
DIGITAL
IS EVERYONE'S
BUSINESS

A guide to transition

DAVID BANGER

INTRODUCTION

Imagine having 20:20 digital hindsight for the 2020s

The 2020s loom large for organisations and many are considering their digital strategies. Many have digital intentions but are uncertain of what needs to be actioned. There are a range of opportunities for organisations willing to explore their digital potential and consequences for organisations continuing a traditional path.

Are you getting your hands dirty? This can have two meanings:

1. You have become involved in something where the realities might compromise your principles.
2. You are stuck in an ivory tower dictating strategy but are prepared to put in the effort and hard work to make the details actually happen.

The book aims to help avoid the first and enable the second. I use the D-I-R-T-Y acronym to outline the sections of this book. Each section is part of a sequence that will enable digital and subsequent transitions in an organisation.

- **Digital:** Timing, thinking differently, what needs to be considered to help achieve greater clarity? When is the right time for your product to enter the market? What is your digital business model? How are you differentiating

in a digital world? Why does your perspective of business needs need to evolve?

- **Innovation:** What lessons can you learn from the past? How can you make them part of your future? What could be tactically implemented immediately? How can the efforts of longer-term aspirations be broken into parts?
- **Relevance:** This covers a range of topics from right sizing the organisation, managing careers, practice and culture of risk, and how all this can help reduce the probability of a catastrophe and avoid situations 'where the realities might compromise your principles'. Plus, it explores why you should maintain a level of relevance with the broader market as an organisation and an individual.
- **Technology:** What needs to be in place for credibility and confidence? How transparency can create understanding and circumstances for meaningful business contribution.
- **Your mindset:** How your past experiences prejudice your future. What is your mindset? How work is approached in your organisation and why this now needs to be different. Thinking is now more important than doing.

When applying the above framework, we work backwards. We start with you and your organisation's mindset—without the right mindset, it will be difficult to step through the other sections.

A meaningful digital future

Let's fast forward ...

It's 2020-something and your organisation has continued to be just in time for your market. It's not out on a limb waiting for the market to catch up nor is it working a hunch—it's at the sweet spot. This has been achieved through the integration of your

existing traditional business and the timely emergence of digital products and services. *Things were different a few years ago. The team was always scrambling to understand what was going on. Upon determining what was happening, your organisation either ignored it, or played the catch-up game with a token effort that had suboptimal offerings compared to others.*

In the 2020s, the people within your organisation are connected yet diverse. They all *think* but are not all thinking the same and ideas are welcomed and refined by the group. There is no hierarchy; those people who can offer the greatest contribution to something are empowered and supported. There is a spirit of learning; people are exploring rather than knowing. The search of knowledge within the organisation is one of the foundation stones, there are other stones too. The back log of work has been rationalised. People are celebrated for their quality of thought rather than their volume of work. There is a willingness from people to place the organisation and colleagues first rather than calculate how to survive or shine.

The technology team has been a key contributor to the digital outcomes; it is transparent, forthright and can be counted on to deliver its piece of these emerging digital services. *This was not always the case. The technology team was a bit of black box and engaged only when dragged to the table. There was inconsistency of services and the employee experience was poor and sometimes drove a lack of trust.* The technology team now openly communicates regularly explaining initiatives and how the team is linked to the bigger picture. The team offers timely thinking that is relevant and helps progress outcomes sooner. The business wouldn't want it any other way.

The organisation is more relevant at many levels. This relevance has been achieved through sensible risk management practices; the people within the organisation know how to manage a risk and escalate when required. Your people are capable risk

professionals and are no longer dependent on resources outside their team. The risk escalations from a team result in people swarming to help and not judge a situation. *Those dark days of judgement and competitive behaviour of ensuring the other team was not doing as well as yours, no longer exist.*

Teams are proactively suggesting how they should evolve rather than waiting for those former reorganisations that were never quite right, always requiring a revisit a year later. People can focus on their work and career and not on how they can keep their job. Some of your people have a genuine presence in the market; they are sought out to share their experiences at events and in other industries. There is a true sense of pride in being part of this organisation. When your people are approached for roles at other organisations, they decline them. Their current role and how it's undertaken makes this organisation unique. In many ways, things have just started, and people want to be part of the future.

There are parallels in how the organisation operates with great companies of the past. Everyone is aware of and respects our organisation's past; however, we have changed the future trajectory by learning from these great companies. There is a shared understanding that ideas are not out of the blue, they are a result of a group of people committed to not settling for the status quo. Ideas are evolved by groups of people and shared with the relevant external audiences. They are refined prior to release, they are not perfected, but they are appropriate, practical and better than many. There have been occasions when the team has operated with restricted circumstances, 'we have been up against it'. These situations galvanised the group; the shared experience has brought people together, *unlike in the past when things were terse, tense and people blamed one another.*

Your teams know their core capabilities and possible limitations; they are smart and partner with other external organisations

with the capabilities needed. Your teams are not led into these arrangements by others, they are aware of the capabilities and initiate the specific interaction. The external partner's capability complements the organisations capability creating scale and reducing time to outcomes. There are partners who have been present within your organisation for a considerable period. *This is not like the arrangements of the past, when a partner was brought in to save something and it often ended badly.*

Finally, your organisation is constantly shifting not sprinting. *In the past, there was a sprint and then rest routine as transformation efforts were massive and almost always missed the objectives.* Today, the organisation is constantly shifting; it is always in transition. You are closer to your customer and the activities behind the scenes are more integrated. You are realising your potential.

How was this achieved?

PART 3

RELEVANCE

Sustaining transitions

Poor risk management capability will slow and potentially destroy an organisation's potential. Risk capability residing within teams who proactively apply this will help contribute to an organisation's relevance. Relevance is achieved through being in a state of constant transition, if risk management practices are not mature and across the employee population, activities will slow or stop.

Further, there is and will continue to be the need for organisations and particularly technology teams to right-size. There are a range of rationales including but not limited to automation, integration and rationalisation of roles. Many organisations take a phased approach to making these changes, eroding the contribution of the organisation due to 'interim organisations', and poorly lead change.

Team alignment during this period of change requires an appropriate style of leadership, remaining visible and willing to listen. This is 'vertically aligning' the organisation. Employee involvement post-transition reduces the dip in performance and can increase engagement when appropriately implemented.

Career management is paramount for any employee today. Remaining static in a dynamic world reduces the potential of contribution of anybody. Employees need to consider their professional capability and passion that can be dynamically shared with broader communities. Employees should be encouraged to proactively manage their career and ensure they remain current; this currency also translates into organisational relevance. Organisation will need to support their employees growing their relevance, their retention will not be achieved by suppression but by the employees choosing the organisation.

Finally, leadership by the executive within their organisation and those first team leaders needs to be connected and empowering with eye cast outside of the organisation, with anticipation of what could be next and how the business remains relevant.

This section discusses the 'in between' area, the R in D-I-R-T-Y, the piece that links the foundations and exciting future possibilities:

- How to scale the risk capability across the employee population.
- The right size for the organisation and what opportunities will add capability?
- How to actively manage your career and encourage employees to do.
- How to create an experience where employees remain at your organisation.
- How to lead with greater relevance. Learnings from others that can make you more relevant.

Risk

This is a discipline to master in order to avoid your hands being the wrong type of dirty.

The professional services industry and internal risk functions within organisations have both grown considerably this century. There is a level of art and science within the practice of risk, and risk capability is something everyone within your organisation should have today as it will be important tomorrow.

The previous sections have reflected upon a learning mindset and transparency, which are important building blocks that, when applied consistently, ultimately create trust. However, trust can be easily lost when people are inconsistent. In this

regard, consistent risk management practices through building capability, and keeping this at the front of one's mind and the regular discipline of action will build on the trust established.

A greater the number of employees with risk capabilities will increase the delivery velocity of initiatives making for greater relevance of the organisation.

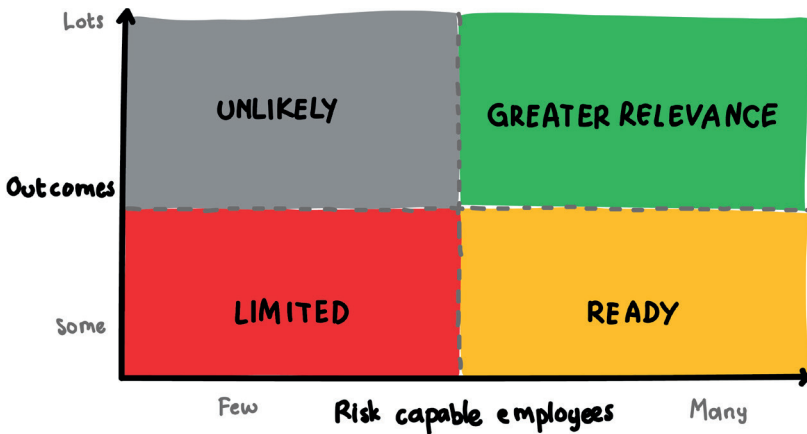


Figure 5: Relevance through risk chart

The risk that technology presents in organisations is considerable and the consequences are potentially catastrophic. The new ways in which people are working within organisations also present a risk. A balance needs to be struck between new practices and the discipline of ensuring that risks are appropriately managed. When implemented appropriately, practices like Agile can assist with the management of risks.

There is and will continue to be a greater expectation and involvement of all professionals understanding and applying mature risk practices. Here is the science:

- Inherent risk: How 'likely' or 'bad' could this be?

- **Residual risk:** What are you comfortable tolerating? Accepting this risk needs to be within an organisation's appetite for risk.

How to strategically manage risk?

Controls are how you can minimise the likelihood and impact of the 'bad' thing occurring. There are several types of control:

- Preventative controls are best; however, they are not always available or possible. An example would be the encryption of data across a network within an Infrastructure as a Service.
- Detective controls can help minimise the event by identifying and actioning the event early in its occurrence. An example would be the deployment of a monitoring solution that would identify an extraction of data by a third party where encryption is not available across a network of an Infrastructure as a Service.

Who can implement controls?

- Primary controls can be implemented directly by the service provider (e.g. a large technology vendor would be ideal) or by the team managing the service (i.e. the application team).
- Leveraged controls are provided by another party (e.g. security with an organisation) and assist the team that is providing the service (i.e. the application team).
- Compensating controls are implemented by a team to manage risk prior to a primary or leveraged control being implemented. This situation is not ideal but is likely to assist in reducing inherent risk or possibly achieving a residual risk position.

How to manage issues?

Teams who analyse risks and implement controls will improve awareness and practices of risk. As the exercise is undertaken, it is likely there will be an identification of 'issues'. This is to be encouraged. An issue is an event—a 'bad' thing that has occurred.

- Teams should always be encouraged to self-identify issues.
- Issues should be documented with a forecasted closure date. If possible, expedite closure prior to the forecasted date.
- Teams should also be measured on both the frequency and length of issue extension rates. An issue not closing on the forecasted date may indicate an area of underinvestment or poor vendor performance.

Here are some insights into the art of risk and how can you encourage a risk culture beyond training, incentives and consequences:

- Encourage everyday awareness at every gathering: Introduce a risk moment at the beginning of team gatherings e.g. someone can share a risk story or perspective. Civil construction organisations do this for safety; thus, increasing awareness and creating a safety mindset.
- Use Agile practices to assist risk management: Scrums and Visual Management Boards (VMBs) are effective ways of creating focus and demonstrating progress. Ensure minutes are maintained for these meetings.
- Place risk VMBs on the wall in a working area so they are an everyday reminder for people.

- Promote risk knowledge exchange by encouraging teams to visit another's Scrum, VMB and risk document portal. Be transparent.
- Ask your organisation what else it could consider implementing. Apply the Pareto Principle, 20% of your effort contributing to 80% of the result, to these suggestions.

This is a critical step. Think of risk not as an activity but as a capability. Build the capability as it will allow your organisation to scale. Things may not go entirely to plan all the time, but with this capability being constantly practiced, the consequences will be avoided or minimised.

Finally, consider the idea that no action results in a greater future action. *What?* All organisations are dynamic and to remain static is not an option. The rate of action will present a greater degree of risk if:

- The choice is to do the minimum: By so doing, a larger transformation is potentially looming.
- Transformation is underway: Statistically, 80–90% of transformations fail as objectives aren't realised.

Therefore, by building a risk capability within the organisation, there is a greater potential for well-managed iterations to create a shift for the organisation. Iteration sits between minimal action and transformation. By being in a state of iteration, constant sustained shifts can be achieved, which will increase the probability of averting a transformation.

Rightsizing and redundancies

This is a difficult topic to write and talk about openly. It's like discussing politics, sex, and religion among adults. There are

lots of private thoughts and limited opportunities for shared understanding (note this is understanding and not agreement).

It's inevitable that your organisation will right-size at some stage, and it's likely that roles will be made redundant and good people impacted. Due to the dynamic nature of the technology industry, technology teams potentially have more frequent cycles of rightsizing. The intended outcomes are often not realised and this results in future remediation (i.e. more rightsizing). Further, people's contributions are eroded due to fear, poor leadership and a lack of career management know-how.

Here you will read about my professional learnings with some personal insights based on decades of experience either watching and learning or leading these initiatives. Most technology executives today need to build new capabilities or integrate shadow capabilities into their organisations. There is often a limited budget to do this, plus an overlapping of capabilities regarding the current technical capability and the desired technical currency. These are two different things that will be explained. Unfortunately, rightsizing organisations for the future will be a necessary skill for any technical executive due to the dynamic nature of the industry.

Let's wind back. I first commenced working in the late 80s, having not completed high school (more on this later). In the first part of my career, I observed two waves of redundancies: one in the early 1990s, another just after 2000 and significant changes after 2008. Observing these periods has offered some key lessons as to why some of these changes went better than others:

- A person is not to be made redundant—a role is; unfortunately, the person is implicated in the role. Organisations that do this well remind everyone of this at the initial planning, during, and at the end of the process. People directly impacted must be reminded that they

have not done anything wrong and that *they* are not being dismissed—it's their role that is no longer required.

- The implications within an organisation post-redundancy are varied and the dip in motivation can be longer than desired if people are treated poorly, information is limited or there is no compelling sense of meaningful work to progress. In this regard, fear of further reductions is not the appropriate motivation.
- Ideally undertake this activity once every 24 months. Don't assume you will have the luxury of tweaking here and there over 12 to 18 months. Generally, you need to go deeper than you think—there are opportunities in doing this (more on this later). In addition, the tweaking approach has people walking on eggshells and focusing on survival rather than doing great work. Great work, on occasion, involves debate and disagreement, sometimes with senior leaders, but people are less likely to engage in the debate if they are only focusing on survival. Building an environment/culture of constructive conflict is a key tenant to achieving your digital potential.
- Support for leaders is to be provided beyond HR and beyond the odd text message and email from a colleague saying, *this is the right thing to do, good luck, and I am here if you need me*. Such messages are nice, but they are not supportive. Support comes from talking through scenarios with peers who have had the same experience. Sharing experiences is an opportunity to improve the experience for the employees directly impacted and the broader team. It also grows the confidence for the leader by being less robotic and demonstrating a genuine empathy with everyone.
- Executive assistants (EAs) also need to be supported. A great EA is emotionally invested with the organisation

and the people they support. Additionally, they are likely to know, before many others, who will be impacted. Don't assume you know the type of support that suits everyone. Ask your EA.

- Every organisation has slightly different processes and support available. Sometimes, the support that is offered to directly impacted employees is optional and based on executive discretion. Make this support available to employees (such as outplacement). Sometimes, executives choose not to make this available to employees due to the cost involved. However, there is a greater cost in not offering this, potentially delaying the impacted employee from moving through what is next for them (they may talk to their colleagues about this, who endeavour to help but are not qualified to do so, distracting both parties from focusing on what is important) and negatively impacting on the perception of the extent to which people are valued by those remaining.

The above lessons are still relevant. Going further, how can one imagine a better organisation for the future with fewer roles? The 'rule of thirds' has proven to be true in several technology organisations across very different industries. When I have been asked to reduce costs and to consider roles reductions, there were three types of contribution these roles made.

Roles generally align to the following three criteria:

- Technically critical: Roles that are technically critical support key technologies; however, avoid ring-fencing multiple roles. The reality is that a lot of technology is now being automated, which presents opportunities to rationalise multiple roles in the same area.
- Leadership critical: This is not about senior leaders, it's about key leadership roles within the organisation. These

roles may not manage people but could offer key thought leadership or capability (e.g. Commercial Manager, Business Analyst, and Risk and Control Manager).

- Additional roles: These are the roles that are involved in the work but are not critical to it. They 'swim with' initiatives rather than being 'key' to them and potentially increase the drag on initiatives through additional conversations that offer limited value. They may be involved due to their legacy technology knowledge rather than current knowledge, and their involvement is habitual rather than critical.

As leaders, you will align people's roles to the three categories. As you embark on this activity, go deeper than you think may be necessary. When analysing the possible roles that are no longer relevant, consider this as an opportunity to improve the capability of the organisation. Removing a third of roles at one time is challenging; however, removing 10–20% of roles and replacing the remaining 10–20% with the right roles is like lightening the load and adding a turbo.

An example is the production of reports within an organisation. You may consider removing the traditional business analyst who compiled the reports and replacing this with a data automation and integration capability. This will automate the manual production, create scale and reduce a point of failure.

The most optimal timing for these changes is augmenting the organisation by hiring for the new roles then shrinking it once these roles are filled by removing those that are no longer required. Completing this within the first half of the financial year generally results in current year savings. If this is not an option, project-based work and items on a team's Agile backlog may need to be paused for a period. Based on my professional

experience, other executives across the business are supportive of slowing down for a short period in order to go faster later.

As an employee, here is what you can do to avoid the probability of redundancy:

- **Technical currency:** Don't become confused with technical capability. Technical currency is what is and will be current for the next period. How can this be incorporated into your role, if it is not already?
- **Leadership capability:** What is your gift? Find this and cultivate it. Make yourself the person who everybody wants on their project or in their Agile scrum.
- **Learning:** No one is ever complete. Be on the lookout for learning experiences. I didn't complete high school; however, I went back to night school for my under- and postgraduate studies. Every year, I prioritise some form of professional learning as an extension of my current role. Writing this book has been great learning.
- **Organisational knowledge:** At one of my previous organisations, there was a person who was developing software on legacy technology; however, as a result, this person also had wonderful operational knowledge. This knowledge became the currency for their future role. They de-invested in the technology capability (it was no longer current) and led the developers of the preferred software solution to create the new application. It was inspiring to watch and a great example to others.
- **Treat everybody as you would like to be treated:** It feels good to be welcomed by others, and it's even better to be included in many things due to the type of person you are. Make yourself a person who everybody wants to spend time with—being included allows your role to evolve.

This is a difficult topic, but it's something that should be discussed more often within leadership teams and their people. By discussing this more regularly, thoughts will evolve, and actions will be implemented. These actions are likely to reduce the need for radical transformation and enable more frequent transitions through active management; thus, creating a future-oriented relevant organisation.

Managing your career

In 2002, I qualified as a coactive coach. I still regularly practise these skills.

At time of writing this book, at least twice to possibly three times a fortnight, I receive a message from a former colleague or somebody I have met within industry. Sometimes these people are working at a technology organisation, sometimes they are from overseas and, for clarity, very few of them work for my most recent employer. People seem to reconnect with me from several jobs back, it's as if time creates a boomerang. Generally, they want to ask what I think about something, or they are seeking advice about their career. I don't like giving advice. I don't think I am good at giving advice and when people have tried to give me advice the past, I found it was their perspective rather than what was most suitable for me.

Further, having met so many people, I don't know *exactly* who they are, what they are great at or why they have chosen to contact me. When you don't know somebody well, it is difficult to give advice. My immediate internal response is *this is interesting*. I wonder why they have chosen to contact me and what can I learn from it? Learning is one of my primary drivers. This curiosity benefits both the person contacting me and myself.

There is one constant though. I am almost always contacted when something has happened or is about to happen. A person

may be about to make a decision or they find themselves in a situation beyond their control. Sometimes they are in a dilemma; they are uncertain weighing up opportunities, angry, emotional, confused, frustrated or potentially excited about something. One former, more senior and exceptionally capable individual once referred to me as his priest (I am not deeply religious. This was his term and is not intended to be used in a defamatory manner) as he felt he could share things with me that he couldn't with others.

When I reflect on this, I think *my curiosity and my willingness to learn from others with no judgement* indirectly makes people more comfortable in sharing things with me. Particularly people in organisations who are more senior to me, whether it is my immediate reporting manager or their peer who is wrestling with something. I have known others who have exhibited the *traits above*, and they have had similar experiences. These people seek to support others without anything in return; they have no expectation that anything will be returned from that individual. There is no intention of a future arrangement.

There have been people I have worked with who have endeavoured to cultivate a close relationship with me; however, it has not felt genuine and I have distanced myself either consciously or subconsciously. This was due to a lack of genuineness from that person and where there was an intention behind the interaction. As a result, I was less personally open and vulnerable; they didn't see the best version of me. This is a pity for everyone when it happens. There is no doubt that many of us operate in this manner, almost all the time, for fear of judgement then consequence.

People are generally not prepared to share things. They don't say what they are truly thinking and opportunities that offer diversity of thought remain unrealised. If you can, try doing something

without an expectation of anything in return. You may receive a greater gift than what you expected—the gift of learning.

When I am contacted by somebody, I generally start by asking how they are and *not* why are they contacting me or what has happened. Their response then directs me to the next question or statement, but very early on I remind people of what Steve Jobs said at Stanford.

‘You can’t connect the dots looking forward;
you can only connect them looking
backwards. So, you have to trust that the dots
will somehow connect in your future.’

—Steve Jobs

These conversations have created great learnings for me. Some common themes have emerged, and these are being shared in the spirit of what I have *learned*. Here are my dozen learnings so far. I have no doubt that this list will change in this dynamic world (more on this later).

Philosophical learnings

1. A mentor of mine once said that your 20s are for being educated, your 30s are for gaining experience and your 40s are for harvesting. If you strive for one prior to the other, it will erode your potential. It's important you know where you are at, don't rush things as later things will unravel. Further, how do you know when you are capable of harvesting? You can transition to a new industry by bringing your capability.
2. It's unlikely your current employer will remain your lifetime employer. Accept this and be grateful for all

experiences (the great, good and indifferent). *These are the dots that will connect at some stage.*

3. How are you remaining current? Seek to learn something new every year. Share with others what you are learning.
4. Practice being open. I am an Australian living on an island at the bottom of the world. Our family spent nine years living and working on top of the world. This expanded our minds and made us more open to everything. You don't have to move halfway around the world to be open: what could you do to be more open? Being open, presents opportunities. How are you expanding your mind?
5. Look inside to be the best version of yourself outside. Don't endeavour to replicate others, learn from them; however, avoid copying. Copying takes a lot of energy and is not genuine; people will know when somebody is not genuine. Your greatest strength is the fact that nobody else is like you. Seek to be the best version of yourself.
6. If something is uncomfortable, determine if there is support with the uncomfortableness. Judgement is not support, don't confuse somebody telling you what to do with how you can explore what you should do.

Much of the above is about mindset. These learnings may be appropriate for you at some stage. Or they may never be appropriate and you may seek insights from elsewhere. Whatever works for you, do it.

The next six learnings are about action. The world has changed dramatically this century and there is a lot of commentary about this. Most data in the world has been created this century, nothing is static, and we now live in a dynamic data world. Consider this as context regarding the suggested actions below.

The information on your LinkedIn profile, other jobsite profiles and contained within your resume is static. Our world is a dynamic content creating one and you need to consider if you will participate in this, and if so, how?

Practical suggestions

1. Do you have a domain (a www address)? It could be your name, it could be a company or community you are wanting to create or be part of. Consider creating this community. I own both www.changelead.com and www.davidbanger.com, plus some other similar domains. One is my current business platform and the other is now the website where you can find out more about me and this book. When I first registered those domains, I didn't know their purpose; however, I found that if I continue to discover when the time is right, the ideas will emerge.
2. What are the five to ten things you know? Start writing or shooting a video about them. Create the content on your domain/website first, then share it on other platforms. These platforms will help you find your community. Connect and serve that community without an expectation. If you are passionate about what you have learned, others within your community will be interested. Make sure you have a home for your content; at some stage, you may want to bring it all together, so begin with the end in mind.
3. Accept that you may not be in paid employment. This may or may not be your choice. Be prepared for this and consider what you will do in this instance. The steps directly above this point are important. It's best to start thinking about these things when you are employed. There is some anxiety in putting yourself 'out there'; however, imagine living a life without sharing your

thoughts and potential with the world. This practical action is completing points seven and eight.

4. Be passionate about something. Be restless until you find this. For me it's business first, then people and then technology. What is your order and why are these things important? Share this sooner rather than later. When I started blogging publicly, I was surprised by who and how people read me. I learned how best to channel my areas of interest to an audience. Learn from others while you are sharing. Don't leave yourself wondering what you could be sharing.
5. Know your value and be prepared for everybody not to value it. What? Yes, not everybody will 'get you'; however, don't lose your voice. You may be pleasantly surprised by who will value you and what they will give back.
6. Often, I am asked about the one sure thing to do? After reading the above, what do you think you should do? It could be reading that book you have not yet read or revisiting a YouTube video or TED talk (*as you may have already gathered Steve Jobs Stanford Commencement Speech* is my favourite), taking a long walk to order your thoughts or setting aside time to further reflect on the question.

The world is dynamic and will continue to evolve. By applying the approaches of yesterday, you may not realise your potential for tomorrow. The thoughts here are intended to help you think and then act.

Employee experience creates an advantage

If your employees are dynamic, your organisation is potentially at risk of losing them. Jacob Morgan is the author of *The Employee Experience Advantage* (2017). This book offers insight into how an organisation can become more relevant with its employees. Jacob's book was possibly inspired by his question to many C-level executives: 'If your culture was a pill, would you take it?' Almost all answered no.

His early research established that companies that potentially have a 'take-able' pill appoint managers who truly want others to be more successful than they are. Further, these organisations have a co-ordinated one-team approach to:

- Culture
- Technology
- Space

This approach creates an Employee Experience Advantage (EEA). Jacob furthered this research with a team of data scientists who reviewed companies on published 'best' lists. Some organisations appeared on these lists at least and up to forty times. They all embodied an EEA, in addition to benefiting from:

- Being three times more profitable.
- Having 40% less turnover.
- Having 24% less employees to revenue when compared to similar organisations.

These organisations focused on some consistent themes across their vision, mission and values:

- They had a genuine reason of being. This rallied employees to consider their impact on their role and within the broader community.
- People in ‘positions of power’ cared about others: ‘people’ were appointed to senior roles with little or no emphasis on technical competency.
- All organisations knew their people well through the use of appropriate data tracking, people-related metrics and genuine dialogue.
- They think like a lab and less like a factory.

These are important points for leadership. Often, when leaders are initially appointed, they are tempted to focus on their subject matter expertise and managing the details.

As a new leader, be mindful of reverting to what you are comfortable with. If you are becoming directly involved in doing the work of your team, your capacity to lead the team is reduced. Also, the example being set may result in your leadership team doing the work of its immediate team. This could result in losing empowerment and the capacity to deal with escalations due to being stretched by working in the technology and not on it. Additionally, growth opportunities within the team may be limited as the leaders are doing some of the work. Limiting these learnings will, in turn, limit how much the team could scale across more meaningful work in the future.

Becoming relevant as a first time executive

When I was appointed to my first senior technology leadership role, I had three long conversations with people who were far more senior and experienced than myself. I did a lot of listening and asked the odd question; it was a little daunting. They acknowledged that I could manage the team; however, the role

was more than this. There was an expectation that I could make a great contribution to the broader business.

After reflecting upon the conversations, I concluded three things. The beauty of this organisation was the culture of empowerment, but this came with significant expectations. It was up to me to either make or lose it—the organisation was unbreakable.

After twelve months being in role, I asked those leaders if the conclusions were right. They turned the question on me? I replied, 'well if this is working for you, it's working for the team, and I am loving it.'

What made you relevant in the past is unlikely to make you relevant in the future. Here are three areas that you may need to evolve based on my experiences.

Leading the team

- Connect the group and have them co-create how they would like to work with one another.
- Establish a shared space. On the walls, make visible what you are working on, and make sure these things are measured.
- Hire people who are smarter and different to you and encourage them to have a voice. Your role is to work with the business. Seek to create broader connections within the industry to anticipate what is next and avoid the temptation of working in the technology team.
- Lead by sharing your 'values'. Don't replace your organisation's value but define what each one means to you. If a decision is required and the 'values' are in place, the team generally makes the right one.

Influencing the broader business

- Involve others in the emergence of the team, explain what the team is and what it will be doing, and set out the stall. For technology leaders, this is likely to include a strategic document for three years (1000 days) and a quarterly business plan (every 100 days), refreshed and reissued quarterly.
- Prioritise the business first, then the people and then technology. Technology should support a process or resolve a problem rather than be implemented because it's interesting. Acknowledge that businesses, geographies and departments mature at different rates and align what is next for them, not what is best.
- Get out into the business and build genuine relationships with those in the organisation. Seek to serve your colleagues but not be subservient and be prepared to constructively challenge.

Involving others in your thinking is as simple as sharing it. At two different organisations, I led teams who created an annual video of 'a day in the life of the employee at the organisation'. I can recall at least half a dozen videos being created over the years. As well as communicating the business plan, we created videos to show how using the technology would benefit the technology team's initiatives.

'For a time I didn't want to answer any questions about Queen. I'd like to be viewed as something alive and relevant, not some fossil.'

—Brian May

Many people don't read detailed plans, but they will watch a video. Beyond these being a great way to communicate, they are also very effective in building the technology team's culture. The videos started with an alarm in the morning, a series of personal and professional events and activities during the day and concluded at home. Creating these does not have to be expensive; within your organisation you will find many talents. At one of my organisations, we had an employee who captured videos on the weekends as a wedding photographer. This person was very happy to shoot the video and required less of a brief than an external agency. Our costs were minimal, just the hiring of some equipment and the purchase a new PC so footage could be edited. These videos were also useful for international audiences and on several occasions, we were able to add the language of our visitors within the video.

Sharing thinking

- Some teams serve multiple functions, connect one function with another and encourage idea sharing. These are not your ideas. Sometimes, you may mature an idea so it can scale; however, it is far more effective to be a facilitator of an idea rather than owning it.
- Sharing something weekly, at the same time, in the same way. At a previous organisation, I was responsible for measuring culture. I learnt something interesting about some of the well-regarded leaders. They communicated weekly in their words, their notes included an industry perspective, something their team was working on and something small about themselves. When I started to do this, it helped me connect with my team and others across the organisation.
- Being available to listen. Many, upon finding their voice, want to shout and be the most dominant voice in any

room all the time. The gift of finding your voice is to allow others to share their voice. If you establish a platform, share the stage with others. Remember, this is about sharing everyone's thinking, not just yours.

A big learning for anyone transitioning into a leadership role is dependency on 'others' for outcomes. Micromanagement is not sustainable, good people will leave and you will become exhausted. The 'others' are beyond your immediate leadership team; they are potentially across the organisation and external to your organisation. Sometimes first-time leaders adopt a combative approach with those external organisations that serve them. Initially this may have some cost benefit; however, over time value is almost always diminished. These others could potentially be a key contributor to how your organisation can innovate.

‘Motivation comes from working on things we care about. It also comes from working with people we care about.’

—Sheryl Sandberg

Additionally, they could be a source of greater relevance leading to connection with customers and broader communities.

Guy Kawasaki's inspiration for greater relevance

Guy Kawasaki has learned from those who have participated and contributed to shifts. He is very apt at putting things in context and worked at Apple twice in his career. Guy is forthright with his views and offers sharp insights.

'I am now two-thirds dead; why should I
be concerned about what people think.'

—Guy Kawasaki

Here is what I have learned from attending several of Guy's keynotes. These four points resonated with the relevance section and Guy has many additional points that are well worth considering.

Make meaning rather than money

When clarifying your meaning, it should achieve at least one of these three factors:

- Increase the quality of life.
- Right a wrong.
- Prevent the end of something good.

When considering a change, avoid acting until you find meaning. Then, check to see if at least one of the three above factors is the meaning behind the action.

Start from the bottom

Avoid falling into the common trap of segmenting populations, calculating future revenue of only a % of the population and converting this to profit. Consider how you weave your 'MAT':

- **Milestones.** For example, the design or shipping of a product is a milestone; whereas, setting up an office is not. Avoid being distracted by the mundane. Basically, milestones are something you would tell everyone about.
- **Assumptions** need to be made. Consider sales efforts (calls and meetings), ROI, installation costs and anything else that contributes to the achievement of milestones.

- Tasks are different to assumptions. What activities are undertaken for the assumptions to meet the milestones?

Become a storyteller regarding how you started, what you are doing and where you are going.

Don't be perfect and iterate

Not everything has to be perfect; if you don't cringe when you look back at the first version of something, then it hasn't been shaped fast enough.

Be prepared to iterate quickly—version 1.1, 1.2 or 2.0.

Value and uniqueness

Consider two matrices: value and uniqueness. There's no point being unique without value, as nobody will be interested. Having value without uniqueness equals competition and reduces margins.

When value and uniqueness intersect, businesses endure, and margins can be maintained and increased.

When listening to Guy, it is evident that he has been influenced by his Apple experiences and is a great storyteller. Steve Jobs was also a great storyteller; he had the ability to simplify the complicated and anticipate what people potentially didn't know they needed. He created relevance. I have visited and worked with many people from Apple over many years and something that their people have regularly shared is the ability of their colleagues to tell a story.

How? No more than 10 slides for 20 mins with 30pt font. Somebody at Apple told me that Steve Jobs only used 200pt font.

This approach works. Having spoken at many industry events and as an adjunct professor, my lectures have always consisted

of pictures or data and not detailed text. People will listen rather than read, it creates a greater connection. This principle inspired 'the pictures' I created for this book. If you are being asked to present on topic, avoid the temptation trap of listing bullet points and looking and talking to these. Use visuals instead and structure the conversation.

I am a big fan on acronyms and the concept of threes and fives—this book is an example. When speaking about the D-I-R-T-Y model, I immediately have five sections and will require areas under each section. This is twenty pieces of content:

- Each letter of the D-I-R-T-Y acronym (5 sections)
- Three points under each section (15 sections)

Further, subject to the brief, you can either choose to cover all sections or go deeper into a section. The beauty of this approach is you can use images and tell stories that make your content more personable, memorable and relevant.

Start thinking about your stories. Document them and simplify them so they are relatable.

Relevance recap

The Relevance section is broad; here is a succinct snapshot:

- **Risk:** build the **capability across employees** as it will increase the velocity of delivery.
- **Rightsizing:** avoid tinkering and **analyse roles by their technical and leadership criticality**. The remaining additional roles are areas of opportunity.
- Proactively **manage your career**, determine how you will **dynamically interact** and **serve the broader community**.

- Employee **experience creates an advantage** for organisations. **Be more like a lab** and less like a factory.
- As a **first time** technology **executive**, focus on **leading your team, influencing** the broader **business**, and **sharing thinking**.
- When **presenting**, use **pictures** with less or *no* words.