

Out of the Box Thinking

We are not going through a recession but a transition from the industrial economy to the networked economy. So says Neil Crofts, an inspirer and executive coach. Neil says: "The culture of the network paradigm is - flexible, transparent, insanely creative, cellular, distributed, diverse, inspiring, permeable and authentic. The culture of the industrial paradigm is - structured, opaque, incremental, hierarchical, monolithic, homogenous, predictable, obedient, and bounded. In today's connected world customers want to buy from businesses that inspire them. People want to work for organisations that inspire them and politicians want to support businesses that contribute more than just money to society. "

In this increasingly complex world of our new century, technology and communication are changing our model of life and work so rapidly that corporate leaders must continuously adapt or perish. New visionary leaders must connect up their ideas, passions and visions with incredible speed, regardless of where they live, how old they are or how much money they have. We are discovering a new kind of leadership, one that inspires and empowers others to take up the baton and lead regardless of age, gender or creed.

Business leaders from Mauritius to Mexico, from Sydney to Shanghai have to continuously review their models of communication and execution as most business paradigms convulse or meet with obstacles that did not exist a mere 12 months ago. Brave is the CEO, business leader or management consultant who can state categorically today that they have THE formula for success. Even the concept of success is being re-invented depending on your industry or the country or region in which you operate. While Australia, China and South East Asia are surfing on a growth wave, other regions like Europe and countries like Mauritius are feeling the bite of recession and fiscal pressures that are causing havoc and slicing the profitability of companies like a hot knife through butter. In those regions, business owners and corporations are having to redefine their notion of profitability. Board meetings have recently been tumultuous as CEO's explain to board members that no marketing strategy, no training programme or no product launch has yielded a solid return on investment.

We are observing that enterprise excellence can no longer be defined, analysed, planned for and maintained. Nokia, the ubiquitous mobile handset company, with 35% of the world's market, have seen their shares tumble by two thirds in 2010 while their profit margins have withered from 15% to 7%. Apple smartphones and Blackberry 'business phones' have eaten into their market share and Nokia is counting on the new Nokia 8 to make a comeback. Tom Peters, who needs no introduction, states that *"those who win are those who ... try stuff (quickly)... watch what happens ... adjust (quickly) ... and then try something else (quickly). All with little fuss or muss."*

Economic turbulence

Great leaders and organisations transform moments of uncertainty into moments of opportunity through innovation. Moments of economic turbulence provide a unique opportunity to launch new products, upgrade existing infrastructure and strengthen customer loyalty.

There is no better time to widen the gap between you and your competitors. Use this time to be aware of the market, not afraid of it. In 1933, Kraft Foods launched its iconic salad dressing Miracle Whip – again; not in spite of the recession but because of it. Although Kraft had an existing mayonnaise business, its sales had slipped as a result of economic conditions. Within 6 months of its launch, this new product outsold all other brands of dressing.

Invest in your customers when they need you most. They are as worried as you are. So stay close to them, help them get what they want and they'll remember you over the long haul. Use this time to increase your communication with them. The worst thing you can do is to disappear from a marketing perspective.

An organisation made the decision not to attend a key industry trade show to save money. However, what they did not consider was the message this action would send to their customers – the business must be in trouble. As it turned out, this absence was their greatest mistake as customers decided to seek new proposals for fear that the supplier was in trouble. A self-fulfilling prophecy.

Easy or long term solutions

The insightful CEO of a client organisation describes the current recession as having bottomed out in a wok shape. That company has made judicious investments in renovations and innovative economies of scale by regrouping various departments under the one roof but the protracted downturn is forcing them to freeze expenditure at the risk of affecting staff morale.

Another client organisation has been thinking of retrenching staff as sales have plummeted by more than 50% and their global high-tech industry undergoes a massive restructure with new, cheaper suppliers. Yet another client, buoyed by growth in their industry two years ago, have massively invested in new infrastructure which are not providing an adequate return on investment, threatening their very survival.

Undeniably, those organisations must take bold decisions to protect their bottom line and appease their stakeholders. However, it would be calamitous for those decision makers to ignore the feelings and frustrations of their employees, those other stakeholders on the frontline who produce the bottom line.

Retrenchments may have been necessary to create a more dynamic, efficient team; capping salaries and cutting expenditure to the bone may have been imperative to protect cash flow; overseas travel may have had to be curtailed. Well, there are easy solutions and long term ones. Easy solutions, like further reducing staff benefits or doing away with end of the year parties, will most likely tempt some decision makers at this time of the year. Easy solutions usually engender poor employee morale and poor customer service. Easy solutions actually make bad times worse as they are cost savings from short-term fixes. They sap the morale of employees translating into 'dis-ease', this mental state that holds employees back and engender dissatisfaction, disinterest and despair.

Long term solutions will take into consideration the Law of Attraction which says that you reap what you sow. If you want success and growth, you must plant seeds of faith, optimism, creativity, generosity and love. Long term solutions will also consider the Law of Vibration which sees the organisation as a body made of a vibratory field. There are low and dense vibrations like fear, anger and despair versus high vibrations like hope, creativity and optimism.

The quantum leap

If you work in an organisation where revenue and profitability are still affected by the current economic transition, jump out of the box and look for quantum solutions. Thomas Edison didn't tinker with building a better kerosene lamp; he abandoned the use of fire – the only human generated source of light since prehistoric times – and broke through a new source. That was a quantum leap in outside the box thinking.

As you read this article, you stand at the growing tip of evolution. The next thing you think, the next action you take will either create a new possibility for you or it will repeat the past. The areas of possibility for you and your company are endless. How many creative thoughts have you had in the past month? How much time did you spend on thinking how you could do what you do differently, or how you could improve your work process or how you could improve staff morale and productivity within your organisation? How much time did you spend sowing the seeds for success, creativity and happiness?

Poised at a moment where global trends carry the seeds of optimism, your next steps as a decision maker will spring from easy or long term solutions.

We, at Quantum Vision, know that you have the vision of a great future for your organisation and its people. Ride the waves and know that you can come out wiser and stronger. Remember that in every mess, there is a message...