

Adapting and Prioritising in times of change to achieve Big Bold Goals

The notion that the better and faster we can adapt in times of change, the better we can do in business, has been a guiding force for my work for a long time.

Having recently been a guest speaker at the EPTDA Volunteers in-person meeting in Amsterdam, and having spent a day immersed in the world of power transmission & motion control industry, I have some ideas to build on what we covered in our session.

The invitation to speak at the EPTDA meeting was in the context of the skills required to be able to adapt to a fast moving world so that we can achieve our Big Bold Goals. It's on these themes and ideas that I want to build on in this article.

First, though, a story.

A Fresh Set of Charts

Just off the coast of Panama, there is a small group of islands. Islands that are surrounded by coral reefs. Reefs that have a number of wrecked boats.

A curiosity as to why these reefs seemed to have so many wrecked boats led to the discovery that they were last charted by Captain Cook in 1770.

The answer was immediately obvious.

These modern day sailors had been trying to navigate a new world using an old set of charts.

It's a good recipe for wrecking a business too by not moving with the times.

We need to refresh the charts and the mental models by which we navigate our fast moving uncertain world.

Here's the challenge for leaders and the teams they work in.

The challenge is figuring out the skills that we and our teams need in order to thrive in this new world.

And it truly is a new world.

There is disruption on every front.

McKinsey Global predict that by 2030, between 400 million and 800 million jobs could be automated globally

Professor David Sinclair at Harvard University predicts that within a decade our average lifespan, by conservative estimate, could jump to 120 years.

And our workforces are in many instances, not in the best place to deal with these changes. A recent survey by Gallup found that 60% of the global workforce are emotionally disengaged at work.

Lean into any field and you will find challenges.

Depending on where you sit, it's either exciting or terrifying!

I can't think of a single sector that isn't facing disruption and that requires us to develop a different set of mental models, frameworks for how we look at the world and how we approach developing the skills needed at work. Put simply, we need a new set of charts.

Professor Kamal Munir at Cambridge University talks of the need to imagine a world 5 years from now and to see the players, the ecosystem, the trends and patterns that have changed and to then work out what part we want to play in that world.

My mentor used to say to me that if you plan to be in the business that you are in today in five years' time, then you won't be in business. Different words but same result – how can you think differently for the future.

In our session, I was very struck by several characteristics of all the volunteer members. Firstly, it was the curiosity, the learning mindset and the openness to try and experiment with ideas. Secondly, was the willingness to develop the industry, to contribute to others and the genuine desire to build better deeper relationships.

From working across many sectors, these are not always skills in abundance and collectively are something to be proud of and to continue to double down. Further, these are vital skills for developing The Big Bold Mindset to handle the challenges of the future.

With these in mind, in our session, we focused on three core skills for each team member to develop.

Core skills that are all about creating those fresh charts to navigate the future by.

I'd like to share these three core skills and give you some ideas of things that you can takeaway and do with your team.

Skill 1 - Deep Listening

When was the last time you deeply listened to what's going on around you?

To what you are experiencing and to what is going on for your team (at home and at work)?

To what is going on for your sector? What are the innovations, what's changing, what's really going?

All too often, we're caught in a constant cycle of an overflowing and never ending To-Do list and the time to listen and be 100% present to what's going on around you doesn't happen.

I had to learn this skill at home to prevent my home life going off the tracks.

Once I honed those skills at home, I then used them with our team at work.

I could then use the same skills to listen and really understand what was going on in the world and our sector and start to map a different route.

It was almost like rediscovering the lost art of listening. Beginning at home brings with it the great advantage of helping to create stability!

How to really, deeply listen though?

Here's what worked for me: Ask an open question:

Something like "what's truly important to you in life" - a great question for life outside work

Or "what would make you feel proud if we could achieve it together at work" - a great question for a team at work.

With pen and paper in hand, then sit and listen.

Listen with 100% focus on the other person.

Write down everything they say.

Don't think about yourself or what you want to say next: it's 100% on them.

Wait until they have stopped. Then ask if there is anything else. Write down what they say.

When there is nothing else, then say, I'd like to play this back to make sure I've understood everything you said.

Then repeat back what you heard and at the end, ask if you heard them correctly.

If there are corrections, listen, make notes and then play back again until they acknowledge that you have heard them correctly.

I know how incredibly simple this sounds, and equally I know how incredibly rare this is!

To be seen, heard and understood is one of the most basic human emotional needs we have.

Taking this core idea and building on it transformed my home life. Taking this core idea and building on it transformed our team at work. It transformed how we built and developed our business.

We only hear what we understand. Take the time to truly understand. Without this, you won't hear the real messages.

Skill 2 - Be More Resilient

To adapt to an uncertain and changing world means that we need to better deal with setbacks and failed experiments.

There are few certainties when it comes to navigating the future and that requires lots of curiosity, learning and experiments to be able to iterate forwards.

The skill to help with this is Resilience.

I like to think of resilience as being like a muscle - the more we develop it, the stronger it becomes.

Here's the good thing about resilience. You and your team already have these skills.

You've faced challenges in the past and will have developed your own strategies to deal with them.

Have a conversation as a team, where you share times when you have struggled and the strategies you used to pull through it.

This is a conversation that can have several impacts:

- you build trust by being vulnerable and open with each other
- you become more aware of how you've dealt with challenging times before
- you can get fresh ideas from others to deal with future challenges.

We all struggle at times. The more our teams (at work and at home) can work together to deal with hard times, the better and faster we can adapt.

It's a deceptively simple yet powerful conversation.

Skill 3 - Unleash your Super Powers

You have an incredible set of unique abilities and so does every single person in your team.

All too often, we and others don't truly appreciate what our strengths, our super powers are.

Ask people who know you well what you are exceptional at. Other people can see us better than we see ourselves.

As humans we have this tendency to think, "well I'm good at this, but so is everyone else", we undervalue where we are brilliant.

When others point towards our brilliance, when we allow ourselves to see that pattern, we become more able to embrace it.

Find that golden thread for yourself and encourage your team to do the same.

Have a conversation to understand what incredible strengths you have together.

Focus on building those strengths.

When we unleash the full power of all our talent, we allow the space for remarkable things to happen.

Facing the Future

All three of these skills are the most human conversations we can have, to listen to each other, to share how we deal with hard times and to tell people what they are brilliant at.

These are three of the skills we need to face the future together.

How well developed are these skills in your teams? At home and at work?

The future is uncertain. The future is exciting. The future belongs to those who develop the skills and unleash their human talent. These are the charts for the future.

Caspar Craven is a leading authority on achieving Big Bold Goals and a sought after Leadership speaker. To get his full set of 20 principles for achieving Big Bold Goals by using a Be More Human approach, contact Caspar's team at www.CasparCraven.com