult thing to do – how do you define performance? How do you operationalise it in a way that is perceived as fair?"

Professor Timming said dual-stream career ladders were a common way to improve promotion outcomes, separating potential career progression into technical and leadership pathways.

However Professor Timming said this idea did have caveats.

"Often times people go for promotion not for financial reasons, but for prestige," he said.

"Workers really are looking for an upgrade in their social position within the hierarchy. They can continue in their position as a technical expert and maybe you provide performance-related pay to keep them happy, but hoping people stay there by compensating them won't take away the desire people have within themselves to move up the ladder." ●

Clockwise from top: Audio Technica headphones, varidesk, Ancient Redgum pen.
Cue Cards, Contacts By Company, ScanBizCards, My Business, Unstoppable With Kerwin Rae, Entrepreneurs On Fire.



Spot of shopping

Gadgets and apps for today's professional

Gadgets

Audio Technica ATH-ANC500BT Over-Ear Wireless Noise Cancelling Headphones (Black)

RRP: \$169

jbhifi.com.au

Should you need to tune out from a noisy office environment for a bit, these headphones provide some seclusion. Controls have been built into the left earcup to allow for convenient control of volume. On a full charge, these headphones provide up to 20 hours of continuous Bluetooth playback and active noise control. This streamlined and contemporary product is foldable for easy storage and ease of travel.

Pro Plus 36

RRP: \$550

varidesk.com

If you get restless or just want to stand for a bit, this product turns any desk into a standing desk. Within about three seconds, you can convert your sitting desk into a standing one. It takes the same amount of time to switch it back. The varidesk has two tiers – an upper display surface for the computer monitor and the lower level for the mouse and keyboard. This product is available in black, white, butcher block and darkwood.

Ancient Redgum Man Size Pen

RRP: \$125

australianwoodwork.com.au

The days of the disposable plastic biro pen are over. Crafted from fossilised redgums which are over 5000 years old, this pen is engineered to give a light and balanced writing experience.

Apps

Cue Cards – Price varies

If you are a speech master, about to present professionally for the first time or just want to make sure you are prepared for any mental blanks, this app has you covered. Once you have written your speech, you can print your speech cards from the Cue Cards desktop app, or you could simply read each cue card from your smartphone, navigating with the swipe of a finger.

Contacts By Company – Free. US\$4.99 (\$7.17) to upgrade features on mobile version.

This app is ideal for those who want to group their contacts according to the companies they work with. Individual contacts can be assigned to a company and both can be viewed together on the same screen. Should you need to send a blanket email or text to the whole company, this app makes it easy.

ScanBizCards - \$4.49

Scan the details from a business card onto your phone. This app allows you to export the cards into multiple CRM platforms, including Evernote and Salesforce. Newly acquired contacts can be transferred to your phone's address book and you can also create new contacts or merge scans with your existing records.

Podcasts


My Business: Australia's leading show for SMEs

Perfect for business owners, each episode features insights and inspiring stories from business leaders. This podcast series covers a wide range of topics such as digital marketing, corporate social responsibility, risk management for small businesses and business growth strategies.

UNSTOPPABLE with Kerwin Rae

For those looking to reach their potential and push through their limits, this could be an influential force. Specialists, gurus and strategic professionals are interviewed to provide insight into the ways you can get many areas in your life, including your business, up to the level you want them to be.

Entrepreneurs on Fire

This award-winning podcast provides insights from the best in the field and how you can achieve financial and lifestyle freedom. This podcast series is updated frequently. 

What's in a name?

Understanding your core skill set could be the key to breaking free from the constraints of your job title.

by Greta Andrews-Taylor, photography Greta Andrews-Taylor

Our careers can take us in a multitude of directions, often leading us into roles we did not intentionally pursue or imagine for ourselves.

While this unpredictability is an exciting and quite often positive facet of our working lives, finding the right role for you and one which matches your skill set is a pursuit over which you can exert some control, according to emotional intelligence expert Amy Jacobson AFAIM.

Referring to our true passions as our 'y', Ms Jacobson told attendees at AIM WA's Stop Chasing The Job Title Sundowner that unveiling and understanding their core skill sets and aligning these with their work was more productive than picking a job title and aiming for it.

"It's looking at it in reverse and going, 'what skills am I really good at, what skills do I really enjoy and what jobs align to those skills?'," she said.

While conceding an individual's core skills were largely a result of nature, Ms Jacobson said she believed these could be built on and this was where a person could find their y.

"What I think is built in is our core skills – we are really good at a group of skills," she said.

"But I truly believe you can build on those skills. Just because it's not in your DNA and it's not there when you start doesn't mean it cannot go in there; it doesn't mean you can't grow and develop and add onto your skill set.

"For me, it's a bit of a combination between the two and that's where I think the y is."

Ms Jacobson said self-awareness and motivation, two of the five key factors which make up emotional intelligence, were a good place to start to define your y.

Sundowner attendees were asked to consider these factors with the help of a skill portfolio which had them rate their preference from one to five in relation to a selection of common behavioural skills.



Amy Jacobson AFAIM

Roles Founder and Emotional Intelligence Specialist at Finding Your 'y'.

Studied Deakin University; The Life Coaching College.

Worked Executive Manager Corporate & Commercial Underwriting WA at Vero; various management roles at Asteron Life; President at Australasian Life Underwriting and Claims Association WA.

Member Since 2019.

"You should be able to rate core skills that make you happy, and if you don't have enough core skills that make you happy then we need to go back to your values and beliefs," Ms Jacobson said.

"Ultimately, you want 70 per cent of your skills to be rated as fours and fives.

"If you look at those skills and you go, 'you know what, I'm doing half of those in my current job, no wonder I'm not happy', you can start looking at it and figure out how to get more of these things into your day-to-day job."

Ms Jacobson said ideally skills that ranked as ones and twos should not make up more than 10 per cent of your job, while your core behavioural skills should define you in place of your job title.

"This is important because the job titles, industries and work structures we have today are probably not going to be around in the next 10 to 20 years," she said.



Ms Jacobson said being comfortable about the uncertainty of the future workplace meant understanding your core behavioural skills and being willing to retrain for a career outside your current one.

"You really need to understand what you are good at, and not as a job title – as something that will survive in the future," she said.

"It doesn't matter how much automation technology comes in, we will always need behavioural skills."

For the time being, Ms Jacobson said skill portfolios provided a great opportunity for leaders to understand their employees and move beyond providing them with the same job title, budgets, processes and targets by catering to individuality and diversity.

"When everyone comes into a company, they bring a particular skill set," she said.

"They bring stuff they are really good at and things they're not so good at, so once you understand people's skill portfolios you can start leveraging them for different projects."

In all, Ms Jacobson said there were myriad benefits to thinking and promoting yourself outside of your job title.

"There is so much more to you than a job title," she said. "Industries and technical knowledge shouldn't limit your choice of career. If you are adaptable and you are flexible, you should be able to survive in whatever world." ●

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**Simple minds:
Mr Michie said ridding
our minds of their
constant narrative
chatter opened up room
for ideas to grow.**



Training your mind and unlocking your potential

Regular mindfulness practice could be the key to combating stress and improving mental wellbeing.

by Michael Roberts

An ancient eastern practice is finding new purpose and popularity in a western society seemingly more stressed than ever before.

While it might once have been met with scepticism and raised eyebrows, the Buddhist tradition of practicing mindfulness is now being firmly embraced by Australians from all walks of life.

A widely touted tool for combating the stresses of daily life, and commonly used to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, increased acceptance of the practice has given rise to apps like Headspace and Calm which guide you through short mind-training sessions.

Both apps have been downloaded more than 10 million times.

These numbers come as no surprise when you factor in that 5.2 million Australians over the age of 18 are affected by stress, according to fresh data from the Medibank Better Health Index.

In light of these troubling statistics, businesses and schools are now introducing people to mindfulness techniques in a bid to improve their overall health and wellbeing.

But why does it seem to help and what is the theory behind this ancient tradition?

If you've never tried practicing mindfulness or it simply didn't work for you, then keep reading because *Leader* picked up some insights from mindfulness guru David Michie at AIM WA's recent Your Best Self Series Luncheon, A Taste of Mindfulness.

bio

David Michie

Roles Best-selling writer; meditation teacher, presenter and coach; Founder of Mindful Safari; Founder of Mosaic Reputation Management.

Studied Rhodes University, South Africa.

Worked Public Relations Consultant at Fishburn Hedges; Public Relations Manager at Newspaper Marketing Bureau.

The Perth-based expert said the most commonly accepted definition of mindfulness was paying attention to the present moment deliberately and non-judgementally.

"We are often not thinking about what we are doing, but something completely different," Mr Michie said.

"Anyone can be mindful for a short while, but if you try to be mindful of anything for any length of time you will find your mind has a way of sneaking off and doing its own thing.

"The ability to think about what is not happening is a cognitive achievement that comes at an emotional cost.

"We are very clever to think about something which isn't actually happening, but we are paying for it."

Mr Michie said mind training was very similar to physical training, where all you had to do was apply yourself each day to reap the rewards.

"A few weeks of meditation is sadly not going to make you feel like the Dalai Lama floating through life, it's going to take a bit more practice than that," he said.

"It's amazing how many times people come up to me and say 'I tried mindfulness once and it didn't work for me, my mind is too busy'.

"But it does work. It's like going to the gym, if you put in the hours you will benefit."

Leading the audience through a couple of short mindfulness exercises, which included a body scan and breathing session, Mr Michie said it was about giving yourself permission to focus on nothing.

"In the West we have a strange view of the mind and body being entirely separate," he said. "Mind has a direct impact on body. It's one holistic system, when you affect one you affect the other.

"Mindfulness can boost your immunity to getting sick, it helps a lot with sleep and can even slow the ageing process."

When people engage in regular meditation sessions they can unlock a treasure trove of brain potential, according to Mr Michie.

"When was the last time you had a great idea when you were angry?," he asked.

"It only happens when you're feeling a bit playful and relaxed.

"The only thing between us and enjoying the benefits of our mind is agitation, this constant narrative chatter.

"If we learn to be rid of them, we can start to appreciate how amazing our minds are." ●

Working to the beat

Is it possible to lift the spirit of an organisation and improve productivity through the power of music?

by Sandra Argesse



As described by American musician, multi-instrumentalist and record producer Stevie Wonder, “music is a world within itself, it is a language we all understand”.

If music can indeed bind us together in a way regular language cannot, does this warrant a role for it in a regular workplace context?

Performing in choirs, as a solo artist and in bands, Emeritus Professor Alan Harvey has always had a keen interest in the evolution and neuroscience of music. A senior Honorary Research Fellow at both The University of Western Australia's Faculty of Science and the Perron Institute for Neurological and Translational Science, his 2017 book *Music, Evolution and the Harmony of Souls* looked at the importance of music for human welfare.

Speaking to *Leader*, Professor Harvey said the level of productivity and satisfaction from music in any workplace would depend on its genre, volume, tempo and the listener's own background and music taste.

“Music can create great empathy and help link people together emotionally and physically,” he said.

“It is one of the drivers of communal activity and social interaction. If you have music, the vast majority empathise with it. You'll get a group dynamic going where you've lifted the cooperative spirit of the organisation.”

In a 2017 TEDxPerth talk titled *Your Brain on Music*, Professor Harvey described how music, as a social communication system, had helped humans to work together.

Functioning as a neurotransmitter in the brain, Professor Harvey discussed how dopamine was commonly activated at the emotional peak of a song. The chemical is associated with motivating and rewarding high attention-based behaviours.

But it's no one-size-fits-all equation.

“Some people find it really hard to work with background music,” Professor Harvey said.

bio

Alan Harvey

Roles Honorary Senior Research Fellow at The University of Western Australia (UWA) and Perron Institute.

Studied University of Cambridge, Australian National University.

Worked Flinders University, UWA since 1984.

“There is also the potential problem that different people like different types of music. Imagine being in an office where you have a bunch of 18-year-olds, a group in their mid-30s and a bunch of mid-50-year-olds. How are you going to find some background music that is neutral, but beneficial to everybody?”

Musical focus

From social media notifications, to emails and instant messenger applications, we live in a world plagued by distraction.

Research undertaken by Mindlab International revealed listening to music in the workplace radically improved speed and accuracy of tasks such as data entry, proof-reading and problem-solving skills.

When listening to a selection of different genres, classical music was found to be the most effective for improving the accuracy of tasks and resolving everyday mathematical problems.

Listening to pop music, 58 per cent of participants completed data entry tasks much faster.

When proof-reading, dance music had the most positive impact, with participants increasing their speed by 20 per cent compared to proof-reading tests undertaken with no music at all. Interestingly, dance music also had a positive effect on spell-checking, with a 75 per cent pass rate compared to 68 per cent when no music was played at all.


A 2016 Taiwanese study titled *Elucidating the relationship between work attention performance and emotions arising from listening to music* revealed that, “in addition to demonstrating that human emotions improve work attention performance, numerous studies have also established that music alters human emotions. Given the pervasiveness of background music in the workplace, exactly how work attention, emotions and music listening are related is of priority concern in human resource management”.

The study stated that “background music in the workplace should focus mainly on creating an environment in which listeners feel loved or taken care of and avoiding music that causes individuals to feel stressed or sad”.

Professor Harvey said an individual's music preference was usually autobiographically dependant.

“It has been reported that one should not select music that workers strongly like or dislike when making a selection of background music to avoid negatively affecting worker concentration,” he said.

“If I had any advice it would be for workplaces and boardrooms to start the day or a meeting with some communal music making; that might be the best thing of all.

“I am convinced the power of music can drive us towards a more cooperative society and a far more connected world.” 

Ready to rumble

The road to effective leadership is to embrace your vulnerabilities, according to Professor Brené Brown's new book *Dare to Lead*.

by Sandra Argese

"Leadership is not about titles or the corner office. It's about the willingness to step up, put yourself out there and lean into courage," writes University of Houston Research Professor Brené Brown in her latest book *Dare to Lead*.

Amassing two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy, Professor Brown has shared the power of human connectivity with millions across the globe. Her TED talk 'The Power of Vulnerability' has been ranked in the top five most popular TED talks of all time. *Dare to Lead*, the author's fifth #1 New York Times bestseller, is the result of a seven-year study on courage and leadership.

The book presents Professor Brown's studies and understanding of developing unarmoured brave leaders in cultures driven by courage. It encourages leaders to have difficult conversations, reveal their true selves and 'rumble' with their vulnerabilities.

According to Professor Brown, a rumble is "a discussion, conversation, or meeting defined by a commitment to lean into vulnerability, to stay curious and generous".

Corporate Writer, Blogger and Media Consultant Mike Peeters AFAIM found himself both moved and motivated.

"The book clearly explains that when we introduce joy, empathy and compassion into both our own and others' lives, we become much more courageous leaders," he said.

"It is something all leaders should try and incorporate, particularly in their working lives. The book explains how easy it can be to shy away from being open and authentic with your co-workers and team members, shunning 'wholeheartedness'. The problem is when you do this, you make yourself numb and build a barrier between yourself and others. Embracing vulnerability helps prevent this."

Dare to Lead articulates the importance of self-awareness and self-love. It suggests the greatest barrier to courageous leadership is not fear; rather it is how we respond to our fear.

Therapy Focus Regional Manager South Claire Nailer AIMM brings empathy to work each day. She said the chapter on empathy was a real eye-opener.

"It was interesting to see how we sometimes make mistakes that block empathy and connection with our staff, but we do it well with our clients," she said.

"I am also a relatively young leader/manager and I found the concept of being vulnerable about your position and not putting on armour really valuable. There is no shame in not knowing everything and, in fact, it can be counterproductive to your leadership position to pretend you do."



Claire Nailer AIMM
Therapy Focus Regional
Manager South.
Member Since 2017.

"The book asks you to consider and really dig deep into the story you tell yourself about yourself and how it compares to the truth. That was definitely a rumble."

The book also shed light on the need to cultivate a culture where brave work and tough conversations are the expectation and armour is not necessary or rewarded.

Looking to gain insight into being brave while being vulnerable, AIM WA Client Relationship Manager Keely Law AFAIM said the book could have also been called '*Get Ready to Rumble*'.

"The book does cover a lot of different models and frameworks which could be perceived as a little overwhelming," she said. "However, the advantage to this is you can select those that work for you personally. Even by adopting one or two of Brené Brown's suggested models or frameworks you could improve your leadership capabilities."

"One of the key takeaways for me was keeping true to your personal values. The book provides an activity where you must drill down to just two of your most core values. This is hard for most – we often want to select five to 10. Her reasoning behind selecting just one or two core values and not 10 is if everything on your long values list is important to you, then none will be your true driver; they are just some warm and fuzzy words on a page somewhere." ●



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A moment in another's shoes

It is time empathy, such as was shown by New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, is given its proper place by those in authority.

by Penelope Thomas



Earlier this year, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern demonstrated extraordinary empathy in response to the nation's worst mass shooting in modern history. At a time of chaos and tragedy, her ability to act decisively and with compassion shone a light on the true power of empathy that unites and inspires and earned her international praise from people like Oprah Winfrey, who told guests at the Women in the World Summit 2019 to channel their 'inner Jacindas'.

Speaking to *Leader*, Melbourne Business School Professorial Fellow Amanda Sinclair said we could all learn something from Ms Ardern's approach to leadership.

"Jacinda is deeply empathetic and someone prepared to do politics very differently," she said. "She is a well-rounded and inspiring political leader who is authentic and acts with dignity, rather than getting involved in political bunfights."

Prepared to cross traditional ideological divides, Ms Sinclair is an author, researcher, teacher and consultant in the areas of leadership, change, gender and diversity. She has written many articles and books on leadership and continues to learn new lessons in the field.

Ms Sinclair believes people who are empathetic are skilled at embracing their own emotions.

"Look at the reaction from Jacinda Ardern in response to the shootings," she said.

"She just stepped up to a nation that was grieving and was ready to talk about her own emotions and the public's.

"Her ability to lead is something we need in politics and in organisations more generally."

With a long-term interest in emotional intelligence, Ms Sinclair said stoic leaders who suppressed their emotions were very uninspiring.

"In many ways, the template of leadership needs to change," she said.

"It's counterproductive to follow the somewhat traditional model of leadership that keeps people's emotions bottled-up.

"Empathy demonstrates a sensitivity to the emotions of others. Being able to read the language of your own and other people's emotions has become part of the territory in leadership."

The leadership guru identified her colleague and friend, former Victoria Police Commissioner Christine Nixon, as an influential leader who inspired her.

From February 2009 to September 2010, Dr Nixon was the Chair of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, which oversaw the largest recovery and rebuilding operation Victoria has ever undertaken as the state recovered from the Black Saturday Bushfires.



Amanda Sinclair

Roles Professorial Fellow at University of Melbourne Business School; author, pioneer in diversity and women in leadership.
Studied University of Melbourne.

Worked as a consultant in multidisciplinary teams.

"Christine was the person in charge of the reconstruction after the Victorian bushfires, where a lot of people died," Ms Sinclair said.

"She was prepared to show empathy and hear people's experiences while understanding her own emotions – this was critical to her role.

"Her genuine ability to connect to people on a real level helped her walk with them during a period of grief and really be there for them."

The ability to put yourself in another person's shoes is a skill that requires people to be present and recognise their surrounds, emotions and other people, according to Ms Sinclair.

"Being present is a powerful leadership tool," she said. "I work with a lot of different groups on this topic to discuss different strategies to help people become present."

Whether you are in a meeting or someone simply requires a bit of your time, Ms Sinclair encourages people to park the work they are doing and take a moment to be present.

"For times when you know the work is important, get fully immersed in the moment," she said. "It can be a momentary thing and doesn't need to take long at all. People sometimes think it is about getting into a meditative state – it's not that at all."

Ms Sinclair said your body could be your ally.

"Sometimes people just need to sit up more squarely in their chair, take a deep breath and let their shoulders drop down a bit," she said. "Noticing the sounds outside or taking a moment to see what kind of day it is can also help people become more present.

"All of this will help signal the importance of the moment and get you out of the fast and furious thinking mode. Not only will this be good for you, but it is good for the person at the other end of it." ●



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