CXO
BY NTT DATA

A Culture of Entrepreneurs

How do you create the right cultural platform to attract and retain entrepreneurial employees, and help drive growth during disruption?

INSIDE ISSUE 1: Creating the platform for Entrepreneurial Culture Walter Ruffinoni, CEO NTT DATA EMEA // **The Most Important Leadership Quality Is Innately Human** Swen Rehders, MD NTT DATA Germany // **The Power of Vision in Times of Change** Maria Metz, Deputy CEO NTT DATA Romania // **The Mobilised Organisation** Candice McGlen, Author of *Engage Us Now!* and member of the Forbes HR Council // **Lessons from the Combat Zone** Gareth Tennant, Former Head of Intelligence at the Royal Marines // **And more...**

Hello.

Welcome to the first issue of CXO by NTT DATA, a brand-new magazine aimed at corporate leaders.

Leaders today are facing a staggering amount of uncertainty, and CXO magazine brings together knowledge and insight from market leaders, experts and captains of industry to help them plan and prepare for the now, next and future.

Together, we're diving deep into the issues that today's leaders are facing with especially curated thought leadership and consultancy thinking - helping CXOs and ambitious organisational leaders like you thrive in disruption, by guiding you through current and future change.

The theme for the first issue is A Culture of Entrepreneurs, which explores the factors necessary – from leadership and organisational structure to the employee experience – to create and nurture the right cultural platform to attract and keep entrepreneurial employees. Our aim is to motivate and educate with original thought pieces from a variety of viewpoints from across the spectrum of corporate culture. We want to spark conversations in boardrooms across the globe – inspiring current leaders to make the right change at the right time, and guiding future leaders to greatness.

CXO magazine is brought to you by NTT DATA, part of the NTT Group, one of the top 5 technology providers in the world, serving 85% of the Fortune Global 100 Companies. NTT DATA is a global consultancy specialising in advisory and technology services, and true to our Japanese heritage, we place a major focus on cultivating long-term partnerships with clients, helping them overcome today's and tomorrow's challenges.

Thank you for reading.

Walter

Walter Ruffinoni
CEO NTT DATA EMEA

Issue 1 Contents

Creating the Platform for Entrepreneurial Culture

By Walter Ruffinoni, CEO NTT DATA EMEA

AVAILABLE AS AN

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In an age of disruption like never before, openness to new ideas – from every level of the organisation – is the first step to cultivating the kind of employee culture that celebrates and encourages entrepreneurship. And innovation from within is the key to survival.

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We started to live by one simple principle: sharing ideas is always a great way to innovate. We encourage people to speak openly ... there is no wrong answer to a question. This promotes personal entrepreneurship, rewards proactivity, and accelerates the professional growth of tomorrow's leaders.

World-renowned futurist Alvin Toffler predicted: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write; but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." I've personally seen the effect of this as CEO of NTT DATA EMEA.

A few years ago, the company was going through a rough time. Our business was slow; departments were organised in silos that made it difficult to share new proposals, experiences and, consequently, made it very difficult to innovate.

We knew things had to change. Together with our leadership team, we began to define what a transparent, dynamic, empathetic and entrepreneurial business should look like. That was five years ago. The cultural shift we made has transformed our company. Not only have we seen year-on-year growth, but we can now better meet our clients' challenges through world-class, cutting-edge solutions.

To place the needs of the customer squarely at the core of development, we put changes in place to facilitate innovation. We adopted a new organisational structure, based around communication between departments. And we looked outside of NTT DATA: we pay close attention to new business startups that are innovating, and ask ourselves how they could help us and our clients.

We have forged close links with universities and collaborate with over 40 colleges. We understand that the people in our business are its most precious asset. Last year, we hired 1,000 new employees and even continued to recruit throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, adding 200 new people to our organisation during lockdown.

I think Rohit Talwar, Futurist Speaker and CEO of Fast Future, summed it up best when he said, "The world is experiencing an unprecedented rate of technology-driven disruption, and humanity will see more change in the next 20-25 years than in the last 200."

At NTT DATA, we knew that the speed of change was accelerating. The ideas around Industry 4.0 are powerful, and are transforming how entire industries are developing. I wanted to embrace these changes and ensure our company was shaping and driving these disruptive changes – and not just reacting to them – so we are able to help our clients plan for the future. To achieve this, we had to make a cultural change across our entire business.

Entrepreneurial culture

So, what does it mean to shift a company's culture? In our case, we started to live by one simple principle: sharing ideas is always a great way to innovate.

It may seem obvious, but it is not. We encourage people to speak openly to their teams and their leaders with complete transparency. There is no wrong answer to a question. And even when comments are controversial, these are not criticised but embraced.

The goal is to ensure our people know they are

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a crucial part of our business, and essential to delivering world-beating products and services to our clients. It's vital our teams and individuals always feel they are engaged, involved and valued. We promote personal entrepreneurship, reward proactivity, and accelerate the professional growth of tomorrow's leaders.

Through this approach, we can foster another core value, which I'm sincerely committed to: diversity and participation. By 2023 we aspire to have 50 talented young leadership roles, with women taking at least 30% of our company's top positions. This is vital to ensure we have the range of skills, values, and perspectives we need to build on the successes our culture shift has delivered.

The future reimagined

The transformation of NTT DATA shows that the key to creating a shared corporate culture is putting people and their needs at the centre.

If we look at any business, we see that its actions and initiatives have a broad impact, first on its employees and clients, and also on society and the environment in which it operates. In this sense, companies have a huge potential as an active part of the community, and for this reason, profit can't be their ultimate and only purpose.

Over the past few years, as our cultural initiatives developed and began to transform our company, many of the ideas that emerged had a clear sustainability component. Sustainability for us is

not just paying close attention to the environmental impact NTT DATA has, but also considering our workforce's wellbeing, inside and outside the company. Connecting our people with their wider communities, feeds back and translates into a virtuous circle that everyone can benefit from.

Ultimately, making people feel represented by the message we are trying to convey is also fundamental for attracting and retaining talent. Younger executives and leaders respond especially well to the ideas and actions that define the culture at NTT DATA.

As all businesses navigate these challenging times, we have also had to become more agile and understand how work has changed. The changes we have put in place we call 'smart work', which we define as a new way to manage and lead people. We ensure that our leaders have high levels of emotional intelligence. This is shown with empathy, which forms the foundation of how NTT DATA makes work smart.

Society 5.0

The future of NTT DATA is to expand on the foundations we have laid, and augment the changes we have made in our culture. Our shift to more empathetic leadership and wider support of diversity, participation and sustainability will evolve into the future. To ensure this roadmap for change is achieved, we clearly understand that people will be fundamental to achieving these goals.

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For these reasons, the real focus of the future job market will be on soft skills. We'll need people who can work in a team, manage conflicts, and communicate effectively. This shift from vertical to soft skills has an important impact on corporate culture. As these elements came into focus, our business became stronger, more resilient, and able to meet the challenges we face today.

In The Go-Between, L.P. Hartley said, "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there." We can say the same for the future. How we define and influence what our future looks like, and how our business shapes that future, is in our control.

At CeBIT 2017, Japan's former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe described Society 5.0, where technology is used to build a more sustainable world and enrich people's lives. I think this vision of the future is an inspiration to us all.

If 2020 has taught us anything, it's that we need to be flexible, agile and dynamic in order to rise to each challenge and win. The changes NTT DATA has made to business process and the culture we have cultivated ensure that the future looks bright, sustainable and, with innovations we have yet to create, exciting.

Since starting as CEO of NTT DATA Italy in October 2013, **Walter Ruffinoni** has transformed the company with communication transparency, people involvement and clearly defined strategy. He is also the author of Italia 5.0, exploring the future of integration between public and private that puts human concerns - social, environmental and economic - at the heart of technological innovation.

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VIDEO

Creating and Maintaining a Competitive Edge Through Culture

Interview with Ash Schofield, giffgaff CEO

Ash talks to CXO about how the market-leading culture at the UK telco was created, and what it takes to keep a ten year old startup thinking and acting like a startup.

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The Big Four of Making Culture Visible: Actions, Rituals, Symbols, Stories

By Ozan Dağdeviren, entrepreneur and author o*f Startups Grow with People*

Being deliberate on culture building serves to make visible what is otherwise hidden. That is exactly why any type of (intentional) cultural change has to start by becoming more literate in the dimension of culture-building. Find out why Ozan Dağdeviren, entrepreneur and author of *Startups Grow with People*, believes that with the right lens, not only leaders, but the whole organisation can see and be part of the change.

An organisation is run by hidden rules. These rules are not hidden because managers and leaders try to conceal them, but because we need a specific lens to see them.

A huge part of understanding (and sometimes nudging) human behaviour relies on thinking clearly in these two dimensions: the individual and the social. Although psychologists and sociologists aren't too fond of each other (in my experience, having studied both), the collective wisdom of these two disciplines converge on the topic of belonging.

At the atomic level our psychological health – and even our very sense of reality – depends on our observation of others, through which we endlessly affirm our perceptions and beliefs. As the group shapes us, we shape the group. It is an endless game of route adjustment for us. This effect is omnipotent when we are teenagers: nothing is more important than what our peers think of us. It is no coincidence that this effect is the most powerful when we are at the most critical era of our personality development. As we age, we find it easier to depend on our own reality, but the group's effect on us is always there.

When pitted against each other, the human desire to belong to a group overpowers the logical and analytical parts of our brain. Not always, but much more often than you think.

Sociology begins the moment when two people interact. Passing by a stranger on the street, you

might gently smile, give a head nod, ignore, or puff-up and stare intimidatingly, depending on what cultural rules you live under. There is always a set of rules – invisible, but hanging up in the air – that we take as guidelines on what to do and what not to do. If these rules were indeed visible, then every tourist in London would be acting in accordance with the cultural customs of the English. Becoming a Londoner, for this very reason, has less to do with owning property in South Kensington and more to do with being able to decipher what people are feeling when the tube stops unexpectedly.

An organisation is a micro-society. Those who understand the culture very well can anticipate what will happen when a meeting gets too heated, while the intern is scanning others with quick glances to get a hint of how the group will behave.

Being deliberate on culture building and making culture an open conversation point, serves to make visible what is otherwise hidden. That is exactly why, any type of (intentional) cultural change has to start by becoming more literate in the dimension of culture building. With the right lens, not only leaders, but the whole organisation can see and be part of the change.

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While working on my latest book, Startups Grow With People, I have found a few common themes between the discipline of sociology and an organisation's people strategy. Those common themes allowed the structuring of four very specific concepts. At the absolute simplest level, culture is the answer to the question, "How are things done around here?" These four concepts are how people learn (and shape) how things are done: actions, rituals, symbols and stories.

Actions

Past actions are cues that help us decipher the intents, personalities and motivations of the

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people around us (just like competency interview questions). They work not only at an individual but at a group level as well.

Imagine a scenario where you have just started a new job. Two weeks in, you see two employees yelling at each other, their faces red and flustered with anger. This is an event that is sure to draw your attention. You will not only turn your attention to the event, but you will also be watching very carefully to see to what is going to happen next. You will want to understand how this will play out. If everybody has normalised the yelling, that will tell you one thing about the organisation; if they are fired, that will tell you another. And if they are called by a senior manager to mediate and resolve the conflict in a constructive manner, that will tell you yet another thing about the culture and values of that workplace. When it comes to culture, actions do really speak louder than words.

Ray Dalio takes huge (well-deserved) pride in the culture of BridgeWater Associates where he is the CEO. What follows is the first sentence from the principles & culture section of the website of what is arguably the most successful investment management firm, due to their culture of collective decision-making: "Bridgewater's competitive edge is our pioneering workplace culture that relies on

truthful and transparent communication to ensure the best ideas win out."

Their core values wouldn't stand much chance if their words of "radical honesty" were contradicted by their actions.

So building the culture you want starts by displaying (or making sure people in the organisation display) the actions that align with your cultural vision. When your eloquent and well-constructed speeches contradict with the actions people observe, they will decide by the action, not the speech.

Rituals

Rituals are actions that have been repeated in the past, and have the certainty of being repeated in the future. They serve as fixed points, provide structure and lower uncertainty. Rituals are independent of time and individual decisions (i.e., it is not up to the CEO to cancel a ritual without a very good reason). If something is a ritual, it is very clear if you are going to do it, when you are going to do it and how you are going to do it. These qualities of rituals give them an almost instinctively accepted certainty.

Nations make use of rituals such as national anthems, and fixed days on the calendars – not just for bank holidays, but to mark a certain national

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Cultures are constructed as the collective expression of our groups' social and psychological needs. How can we responsibly use these social dynamics that are embedded in our groupthink, to shape a company culture?

victory or major event. There are rituals around getting married, and death. As outlined in Imagined Communities by Benedict Anderson, cultures are constructed as the collective expression of our groups' social and psychological needs.

Okay. How can we leverage this understanding? How can we responsibly use these social dynamics that are embedded in our groupthink, to shape a company culture? The answer is to architect the rituals that fit with the values and identity of your company. Here are two examples.

#1 TMIA-OP (This Month I Achieved, Over Pizza)

This is an event that takes place at a fixed date, every month. Company buys the pizza, and people are invited to share one example of an achievement they have been a part of in the past month. People eat pizza, listen, and share their appraisals. Followed by a free-format chat.

#2 Why Do We Exist?

This is an orientation programme every new recruit has to complete. It includes an intense fixed reading list of key topics and books that align with the values of the company, followed by a discussion. It also includes a face-to-face with the leaders where they walk the new recruits through the history of the company.

Search for and find what feels right for your organisation.

Symbols

Rituals and symbols go hand in hand. They complement each other. Usually, one makes the other possible. Rituals serve our need for certainty and our dislike for ambiguity. Symbols make use of our capacity of associations. They do not always need to be visual, but are mostly so. This is because the human brain's visual processing capacity is many times that of the other senses.

Visual and auditory symbols such as the logo of your company, the design of your website, and the type of music you decide to choose in the background of your promotional video all have a part to play.

Where will you hold your next company dinner? At the best burger place in town, or at a Michelin restaurant? Both are okay, as long as they are consistent as symbols with your overall identity.

If you want a culture that is dynamic, challenging and goal oriented, the symbols have to tell the same story. If you are looking to create a culture that is laid back, sincere, creative and relaxed you have to choose your symbols accordingly.

According to the State of Employee Engagement Report (2019) 33% of employees aren't reminded of

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the mission often enough. The right symbols in the right places can alleviate this problem.

Stories

Stories create identity and association through feelings. The biggest difference between an edge-of-your-seat action movie and a "meh" one, is how much you associate and empathise with the characters. In one case, you feel for the hero, want her to survive or overcome the obstacles. In the other, you couldn't care less if she disappeared – you don't know her.

You need people who are invested in the company and who associate with its past, present and future. For that, you need to tell good stories – not fictional events that haven't happened; quite the opposite, the biggest strength of your stories will be their reality.

Dig back into your past. Discover the real reason why you have joined this company. Talk about yourself and your past, your failures, your successes, what has led you to being here today. Talk about the challenges you have faced so far, how this company is alive today, about the sacrifices you and other people have made. The story of how you got to where you are is also the story of the company and its culture.

Leaders are good storytellers and storytelling, like many skills, can be learned. You just have

to be convinced that it is worth the investment and effort. Over the years I have found the best resource for learning storytelling is Pixar's free online course on the topic!

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Unfortunately, in social sciences, we don't always have the clarity and certainty that is easier to find in engineering. Culture is a complex thing (as opposed to complicated, which can be understood with enough analysis; complex on the other hand, has so many moving parts that cause and effect can only be understood in retrospect). This doesn't mean, however, that the shape it takes is out of our control. It can be shaped, if it is made visible. To make it visible, the first step is becoming an organisation that is culture literate. What is one action that you could initiate today, that would nudge your organisation towards that goal?

Ozan Dağdeviren focuses on EdTech, startup culture and tech products. His experience is a unique mix of building tech products and working to understand human behaviour. Ozan has worked both in corporate settings and as an entrepreneur, applying his education in Psychology and Sociology to his work.

Podcasts

NTT DATA experts discuss the latest trends and offer advice on how to embrace innovative change in large organisations.

Supporting Clients In a Time of Need

Nothing reaffirms the belief that close collaboration and communication are the foundations of a good relationship more than an international crisis. The panel discusses how to be trusted partners of our clients by utilising international connections to build insight, whilst demonstrating high levels of flexibility and agility to their clients' changing priorities.

Teamwork and Leadership in a Virtual Workplace

As many organisations commit to a majority virtual workplace, the way we motivate and engage our teams will change. The panel discusses how the balance between work/life becomes blurred as we cross from the public space into the personal and the challenge for managers is to recreate the moments between meetings whilst driving authentic and regular communication.

Conscious Leadership: The Secret Ingredient of an Entrepreneurial Culture

By Hema Bakhshi, culture transformation expert and former Director of the Future of Work at Santander

A different time, context and challenge requires a different mindset. The trick is not to blindly discard what has brought about success today and simply recreate the latest tactics, but to challenge the assumptions that have underpinned past success, and stress-test the ways value is created.

The storm will pass. When it does, the world will be described in terms of the before-and-after of Covid-19. The global pandemic and a volatile political and socio-economic climate have shone a microscope on companies' business models.

As it has done so, it has brought into stark focus the companies that will thrive, and those that will fall by the wayside. The companies that emerge from this will need to grasp the opportunity to be part of and shape the future, otherwise their emergence will only be a delay to the inevitable. Here we outline an often overlooked yet critical ingredient of creating the culture required to survive and thrive this (and any other) disruption.

Redefining entrepreneurship

In recent years there's been a real focus on 'innovating from within'. Business leaders from corporate boardrooms have observed smaller, nimbler players eat into their market share with new and innovative ways to generate value for customers. Businesses with an entrepreneurial culture are unconstrained by a lack of past experience, which provides the permission to test and experiment, to fail and to learn. On the flip side,

large legacy companies have developed established methodologies of delivering change in their environment. They have benefited from structured processes, systems, and governance, that is deeply ingrained into the ways of working.

Driving organisational change has been achieved through approaches such as Lean, Six Sigma and Just-in-Time, which have been centred around driving efficiency. Put simply, innovation has often centred around creating the same output with less resources, be it time, money or labour. This approach has allowed us to reduce flex, waste and redundancy from our processes, and increase profitability.

However, herein lies the problem: the processes, and subsequently the organisation, become brittle. Inside the corporate structure, when something comes at us out of leftfield, we often do not have the time, money or labour to be able to deviate and respond with agility.

The previous foundations of success centred around a large customer base, access to capital, and a strong brand, but these are quickly being eroded by growth-hungry startups. The response has largely been to emulate. We've seen the buzzwords – digital disruption, transformation, agile, fail fast – they have all become part of everyday office-speak, as have the creation of shiny new job titles. The overarching line of thought for many organisations is 'think like a startup' – but the question I ask is, is this thinking flawed?

Conscious leadership – the alternative entrepreneurial mindset

A different time, context and challenge requires a different mindset. The trick is not to blindly discard what has brought about success today and simply recreate the latest tactics, but to challenge the assumptions that have underpinned past success,

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A culture of connection, communication and empathy brings implicit values, norms and behaviours into the everyday.

and stress-test the ways value is created.

Today, 1 in 4 people suffer from a mental health problem. A few years ago, Business Insider published an article about depression in the startup community, and according to the research 7% of the general population report suffering from depression, while 30% of founders report dealing with its effects, and more than 50% of those get to burnout.

The pressure is immense. The world of an entrepreneur is one which is filled with constantly changing goalposts and failure as a common occurrence, where rejection is rife, and the busy mindset is prolific. This far less appealing side of entrepreneurship is one which is often unacknowledged, and whose implications are ignored.

An entrepreneurial mindset is much more than understanding the tools and techniques used in the innovation process, bringing speed and agility. It's greater than developing an openness to change encompassed in the behaviour of flexibility and adaptability. It's not just an appetite for risk and big ideation. The entrepreneurial mindset that needs to be fostered inside today's business needs to be purposeful and intentional. Creating the space to think in order to respond is critical to success.

It's this increased level of awareness of how your people and their work come together to create value which unlocks limitless opportunity. Four fundamental pillars to a conscious organisation can bring exponential benefits:

1. **Make your purpose more than a slogan.**
   Having complete clarity around the purpose of your organisation, the impact it seeks to make, and the needs of the people you serve, provide laser-sharp focus.
   Being able to distil the core values of the CEO into those of the organisation creates an authentic link to knowing the mission you're on, the vision you're aiming to turn into a reality – and most importantly, brings it to life in a crystal-clear way for those working with and for you.
   Purpose is a psychologically motivating factor, and a sure way to bring people on your journey. It powers how you attract, retrain, engage and motivate your workforce. You can unleash incredible power of creativity and productivity if you create an organisation that has a strong purpose and a fluid strategy.

2. **Build a culture based on connection.**
   Creating shared awareness of, and alignment to, the core principles and practices counts. Knowing your people, what matters to them and allowing them to hear what matters to the leadership, requires honesty, authenticity and courage. When both successes and challenges are openly shared, you are able to tap into the thoughts, ideas and perspectives in a new way. A culture of connection, communication and empathy brings implicit values, norms and behaviours into

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Creating organisations full of vitality, where people can bring their whole selves to work, matters more now than ever.

the everyday.

3. Reconfigure ownership through collaboration.
The problems we face are new and complex, and the untrodden path is daunting. Real collaboration allows collective intelligence to be harnessed, and a previously untapped resource is unearthed.

A shift from top-down decision-making to collective problem-solving brings an entirely different dynamic, where accountability and responsibility are brought to the fore and trust and outcomes play a significant role in making progress. Concepts like holacracy brings this to life in the way decisions are made, conflict is resolved, and work is managed across the organisation.

4. Make wholeness and wellbeing matter.
Creating organisations full of vitality, where people can bring their whole selves to work, matters more now than ever before. Emotions are so central to our everyday functioning that they play a critical role even in finalising logical decisions. They affect what we pay attention to, how we weigh up information, the way we interact with others as well as our own ability to span beyond the here and now and take perspective. Creating a psychologically safe space where people can work through their limitations and unleash their individual superpower, nurture their creativity whilst experiencing a real sense of belonging

brings a huge shift in employee experience.

It's about growth...

Irrespective of the size and scale of your business, we are all faced with the same challenge of consciously creating an environment that fosters and facilitates growth. Creating an effective culture of entrepreneurship lies in striking a balance whilst enhancing humanity at work.

By increasing creativity and productivity, we can increase profit. Conscious leadership allows us to be more aware and thoughtful to our context, and more cognisant of the impact we can make.

Creating true balance in a holistic way creates a competitive advantage for businesses, and for us as people – as humans. The secret is that we need to consciously seek the balance, and fiercely protect it: an act which can feel almost counterintuitive to success and progress, but undeniably underpins it.

Hema Bakhshi is a culture transformation expert and former Director of the Future of Work at Santander. Hema is a Co-founder & Director at The Business Buddha, and is on a mission to inspire, shape and grow more conscious organisations.

Change Through Diversity

By Anna Budde, CMO NTT DATA DACH

Businesses that lead their market sectors all have one thing in common: they all practice diversity. Diversity is not merely based on gender, but also personality and participation. A diverse workforce equals agility, productivity and innovation. Anna Budde discusses how you could practise diversity in all its forms and transform your organisation into a leading company that understands the human element in success.

The ways in which companies make strategic decisions which lead to world-class innovation are manifold, but the foundation of all these decisions is the human resources that all businesses have available.

The people in your company are an asset that can transform every aspect of your business. The data you collect and analyse is, of course, part of your strategic planning, but the human component is more potent.

Businesses that want to remain successful have understood they must embrace new technologies which have brought, in some cases, massive change. Technology though, can't be used in isolation. A simple application of new technology won't deliver the innovative services or products your company needs – people will.

Leaders must nurture the people in their business: their innate curiosity, ideas, perceptions and unique perspectives should be the cornerstone of every process and action across your organisation. And for a broad range of these ideas, perceptions and unique perspectives, a diverse workforce is a prerequisite.

According to McKinsey & Company, diverse

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organisations are 33% more likely to outperform industry norms. When diversity is discussed, commonly the conversation can focus primarily on gender and race only. Diversity is much more than these simple labels: diversity encompasses the unique personalities of each individual in your business. Alone they can deliver a level of input your enterprise can use and learn from; but when brought together by inspirational leaders, the diverse nature of these groups can be a powerhouse for change. It's more complex than achieving a mix of genders in your company, and instead involves the creation of a complete culture within your enterprise.

Also, it's vital to understand that diversity and participation are not the same and are not interchangeable. Diversity is about the differences that people bring. By contrast, participation refers to the efforts used to embrace those differences. It describes how much each person feels welcomed, respected, supported and valued. In short, while diversity is about recruitment, participation is about the culture of a business.

Goals and values

Embracing diversity and participation are now critical for all businesses. Leaders must understand how the culture they are fostering across their organisations must be protected and expanded. As the landscape enterprises now find themselves trading within has radically altered, developing a culture of diversity and involvement should be a vital part of your business's strategic planning.

Often, leaders will be fearful of opening their companies to possible claims of discrimination. The reality is that when diversity and participation are clearly understood, they can be implemented without any potential negative impacts. But beginning a diversity programme across your business just for PR reasons is highly damaging and can undermine any cultural change you are trying to bring about.

Diversity and participation are not business processes your company can buy, or perform a check-box exercise against. Leaders need to understand the subtleties of implementing a diversity and involvement programme and how a shift in business-wide culture can achieve this.

I have spoken a great deal so far about business culture, but how do we define this? And how do we make practical changes to evolve a business's culture to become more diverse and ensure participation is available to all?

Culture is the product of more engagement and communication. The inclusion of a workforce in the strategic planning they often just see at a distance but have little or no input into, creates a culture of participation – what Slack called in their report into the state of work, 'aligned' employees who agreed with this statement: "I feel aligned with my company's vision, values and operating principles."

For business leaders, the critical question is how to develop a culture of participation and diversity. The answer is to practice more transparency and collaboration with individuals and teams. The

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Diversity encompasses the unique personalities of each individual in your business. Alone they can deliver a level of input your enterprise can use and learn from; but when brought together by inspirational leaders, the diverse nature of these groups can be a powerhouse for change.

interconnected nature of businesses today requires dynamic teams moving towards a common purpose. But culture is more than just employees feeling included in the strategic planning of their company.

According to Saadia Zahidi, the managing director and head of the Centre for the New Economy and Society at the World Economic Forum, this new era of work "is about being able to work and relate with your teams in a different way." She goes on to say that active listening and flatter team structures are crucial to building a culture of participation.

Culture also comes from an appreciation that every person in the business is different. They bring unique perspectives that can be harnessed by enlightened leaders – and note that I said leaders and not managers. Leadership and management are very different approaches that may result in similar results, but the journey to those outcomes is very different.

Culture creation

Aligning each individual to well-defined objectives across your organisation is how diversity and participation begins. Communicating your company's vision and development strategy is vital, as workers who don't have a clear understanding of what their businesses are trying to achieve will never feel they are a vital part of your business.

This communication begins with leaders who have high levels of empathy and emotional intelligence – as well as a well-defined appreciation of diversity and participation which, importantly, also includes a detailed understanding of the personal goals of each

employee. Plus, how these can be nurtured as part of the broader drive to create an all-encompassing and diverse culture that delivers stated goals.

As Simon Williams, CEO at NTT DATA UK, explains: "Psychological safety is one of the most powerful enablers of effective teams. It's important for us at NTT DATA to create an open environment where people can really be their authentic selves, and where feedback and ideas can be raised comfortably by everyone in the organisation – no matter their position."

Building a comprehensive and diverse culture within your business begins by an understanding that the trinity of authenticity, values and attitude drives a company to become unique. All of these components are supported by diversity. As a business leader, if you are not building a diverse workforce right now, why not?

Anna Budde is Chief Marketing Officer & Chief Communications Officer and Member of the Management Board for NTT DATA in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. She is a founding member of the award-winning initiative "Women inspire NTT DATA" and received the German Brand Award 2020 for the NTT DATA employer branding campaign.

Three Simple Hacks to Underpin an Entrepreneurial Culture

By Greg Eden, Director of Business Design, NTT DATA UK

We all need better ways to deal with change. In times of disruption, organisations should focus on creating a culture where change equals opportunity. Operating metaphors, inverted organisation charts and weekly experiments could be the key to creating this culture.

What does being entrepreneurial mean to you as a business, and why do you want to foster this type of behaviour? Is it because everything keeps changing and you need your people, and your business, to see positive opportunity in change, rather than negative disruption?

Let's assume yes.

So then, what attributes make for a successful entrepreneur? My theory is that it's the ability to:

1. Sense change early
2. Analyse change effectively
3. Act on change quickly

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Inevitably, the lion's share of focus and investment goes towards technology. In a digital-first world, this is understandable. More often than not though, the human component of the change challenge is parked for later."

At the scale of the lonesome entrepreneur or the small business, these three steps benefit from short 'neural' pathways that link the sensing, processing and acting responses. In a larger organisation these pathways tend to be elongated and convoluted. Subtle market shifts may go under-reported, decisions might be based on outdated insight, service change can be sluggish or, when it's late in the day, rushed.

To address this change challenge, most pre-digital businesses have 'agility' as a central theme of their transformation strategies. Inevitably, the lion's share of focus and investment goes towards technology. In a digital-first world, where the ability to develop and deploy code quickly is a fundamental of survival, this is understandable. More often than not though, the human component of the change challenge is parked for later, under-funded or 'covered' by the box labelled 'culture'.

If culture is the sum of beliefs and behaviours, and the context is one of continual change, then aspiring to an entrepreneurial culture makes sense; a culture where change equals opportunity if you're able to sense, analyse and act quickly.

But how do organisations grow this attitude, and enable it to function?

1. Test your operating metaphor

Humans use stories to understand complex things, and one of the most powerful storytelling

devices is the metaphor. Back in 1986, Gareth Morgan, professor of organisational behaviour and industrial relations at the Schulich School of Business at York University in Toronto, published 'Images of organisation' in which he describes eight organisational metaphors: machine, organism, brain, cultural system, political system, psychic prison, instrument of domination, and flux and transformation.

While psychic prison and instrument of domination may sound a bit alarming, the other metaphors are quite common, although they usually appear in different contexts. Many businesses aspire to a machine-like code factory, that emphasises repeatable processes that drive efficient output. Likewise, the brain metaphor is captured in the idea of the learning organisation, which emphasises feedback loops and continuous improvement.

In the context of continual change, the flux and transformation metaphor, which emphasises that an organisation is an ever-changing system indivisible from its environment, is perhaps the most timely model to contemplate.

Morgan's eight metaphors were developed in the 1980s; suffice it to say the world looks a bit different today. His message, however, is entirely relevant: metaphor provides a powerful way to view an organisation. They can be used to build a shared vision – a critical component of successful transformation – but they can also inhibit new perspectives where an

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If structure supports behaviour, then flatter structures are more likely to support entrepreneurial culture. This is because flatter structures effectively shorten feedback loops with the side effect of empowering teams to act, rather than pass messages up a hierarchical chain.

entrenched view obscures new possibilities.

The exercise of testing your operating metaphor, or defining a new one, becomes a powerful way to uncover competing and supporting systems of behaviour that support or erode entrepreneurial culture.

2. Flip your organisation chart

In the age of 100% connectivity, virtual teams, the gig economy and mushrooming startups, traditional organisations (by which I mean anything that predated e-commerce) may have looked at new-age structures like flatarchies, holacracy or humanocracy with bemusement. Yet today in software circles, the concept of self-organising teams is common, while just a few months ago 100% remote working was treated with scepticism.

What does this have to do with organisation charts?

The reason 'innovative' companies experiment with different types of structures is that they, for the most part, are trying to reduce the time it takes to sense, interpret and act. Organisation structure is a key element in ownership of a problem, how decisions get made, how people get rewarded, in how risk is managed, and in how businesses communicate internally.

If structure supports behaviour, then flatter structures are more likely to support entrepreneurial culture. This is because flatter structures effectively shorten feedback loops with the side effect of empowering teams to act, rather

than pass messages up a hierarchical chain.

To borrow from Morgan's 'brain' and 'organism' operating metaphors, feedback loops are like neural pathways in the body. The shorter they are, the faster messages can move, and the more perceptive and responsive you can be. As evolution has taught us, the ability to move quickly when it counts is a competitive advantage!

It's why Elon Musk's steer at Tesla is "anyone at Tesla can and should email/talk to anyone else according to what they think is the fastest way to solve a problem for the benefit of the whole company."

It's also why Gary Hamel, visiting professor of Strategic and International Management at London Business School, and the world's most influential business thinker (according to the Wall Street Journal) says things like, "management is the least efficient activity in your organisation".

His research suggests that the average ratio of "bureaucrats to support staff is about 1 to 4.7", and to paraphrase his wider discourse: if we found a way to make middle managers more productive, "it would raise economic output in OECD countries by around $9 trillion." That's a big number.

Re-engineering your organisation structure to shorten feedback loops, remove middle management and empower teams may be a seismic change. Going from traditional hierarchy to a Zappos-like holacracy overnight – where there are no assigned roles and employees have the flexibility to take on various tasks and move

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An experiment implies the outcome is not certain. This allows for an alternative outcome to be seen as insight rather than failure.

between teams freely – is not to be embarked on without due caution.

However, there are plenty of ways to nudge an organisation in this direction. A simple but powerful hack that is easy to implement, and costs you nothing, is to flip your organisation chart.

Very simply, when describing team structures, invert the usual top-down hierarchy to show managers or leaders as supporting teams, rather than the other way around.

It's a small change with a big message: you, the team, are the business; you are supported, and what you do is valued.

3. Add 'experiment' to role descriptions

Successful entrepreneurs know how to experiment. So should your teams. The trouble is that fear of failure, or looking foolish, inhibits many personality types from going beyond what they know they can safely do. For all the talk of failing fast being okay, in many organisations the culture doesn't sufficiently reinforce the message.

So here's a small change that can create psychological safety: add 'experiment' to a job description.

In a world of constant change you could argue that everything becomes an experiment. But by actually calling this out, and asking people to think about their work as a set of experiments, you can drive beneficial side effects.

An experiment implies the outcome is not certain.

This allows for an alternative outcome to be seen as insight rather than failure.

An experiment also implies measurement. This bakes in feedback loops and the notion of continuous learning as how work gets done. Experiment also means, or at least it should mean, a level of controlled environment where risk is accepted and designed for.

To take it one step further, set experiment objectives for your teams. Run a monthly or weekly experiment. State a hypothesis, define an execution and measurement method, and discuss the results as a group. Start small and do it regularly.

How many job descriptions ask people to experiment as part of their day jobs? As a C-suite executive, how could you experiment more in your job, irrespective of your role? How would you set up your experiment and what would you test? And what message would this send to the people around you?

Maybe it's time the C-suite all became CXOs – chief experiment officers.

Greg Eden has spent the last 10 years leading digital transformation initiatives for global telecoms companies, multinational charities, and the UK government. He operates at the intersection of customer experience, business and technology.

The Kind of Culture Employees Love

By Josh Levine, organisational culture expert and author of the bestselling book *Great Mondays*

Notoriously hard to define as culture is, now the rules have also changed on how organisations build it. Perks that provide short-term satisfaction won't cut it and the corporate loyalty of our grandparents hasn't stuck the generations. To thrive, organisations need to define their culture beyond the free lunches and casual Fridays and learn to utilise culture as a business tool.

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."
— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Sex in stairwells, absentee management, outright racism. The stream of reputation-killing misbehaviour continues to dominate news feeds. Reports like these are finally turning more than stomachs as business leaders realise the new truth of twenty-first century capitalism: ignore company culture at your own risk.

Mitigating risk is far from the only reason to embrace culture as a business tool. Some of today's best-performing companies, regularly featured on Fortune's annual list of the 100 Best Companies to Work For, point to culture as a major part of their success. Even outside of being a great place to work, the proof that investing in people brings big benefits to the bottom line is piling up. It's pretty clear now: culture can be a critical liability that

derails business in a single tweet, or a valuable asset that consistently lifts employees, customers, and companies. But how do we define what it is?

You know it when you see it

That's what most people might say about the culture at their company. What they really mean is you know it when you see its symptoms.

Free lunches and casual Fridays. Hiring practices, and employee reviews. How emails are written, and workspaces are designed. Defining culture as events, moments, and practices gives you a sense of what it is, but – like describing an outfit to tell your mom about the person you are dating – it falls woefully short of getting to the heart.

Company culture affects so many things, making it notoriously difficult to define. The layman's definition is usually something like 'How we do things around here' or 'our behaviours and norms'. Management guru Ed Schein sounds like Darwin when he describes it as "the behaviours that best adapt to challenges". I see it as the cause and effect of every choice we make.

Each of these definitions have their strengths; but

attempting to pin one down is like trying to look at those floating dots on the backs of your eyelids; the more you look directly at it, the more it disappears. Unfortunately (or fortunately), whichever definition you align with, you'll only find more questions.

There's a wide gap between knowing what it is, and what to do about it. To wield culture as a business tool, we need to understand not just what culture is, but how it works, and what we can do to influence it. First though, let's take a step back and answer why.

Constant culture

A lot of the people I meet think the culture conversation came out of nowhere. It didn't. In the '90s and '00s leaders discussed the idea, it was just rare. Back then culture change, along with large-scale initiatives like corporate reorgs and strategic realignments, were infrequent events. Now hardly a year goes by when a massive internal shift doesn't occur. Culture change is no longer a one-time event, it's a constant. Or at least it should be.

The reason culture as a term has become so prevalent online and in boardrooms is a better

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Culture is the cause and effect of every choice we make.

understanding of the term VUCA, an acronym that describes the state of business: volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous.

A quick survey of the past 20 years reveals this new reality, and it is what our collective anxiety has been telling us. Startups rise and fall in a season, and new ideas upend entire industries in the time it takes to tap 'I agree' and allow the latest app to access your contacts. The world is speeding up, fast. But speed is just the beginning of the new physics in which we live.

One foot out the door

In tech-driven hotbeds of modern capitalism, one of the most shocking signs of change can be found in the plight of the incredible shrinking tenure. In the 1960s and '70s, lifetime employment was the norm, and corporate warriors in the '80s and '90s dedicated decades to a single company.

Now employees stick around for a meagre two to three years. Corporate loyalty seems like a quaint idea great-grandfather once believed in. Whether it's a message from a headhunter on LinkedIn, or dissatisfaction with the job itself, it's only a matter of time before the temptation to jump ship becomes too much.

In the world of tech, there are too many companies willing to pay too much to fill too many roles. For better or worse, it's reality. Even notably non-tech economies aren't protected from this brave new world as this hurricane of change will

soon impact all cities and economies. Consider yourself warned.

The rules have changed

Before software began to eat the world, before the great speed-up, and before remote work was the norm, business was easier to predict. Managers kept employees happy, productivity high, and turnover low by simply paying more at every annual review and promising a title bump if only the individual worked harder.

Back then, the rule of the ladder was simple: keep climbing straight up no matter what gets in the way. Change of career: start over. Have a baby: try again. Spend too much time with family: do not pass go.

This linear brute-force approach was true in the larger market, but that too has changed. Hyperconnectivity and hyperactivity mean an unhappy customer armed with only a YouTube channel and a respectable following can flap her wings in China and cause a PR hurricane that disrupts the course of a business in Chicago. In this climate, culture is the only sustainable competitive advantage businesses have. And purposefully designing it is the only way to survive the knock-about, drag-down, relentless world of business. From here on out culture rules, and it is everyone's job.

Regardless if your title is CEO, senior manager, associate, or contractor, every choice you make is the cause and effect of the organisation's culture. Mastery will require not just assigning a person to

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Purposefully designing [culture] it is the only way to survive the knock-about, drag-down, relentless world of business. From here on out culture rules, and it is everyone's job.

be responsible for the care and upkeep of culture, but a team dedicated to the task of its support and implementation.

Like finance and operations, culture isn't a problem to be solved; but a business function to be supported, evaluated, and applied. Business has changed so radically, even the war for best and brightest isn't one you can win — at least not with dollars and donuts.

Why you?

In high-demand, low-unemployment economies like Silicon Valley, and more broadly the connected world, the tendency has been to throw money at culture problems like talent acquisition and retention.

Unfortunately, even free food, fancy buildings, and sky-high salaries no longer slow turnover. Seasoned executives who have got used to these perks that provide short-term satisfaction working are worried. As more work becomes knowledge work, and digital tools enable anyone with a laptop to earn from anywhere, the question every business leader has to ask is "why us?".

It sounds like an unanswerable lament, but it's a very practical query. Top-tier organisations, and those that want to be, better have a compelling answer to why anyone would choose to work with them for more than a season.

As corporate lifecycles and markets accelerate, leaders must grapple with how to create an

ecosystem of intrinsically motivated employees, who work together for the benefit of the company, their team, and each other. Business leaders now know that they need an outstanding company culture to find, keep, and engage the best employees. The next challenge they face is how.

Josh Levine is an educator, designer, and bestselling author, but above all, he is on a mission to help organisations design a culture advantage. His book Great Mondays: How To Design A Company Culture Employees Love was selected as one of BookAuthority's best culture books of all time. Josh is a contributing writer for Forbes.

Selfless Service: How Japanese Philosophy Supercharges Innovation

By Tom Winstanley, Vice President, New Ventures, NTT DATA UK

Concepts from Japanese culture have permeated across the business world, and with good reason; a mindset which welcomes change and sees continual improvement, humility and respect as de rigeur is perfectly placed to be innovative.

A business's propensity to change and innovate is based, I believe, on its culture. Defining what culture is in a business environment can be challenging; but when a clear ethos of innovation, leadership and diversity is present, companies can and will evolve.

One of the core reasons I joined my current employer was their refreshing and empowering culture that comprehensively influenced every aspect of their business. The sense of purpose and ease I felt was highly attractive.

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Well-established businesses in Japan understand that innovation is a marathon and not a sprint. Companies have long-term strategies to give their enterprises time to innovate.

NTT DATA is Japanese, and many of the business practices and philosophies from Japanese culture have helped the company to develop its innovativeness, diversity, and entrepreneurial spirit. 'Omotenashi', for example, is a powerful concept, which essentially means looking after others (or selfless hospitality), and can be applied to not just business processes, but how individuals and groups work, communicate, and above all, collaborate for the greater good of the company.

For the best Japanese businesses, the twin goals of service and quality have provided the pillars upon which they have driven success. Out of this relentless drive for excellence, innovation has emerged; not by design, but simply because the conditions were present for these innovations to occur.

Culture is similarly often not a conscious strategy, but a consequence of the drive to become a better company, serving employees and customers alike.

When Western companies try to define innovation, this is often very narrow. In Japanese business culture, innovation has many facets.

- **Kaizen** – change (kai) for the good (zen), or continuous incremental improvement
- **Kaikaku** – big, radical change such as fundamental changes to a production system

- **Kakushin** – to do something completely new and different (which Western businesses would recognise as pivoting)

These different and often subtle components of innovation have been driving how culture is defined and nurtured across our business since its foundation.

Innovation doesn't usually happen overnight. Well-established businesses in Japan understand that innovation is a marathon and not a sprint. Companies have long-term strategies to give their enterprises time to innovate. This long-term view also enables businesses to remain on the cutting edge of innovation. The NTT Group, for instance, spends $3.2 billion annually on R&D. This may seem a considerable investment to make, but this investment allows us to see the future and advise our clients accordingly.

Evolution and revolution

The concept of Kaizen has been filtering into business culture across the world for decades.

Less well known are Kaikaku (evolutionary change) and Kakushin (revolutionary change). When brought together with the concept of Omotenashi, these symbiotic ideas promote a culture of growth.

Entrepreneurship is central to how these concepts of Japanese business culture are expressed.

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> **Without emotional leadership and a diverse workforce, innovation is stifled. Understanding how innovation is not just one linear exercise, but a multifaceted, ongoing process is how the concepts of Kaizen, Kaikaku and Kakushin – change as a constant, radical change and revolutionary change – come together to create a new environment where business can flourish.**

Individuals, groups, teams and even outside businesses come together to innovate.

Then, time is given to let the ideas flourish. 'Nemawashi' is the concept of 'watering the roots' of ideas, testing them with stakeholders systematically to allow them to develop and grow into innovations.

Our approach to business philosophy applies outside as well as inside the company. At an event we hosted in Tokyo earlier in the year, Open Innovation, new startups competed across several industries – including, IoT, smart manufacturing, FinTech, and telecoms – for a prize of $100,000. This understanding of how new businesses can be used to aid innovation in the wider community, feeds back to the ideas encapsulated in Kaikaku and Kakushin.

We take all of these concepts and make them tangible. This is achieved with clarity of mission, teamwork, foresight, and always placing client needs first. Again, the concepts of hospitality and selflessness are central here. These reinforce the entrepreneurial approach the business takes to problem-solving.

Open innovation

How a business operates speaks volumes about the culture it has created. Defining values that are harmonious with the environment within which the company works, is essential to gain the empowerment embodied in the concepts of Omotenashi in particular.

Taking a philosophical and even experimental approach to business is at the core of how we operate. And these concepts are critical components of how organisations should all be built.

Without emotional leadership and a diverse workforce, innovation is stifled. Understanding how innovation is not just one linear exercise, but a multifaceted, ongoing process is how the concepts of Kaizen, Kaikaku and Kakushin – change as a constant, radical change and revolutionary change – come together to create a new environment where business can flourish.

With over 20 years of experience in consulting and programme delivery with a focus on the interface between business, customer experience and technology innovation in the telecommunications, financial service, retail and public sector, **Tom Winstanley** leads NTT DATA UK's New Ventures unit, working with clients and partners from startups to alliances to develop new business opportunities.

Talks for Good

NTT Disrupt speaks with world-class leaders about how tech can lead society for the better.

VIDEO

Amy Jo Martin on Renegades

The author of the New York Times bestselling book Renegades Write the Rules discusses the power of being a renegade.

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VIDEO

Afdhel Aziz on the Power of Purpose

The co-author of the bestselling book Good is the New Cool: Market Like You Give a Damn discusses the power of purpose.

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The Mobilised Organisation: Building Power through People

By Candice McGlen, talent development expert, member of the Forbes HR Council and author of *Engage Us Now!*

When discussing employee culture, much focus has been put on agility, or the ability to respond to change. But to remain relevant and competitive, organisations must also consciously lead the change. In this way, there is much leadership teams can learn from social change movements, where authentic purpose, a belief in people power and the removal of barriers to participation mean that grassroots mobilisation can have real impact.

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Organisations who wish to remain relevant and competitive in the years to come must not only be adept at responding to change, but also consciously lead change.

"Irrelevance happens when the speed of change outside of an organisation is greater than the speed of change within an organisation."
— Rick Warren

We live during a time where everything that can be changed, will be changed; from the way we work to the way we live our day-to-day lives.

Our interconnected and globalised world, with access to information and rapidly emerging and disrupting technology, creates a landscape for businesses that requires some soul searching to determine how to consistently add value, and remain relevant, in such a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment.

Expectations from consumers, employees, and communities are shifting in ways that require organisations to look beyond just achieving their bottom line, to how the organisation goes about doing it in consideration of the environment, people, and communities they serve.

While none of us can predict the future, many businesses are looking to establish ways to build organisational cultures and structures that are future-proof. Much of the focus has been on agility – that is, creating organisations that can respond to change. But organisations who wish to remain relevant and competitive in the years to come must not only be adept at responding to change, but also consciously lead change.

Before I started my career in Talent Management and the for-profit world, I spent a number of years working with social change organisations. I worked with organisations who used grassroots and community organising principles to build meaningful and positive change in local communities and around the world. One thing that always struck me about this work was the amount of passion, care, organisation, and emphasis on empowering every person involved to take action.

Effective grassroots movements are built to win, inspire action, create unity around a common goal, and make a difference. They're designed to be purpose-driven, liberating environments where everyone can lead in a way that uniquely connects them to the mission. As businesses continue to work towards building future-proof organisations, I believe there are key principles that companies can learn from the experts of people and grassroots mobilisation to build winning organisational cultures. The following are some of the principles organisations can adopt.

Be the change

It would be difficult to benefit from the power of grassroots mobilisation without having an authentic and compelling purpose that is also tied to social impact. I interviewed many non-violent direct-action grassroots organisers and during those interviews, I discovered that each organiser was drawn to making

> **Effective grassroots movements are built to win, inspire action, create unity around a common goal, and make a difference. They're designed to be purpose-driven, liberating environments where everyone can lead in a way that uniquely connects them to the mission. As businesses continue to work towards building 'future-proof' organisations, I believe there is much that companies can learn.**

a positive difference. Each of their stories started off with an ability to recognise issues and a compelling desire to do something about them. The organisers viewed themselves as change agents, or change enablers, who were 'activated' by their willingness to make the world a better place for current and future generations. They did not view their work as temporary or fleeting, but as a lifelong commitment. And what got them to this level of dedication was always a compelling mission that inspired them to keep going.

Application: Find a social issue that aligns authentically with the mission of your organisation. While volunteering and donations are great, organisations have to take it a step further by being the change they want to see. This means finding authentic opportunities within all of your organisational practices and processes to impact change. The UN's Global Goals is a great place to start to identify social challenges.

During onboarding, have employees set their personal mission within your mission. What's important to them? How will being a member of this organisation support their goals? What do they want their legacy to be?

Build people power

As a leader in developing human potential, one of my favourite aspects about grassroots mobilisation is the belief in people power. Grassroots organisers take on a facilitative leadership process. They believe that real and lasting change happens when people are empowered to act and work on behalf of their own self-interests. Development is an extremely important pillar of this work, as everyone is given tools to not only lead change and take charge, but respond to challenges and obstacles that may arise.

Application: Leverage innovative learning technology, tools, and programmes to equip everyone with the knowledge and resources they need to succeed. Provide universal skills such as effective communication, systems thinking, continuous improvement, project management or finance education to all employees. These are skills that will not only empower them to succeed and add value to customers in a mobilised organisation, but also succeed in their personal lives. Build a transparent and grassroots career development process – allowing employees to build and visualise their future within your organisation.

Remove barriers to participation

There is no agility or innovation within oppressive, rigid and confining structures. Often, organisations are structured in ways that promote groupthink, low psychological safety, silos, exclusion based on differences, and an over-reliance on the status quo. We amplify and recycle the same voices and perspectives, and miss out on answers and solutions that are available to us. We often miss the full scope of the experiences and untapped talent we have within our own organisations.

Application: Remove barriers to participation by

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One of my favourite aspects about grassroots mobilisation is the belief in people power. Grassroots organisers take on a facilitative leadership process.

mapping out and understanding the experiences of your employees through their lens. Is everyone experiencing the same organisation? Do people feel safe being their authentic selves? Do they feel that their voices, experiences, and perspectives are valued within the organisation? Design interventions based on your findings to build a culture of inclusion, empowerment and openness. Co-create solutions with the workforce. Bring people along for the journey. Host skip-level meetings and find ways to continuously break processes, thoughts, and actions that prevent people from reaching their highest potential.

Develop ally leadership

In social change movements, an ally is an important form of support. An ally is someone who may not experience the challenges of a particular social group but is committed to using their influence and impact to learn, educate others, and support the work of the impacted group.

   Application: Leaders should study the role of an ally in social movements to adopt practices that will empower and enhance the lives of their staff, customers and communities. How can you use your influence, impact and privilege as a leader to support your direct reports and customers?

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   When all that we can be certain of is that things will remain uncertain, we must become comfortable with adapting quickly – it's the only way to stay relevant. A mobilised organisation, based on the principles and practices of grassroots movements, allows businesses to do this. By weaving authentic purpose into everything they do, building capacity through employees and the communities they serve, and removing barriers to participation, organisations can consciously lead the change – and successfully lead the charge.

Candice McGlen is a talent development expert, member of the Forbes HR Council and author of *Engage Us Now!* Candice is an organisational and talent management consultant. She pioneers the category where social impact and HR meet.

CXO
BY NTT DATA

VIDEO

Responding to Disruption with a Culture of Creative Innovation

Interview with Caroline Miller OBE, CEO of the Birmingham Royal Ballet.

Caroline talks to CXO about how the Birmingham Royal Ballet has pivoted from physical to digital with such success, and why their unique creative culture has helped them survive the pandemic.

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The Power of Vision in Times of Change

By Maria Metz, Deputy CEO NTT DATA Romania

Embarking on continuous transformation is one of the most significant decisions a CEO has to make, but 2020 has taught us that we must prepare for the unexpected. Vision, ambition, commitment and conviction will be required of not only the leadership team, but everyone in the organisation.

As technology advances, we see business models pivot, rise and fall.

In order to prepare for and respond to the disruptive shifts that emanate from new technology, businesses have to understand how their transformation will mirror the changes we see in the world. Where is society headed? How can our organisation adapt to the future?

Needs must

As the raison d'etre of any business is to serve their customers (or end users) and fulfil their needs, all enterprises are by definition people-centric.

Humankind is constantly subject to change: political changes, social movements, environmental disruptions, technological discoveries. A complex intertwining of such events determines psycho-

> " **The individual, the business environment and society itself must become one in order to adapt to the new paradigm.**

emotional changes in individuals and communities, which translate into whole cultural mindset shifts. For businesses, all these shifts result in new needs emerging over the decades. Our parents had neither the same needs as we do now, nor did they expect the same standards in service.

Today we expect premium, modern UX in any device, car or appliance; we expect 24/7 connectivity and access to information, as well as remote working and a safe online environment for us and our families.

In 2019, almost 80% of the households in Romania had access to high-speed internet. By contrast, the generation before appreciated even a simple interface for their phones or appliances, not to mention transportation; they bought newspapers, watched TV and worked in a totally different environment.

The needs of the last couple of decades have led to new industries emerging – digitalisation, cloud, streaming, IoT, etc. – but they have also put pressure on business models.

Technology is disrupting business practices, and opening unprecedented opportunities. Business models embedding digitalisation across markets, functions and processes have become top of mind for CEOs in every industry.

In a recent survey, more than 50% of the companies in all industries globally have a digital strategy that is enterprise-wide or specific to individual business units, and about 30% of companies are in the process of defining one.

Preparing for the unexpected

As cultures morph and customer profiles are rewritten, agility is not just mandatory for staying competitive, but vital for the very existence of the organisation.

To foster an attitude of always being ready for the 'next normal', organisations must:

- Stay on the lookout for the new needs and trends
- Have frequent and ongoing contact with clients and potential partners that forge industries
- Create an organisational structure that can drive innovation from within
- Build a vision and culture that inspire employee entrepreneurial spirit

2020 has completely changed our perception of the world. The events of the last months have modified behaviours and sped up adoption of new tools, as we move towards an interconnected smart society (Society 5.0).

The individual, the business environment and society itself must become one in order to adapt to the new paradigm.

We are now facing an abrupt evolutionary curve that accelerates digitisation, forcing companies to be more agile and modern than ever before, while not overlooking a strategic, ecosystem-based transformation plan, as well as a proper business continuity plan.

As Deputy CEO at NTT DATA Romania, I've seen firsthand the payoff of championing transformation,

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The commitment of the managerial team must be rock solid in order to inspire and lead. Every individual must push in the same direction as you. Your vision, your goals and your culture depend on the way it is co-created with your people, and carried on by their commitment and responsibility.

business continuity and culture throughout the organisation. Remote working has always been available for all our colleagues, for limited periods. Consequently, going online was less painful both technologically and emotionally. At present, 85% of our colleagues are working remotely.

Nevertheless, working remotely creates a gap within teams, and a lack of human contact generates alienation. We are striving to bridge this gap through personal coaching, even for the CEO level, and through dedicated online meetings where we share our plans and our worries. This has helped us maintain productivity and team cohesion.

One of the greatest challenges is the lack of face-to-face client interactions and managing client relationships. Trust grows through human interaction; nowadays trust must be built remotely.

We all must adapt, at a personal and organisational level.

Client, colleague, company

Embarking on continuous transformation is one of the most significant decisions a CEO has to make. When you start as a small company and you grow into a global one, continuous transformation is in your DNA. You cannot afford to slow down: you need to be constantly on your toes, understand your clients, your market, and above all, your teams.

The commitment of the managerial team must be rock solid in order to inspire and lead. Every individual must push in the same direction as you. Your vision, your goals and your culture depend on

the way it is co-created with your people, and carried on by their commitment and responsibility.

Here's how we achieved it at NTT DATA:

1. **Vision and conviction of the benefits of change.**
   We moulded our strategy around the 3C symbiosis – the client, the colleague and the company, as well as the greater good for all of them – thus contributing to the mutual synergy, and changing the previous perception of the ecosystem to one focusing on the importance of collaboration.

2. **Framing transformation as a higher level of performance.**
   Transformation is not a one-off, it is a modus vivendi. It is continuous improvement, firmly rooted in our own experience and in the Kaizen concept inherent in Japanese business culture. On the road from a startup to an international corporation, the organisational structure of the company transforms: from silos of business lines acting like small companies to a complex, interdependent matrix system of competence areas, creating readiness for system integration services and delivery of turn-key-solutions.

3. **Stepping out of our comfort zone, following dreams and inspiring ambition.**
   In Romania, we started with a dream and a few people, with hope and determination. Two decades later, more or less the same team (after numerous transformation processes, and older and wiser) know that the only constant is change and the greatest benefit is knowledge.
   Growing a company from a handful of employees

at the turn of the millennium to over 2,000 by 2020, has kept us constantly needing to adjust everything to the new organisation size, and adapt business models to new markets and needs. This has taught us the true value of change and helped us master the art of business transformation. As such, we created a continuous transformation concept – internally branded as 'Alive' as we believe it to be vital for existence – that covers all organisational aspects:

1. **Reorganising delivery teams for better efficiency:** aligning with the legislative landscape, increasing the specialisation of colleagues by relieving administrative roles, adding new roles and reducing redundant ones, and focusing on the professionalisation of roles based on skills and individual strengths.

2. **Taking reliable business continuity measures:** secure digital and physical workplaces, with a top-notch cybersecurity strategic layer for remote working, even for some of the highly-confidential, segregated projects:
   - Audited processes and infrastructure (10+ audits each year);
   - Diversity and inclusion policy;
   - Security awareness communication: cyber-attacks prevention trainings and security bulletins.

3. **Creating sustainable, high-margin, product-based revenue streams:** this called for the design and implementation of a standardised product development lifecycle to help unify and consolidate the way we treat project management, opportunities, escalations and risks.

4. **Clarvision™ Business Suite reinvention:** while most companies freeze their budgets, we decided to invest over €3 million in modernising our Software Enterprise Suite, in order to bring an efficient solution and new modules for the Romanian market as well as extending the technology skills of the product team.

Transform, transcend

The difference between leading and lagging in the race for digitisation lies not only in the speed of operations, but in the investment made in tech-based innovation, daring being bold in budgeting and intelligently using data to make decisions. And, of course, customer-centricity in service and product development.

To stay the course, and outmanoeuvre the competition, organisations will need to bring together vision, strategy and continuous transformation. On the foundations of a reliable team and reliable infrastructure, businesses who provide the freedom for their people to innovate – and at the same time the security of change frameworks and scalable resources – will be poised for sustainable growth.

With over 20+ years of IT&C experience in developing strategic business lines, **Maria Metz** inspires teams, changes mindsets and nurtures a sustainable transformational culture, based on the symbiosis of the 3Cs: client, colleague and company.

In Depth

NTT DATA takes a deeper look into critical areas of organisational change.
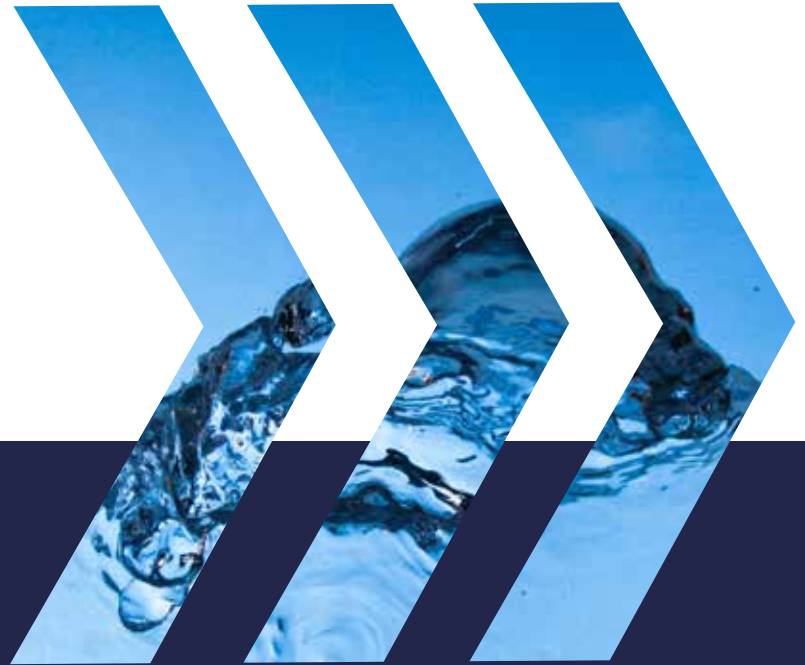
White Paper: Building a High-Performance Culture

This paper investigates how to build a high-performing company culture through purpose, meaning and entrepreneurship.

Scan the QR codes with your smartphone camera

Part A
Meaning in the workplace

Part B
Entrepreneurial culture for enterprise

By providing employees with true purpose and the right cultural backdrop, organisations can supercharge their performance. Companies need to engage, inspire, and give employees meaning in their work. Gallup, in its 2017 State of the Global Workplace survey, found that just 15% of employees were engaged at work.

How can we inspire and motivate employees? What lessons must leaders learn to build an engaged workforce?

It's long been thought that entrepreneurialism can be defined by the startup organisation. This is misleading and hides the reality that even the largest company can invoke a spirit of innovation with a few simple steps. Team size, decision-making and hypotheses are three areas where you can begin your journey in creating an entrepreneurial culture.

White Paper:
Re-Energising Employees to
Thrive in a Changing Business

The white paper examines some of the key challenges facing organisations as the digital revolution gathers pace. By understanding the new disruptive environment and connecting people across (and beyond) the workforce, organisations can become more motivated, inventive, adaptable and quick to respond.

Employers have a problem. New technologies are increasing competitive pressures and, at the same time, the expectations of those entering the workforce are changing.

But there is an opportunity for organisations that can energise the evolving workforce to meet the emerging challenges – for example by:
- Giving employees a stake in the future
- Making space for ideas
- Consumer grade as standard
- Freeing time for employees to make an impact.

Read the white paper to discover how you can equip, support and incentivise individual employees, realising the full potential of your workforce.
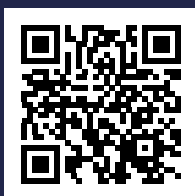
Scan the QR code to read the white paper and discover how you can equip, support and incentivise individual employees, realising the full potential of your workforce.

You Have Never Been More Important

By Jonathan Brown, performance & stress expert and author of *Stress and Success - Fast Fixes for Turbulent Times*

In times of crisis, the foundation of leadership and trust is competence, caring and character. It is vital leaders communicate with and support their people. Never has strong leadership been more important.

For the last decade, I have investigated what we can learn from the most stressful situations. This came after I had suffered a great loss, both financially and emotionally. I got caught out by the crash of 2008, losing $1m and experiencing an 18-month depression. This painful experience demonstrated that conventional performance ideas fail in crises.

So I began studying the toughest situations – where lives are genuinely at stake – such as in the military, being a first responder and in the airline industry. I then translated these insights into ideas and principles for business. Below are some things to consider as you lead yourself and your people through this challenging time.

Assess and embrace the tough reality: we must prepare for the long haul. We all want this to be over, but sadly this period of intense challenge is only just getting going. We have the turmoil of Brexit, the worst recession in living memory and the continuing COVID challenges to tackle. It's

> **To move from surviving to thriving, focus on relationships and engagement. The pandemic has changed what our clients value, how we deliver that value and the values of our people.**

going to be a long winter. Seeing and accepting the tough reality is essential for us to lead effectively. Reassuringly, we are built for struggle and conflict so we can and will get through this.

Focus on surviving in a way that promotes thriving: take stock, and replenish resources – both personal and organisational. Take a breath to help you regain and sharpen your focus.

Build relationships to improve value (and values): to move from surviving to thriving, focus on relationships and engagement. The pandemic has changed what our clients value, how we deliver that value and the values of our people. These changes can increase the friction (cost) of some actions, and reduce them for new ones. See what's changed and use these revised values to focus on delivering value.

Improve your leadership with the three Cs

To keep your network strong, build trust through better leadership. US battlefield research shows that followers look for the three Cs: competence, caring, and character. Think about what answers your people will have seen in your behaviour over the last 6 months:

Are you good at your job? Do you care about them as people? Can they trust you to do what's right for everyone?

If your people had any doubts about your answers to these questions, they're not in any doubt now. This year, you may have had to move faster than you wanted, without explaining why. When fear is

high, people assume the worst. Go back and clear up any misunderstandings.

Connect with meaning. It's our job as leaders to help our people see that all the struggle we've had is worth it, and that they are doing the right thing sticking with us. We do this best when we reaffirm our own commitment to our roles and to the mission we took on. A stronger sense of purpose – that what you are doing matters – is essential to get you through the darkest nights. Much of this is simply helping people see beyond the immediate crisis.

Give people a clear vision on how we will win in the next 12 months. Stress is hard when we can't seem to make progress. Given all the government rules, a feeling of progress has been in short supply. Communicate how you visualise being successful as a business to staff. If you don't know, then engage your people with the question and your best ideas so far positively and openly.

Test the most promising ideas. This means instead of attempting to find one best answer, test and engage with your network to answer today's questions faster than your competition.

Ensure we all get through this

Help the helpers first – those who have been doing most to help others in this crisis. Focus first on their health and recovery, such as by getting health tests and individual health plans if you have the resources. Then, have the strengthened helpers cascade this health and recovery focus throughout the organisation.

Also of paramount importance is re-establishing

> **Be sure your people feel supported by listening to what they need and then giving it to them (or if you can't, explain why).**

the boundaries between work and home. Most of us didn't plan for 'work-from-home-as-standard' but we can use it as an opportunity to create a much more humane workplace. As one of my clients said, it can feel like "I'm living in my office, rather than working in my house."

Reconnect in person, if possible. Meet in person as a group (conforming to the laws of your geography). If not, meet as many team members as possible individually, and encourage them to do the same with their people. The personal reconnection will come in useful over the winter.

Remember, support is a feeling. It is crucial your people feel supported so listen to what they need and then give it to them (or if you can't, explain why). Target your support, so that it can be amplified by others in the organisation.

Help people to ignore things. In dangerous situations, the pivotal decisions focus on what it's safe to ignore. It's your job as a leader to help people do this confidently. Encourage open information sharing. One leader I worked with in a strategic consultancy used to tell her people "I trust (and pay) you to solve problems… But, if things keep you awake, talk to me." Usually, she passed it back, but occasionally she was able to anticipate issues that threatened the whole project.

Finally, remember this last point: You have never been more important.

This crisis has clearly shown that leaders matter.

You matter. This year, we have all witnessed clear examples of the incredible difference that leadership – both good and bad – makes in our lives. Embrace the challenge and opportunity that goes with this. Your impact is now magnified, so see this crisis as an amazing opportunity to make a difference. Live the three Cs, and you and your organisation will thrive in 2021 and beyond.

Jonathan Brown is a leading coach and consultant to some of the world's top firms. His extraordinary recovery from burn out and his research into in extremis situations has given him a unique perspective into the challenges facing leaders and companies today. In 2017, he became the World's first esports Performance Director, and worked at four successive Worlds tournaments.

CXO
BY NTT DATA

VIDEO

Building a Culture Employees Love

Interview with Josh Levine, organisational culture expert and author of the bestselling book *Great Mondays.*

Josh talks to CXO about the six elements of organisational culture design and the future of culture after the pandemic.

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Purpose Begins at Home

By Paul Skinner, corporate purpose expert and author of *Collaborative Advantage: How Collaboration Beats Competition as a Strategy for Success.*

The pandemic has forced us to reconsider conventional approaches to management as we are united in a common experience, barriers between the professional and personal are blurred, and ultimately we realise our stakeholders are human. There is now huge potential for positive change in both social and economic spaces, if organisations look for the opportunities for good.

The current disruption facing society and the economy could leave us asking 'What's the point?'

But while a deeply changing context may take the ground away from not only businesses but entire sectors of economic life, confronting emergent realities head-on can also be a source of renewal, rejuvenation and innovation.

We may find our greatest purpose by leaning into our most pressing challenges. Many of the most successful businesses were launched during our most difficult times. As commentators have been keen to point out, AirBnB, Disney, FedEx, General Electric, HP, IBM and Microsoft – to name just a few – were all founded during periods of recession.

Humanity vs human resources

Conventional approaches to management thinking de-contextualise key stakeholders. The humans who work for us become 'resources' as if they were a raw material to be mined. The people who buy our products become 'consumers', as if their human agency were limited to their capacity to diminish the world's supply of whatever we happen to be selling them.

The relative merits of alternative courses of action are evaluated with misleading precision in

spreadsheets that are too often specifically wrong rather than approximately right. Frontline staff may be ordered to follow a 'computer says no' mentality rather than exercise common sense and empathy in the moment. The exceptions to these rules are so glorious that we can often remember them forever.

De-contextualisation limits our perceptions of what is possible; it causes us to overlook the real meaning of any situation that we face. And it tends to reinforce prior assumptions, rather than provide a healthy challenge to them. Above all it causes us to overlook the wholeness of the people we work with, serve or live alongside.

Recent times have made that wholeness impossible to overlook. A single issue has impinged on each and every one of us and caused us to change the very fundamentals of daily life. Working remotely has blurred the lines between boundaries, as we see colleagues become people again, stroking their dogs, getting surprised by curious toddlers, or losing the plot over their noisy neighbours in the middle of meetings.

One aspect of working from home that we have enjoyed is the increase in autonomy that it has given us. Many people leave the corporate world to go independent, but less often does this seem to happen the other way around. I have long suspected this is because we value our autonomy greatly enough that it is even worth a pay cut or a reduction in other benefits.

Participation, not pronouncement

It has become fashionable to use phrases such as 'employee experience' in designing improvements to workplace culture. But like many other management constructs, although well-intentioned, the concept born of the prior notion of 'consumer experience', could be said to belittle employees, as if they are the passive recipients of something being done to them: an audience at a show rather than the actors on the stage.

Autonomy can trump improvements in employee experience alone because we are psychologically disposed to be more comfortable with action that we shape, influence or control. That is why we can't tickle ourselves – we know exactly what we are going to do, so know we have nothing to fear!

Open plan office spaces can be a horrible compromise: not quite a meeting, not quite working in solitude; too noisy for reflective work and not gregarious enough to drive the creativity that comes from getting out and about. Working

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We may find our greatest purpose by leaning into our most pressing challenges.

from home and ditching the commute has extended the realm of the possible for many and given us a flavour of an additional level of independence that we've come to appreciate.

Once we accept the 'Zoomification' of work, all of a sudden the ground becomes more fertile for other forms of decentralisation to emerge, that could open the door to gains in diversity and inclusion and the performance boost these gains can bring with them.

No longer are managers limited to hiring candidates within a daily commuting distance (and nor are candidates forced to pay extortionate rents to get access to good jobs); the digitisation of work lends itself to a greater variety of contracts, such as three-day weeks or job-sharing. The added independence of roles makes them more amenable to an older workforce with experience but commitments, or who simply want to extend their career beyond retirement age without the stress of a traditional full-time role; and people who might for health or other reasons struggle with traveling every day may find it much easier to contribute in a role that's two days in the office for every three at home. It makes work 'people-shaped' rather than trying to make people 'job-shaped'.

Opportunities for good

Such a diversification also has the potential to drive important social and economic benefits. In the UK, it could ease the path to the 'levelling up' of the economy to raise levels of wealth across the country in regions that have lagged behind for too long, overshadowed by a London that has come to dominate the economy to the exclusion of people living elsewhere.

It could also support environmental drives such as the '15-minute city' concept, becoming increasingly popular across Europe, that aims to make everything we need to do on a daily basis available to us within a 15-minute walk – improving neighbourhoods and slowing climate change in the process. It could alleviate the devastating proportion of people affected by disabilities who remain long-term unemployed, and help us deal with the burgeoning challenges of ageing populations.

It is also a great opportunity for businesses who have been missing a trick in restricting recruitment to demographics willing and able to fit themselves into the confines of ways of working. We can recognise that this takes us out of our natural environment, and inevitably reinforces the siloed thinking that economists blame for lack of advances in productivity.

More inclusive thinking from more inclusive staff, working in more inclusive ways to serve more inclusive communities. That's one way in which a true sense of purpose, and not just charity, can begin at home.

Paul Skinner is a corporate purpose expert and author of *Collaborative Advantage.* Paul is an author and founder of Pimp My Cause. He consults with leadership teams to define ideas that create value and engage customers, staff and partners with purpose.

CXO
BY NTT DATA

EVERYDAY ENTREPRENEURS

United in Change

A film by NTT DATA

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NTT DATA employees from across EMEA share their passions and discuss what it is about the culture that allows them to develop their entrepreneurial skills inside and outside the company.

Lessons from the Combat Zone

By Gareth Tennant, strategy consultant and former Head of Intelligence of the Royal Marines.

What lessons can leaders learn from the military that will aid them in making effective intelligence-led decisions under conditions of constant change and uncertainty? In a world irreversibly changed, by acting with foresight and insight, business leaders can thrive even amongst complexity.

AVAILABLE AS AN

Audio Read

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> " As things become uncertain, the natural instinct as a leader is to grip ever tighter, to rein in others and try to retain control of the things within their grasp. They need to do the opposite.

As I looked into the cloudless Afghan sky, I saw the thin white vapour trails of the two French Airforce Dassault Mirage fighter jets. I knew I had about a minute and a half before the airstrike and was anxiously confirming the location of the enemy with the pilots. More importantly, I was also trying to ensure that the Marines I was commanding were a safe distance from the impact zone. Because of the intermittent radio communications, the thick vegetation of the now infamous 'green zone' and the fact we were engaged in an ongoing firefight with insurgent forces, I could neither control nor know with any certainty where all my Marines were. To ensure their safety, all I could do was let them know where and when the strike was going to be and to impose a limit on how close they were allowed to be to it. The rest of it was down to them.

The dust and noise of combat can seem a long way from the glass panelled offices and whiteboards of the corporate world, but there are some striking similarities in the challenges faced by both combat leaders and business leaders. As businesses face the realities of a world irreversibly changed – both economically and socially – by the impacts of Covid-19, it is perhaps a pertinent time to revisit the trope that business leaders are the generals in command of their armies.

The key to leading teams amidst uncertainty is mutual trust

As with my Marines in Helmand, when faced with fast-changing and complex situations, business leaders must trust their employees to act without constant oversight and direction. As things become uncertain, the natural instinct as a leader is to grip ever tighter, to rein in others and try to retain control of the things within their grasp. They need to do the opposite. Good leaders will focus on empowering their employees to make informed decisions, delegating authority (whilst retaining responsibility), increasing communication flows and forming high-performing teams that work well together and depend on each other to overcome challenges. Of course, this is an easy thing to say and yet extremely difficult thing to do in practice. To build trust in a team and for them to build trust in you, takes time.

Part of the process of building trust comes from cultivating a corporate culture that is honest, one which acknowledges the possibility that things may go wrong, mistakes will be made, and – by the very nature of complex situations – that not every decision will lead to the desired outcome. In other words, businesses need to prepare to accept more risk and become more resilient as things don't go to plan.

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> **In times where there is no external certainty, it is vital to find structure in the organisation.**

Of course, this is not an advocation of leaders taking a 'hands-off' approach, spending more time on the golf course or focusing on strategy at the expense of operations management. In the words of the great military philosopher Sun Tzu: "Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."

It is the job of a leader to not only create the conditions for resilient and agile tactical operations, but also to align them to the overall strategic goals. Whilst leaders must give their subordinates delegated authority to make decisions and the skills to adapt to changing circumstances, they must also ensure that people across the organisation work harmoniously toward clearly stated goals, and within the parameters of clearly defined ethical, legal and fiscal boundaries.

Change is more palatable when you own it

In times where there is no external certainty, it is vital to find structure in the organisation – to build a sense of collective resilience in the face of mounting challenges. In effect, to make the act of adapting to the situation routine. Transformation projects used to be particular events; now change is an everyday part of life, so businesses and their leaders constantly need to adapt just to survive, let alone succeed.

A crucial component to it is in emboldening individuals to own the change. This requires building mental resilience in the team. To do this, leaders must engender a culture that prides itself on its ability to adapt and problem-solve. This is why The Royal Marines recruiting slogan is 'It's a state of mind.' At first glance this perhaps seems a bit odd. An organisation whose role and selection process seems to be all about overcoming immense physical challenges has a slogan that focuses on mental strength. But of course, the reality is that facing the uncertainty of combat operations takes a far greater psychological toll than any of the physical challenges of war.

Maintaining both good communication and a sense of humour is vital. Understanding the reasoning of senior decision makers and working in a relaxed and fun environment takes the sting out of painful and disruptive change programmes. This is why soldiers still routinely manage to find humour in the darkest of circumstances. Above all, effective leaders need to be present, providing reassurance, guidance and facilitating communication. People tend to embrace being treated like a professional and not being micro-managed, but they also resent being abandoned or ignored.

> " **Dealing with uncertainty requires building mental resilience in the team. To do this, leaders must engender a culture that prides itself on its ability to adapt and problem-solve.**

Resilient and adaptable organisations have tight cultures and loose hierarchies

These two concepts – empowering people to adapt and make decisions for themselves, and aligning disparate groups across an organisation to work towards a common set of goals – is what we in the military call 'Mission Command'.

Mission command is the ability to delegate and de-centralise operations without losing control. It is the doctrine of empowerment through mutual trust, goal alignment and intuition combined to enable distributed leadership and decision-making.

We've seen this before. The (now somewhat clichéd) David-and-Goliath business story of tiny startups taking on global record labels at the turn of the millennium demonstrates the power of decentralisation. But Napster, BitTorrent et al, weren't the strategic winners in the music industry. Early file sharing platforms were too disorganised, decentralised and too numerous to capitalise on the disruption they had sewn. It took platforms like Spotify, SoundCloud and Apple Music to find the balance between decentralised execution of music sharing and centralised objectives of branding and monetisation.

Disruption and change are here to stay, but those business leaders who are willing to learn, adaptive to market changes and willing to take calculated risks, will thrive – whereas those who batten down the hatches and try to wait it out will struggle even to survive.

To thrive in uncertainty, one must accept that not all decisions taken are going to be right. But by implementing feedback loops, empowering decision-makers closer to the shop floor and creating a culture of learning, organisations will be able to quickly 'fail forward', and adapt to the changing environment faster than their competitors.
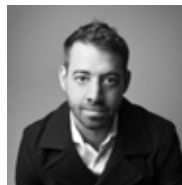
Gareth Tennant is the Director of Decision Advantage, and former Head of Intelligence of the Royal Marines. He is an expert in command, leadership and liaison in a range of capacities, from operational planning, coordination and de-confliction to delivery of tactical high-risk operations and long term project management.

Tech for Good

NTT DATA uses its technology and innovation capabilities to help its communities and clients.

VIDEO
Connected Conservation

Together with Connected Conservation and partners, NTT Group used IoT to track illegal human behaviour to keep animals safe and free. Connected Conservation's vision is to eliminate all forms of poaching, globally, through continued innovation in intelligent technology.

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VIDEO
Vatican Library Digital Archiving

NTT DATA worked closely with the Vatican to digitise the manuscripts in the Vatican Library. This extraordinary project demonstrates how advanced technologies can be an asset to preserve and share ancient treasures in order to archive evidence of humankind's common cultural heritage.

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In the Age of AI, the Most Important Leadership Quality Is Innately Human

By Swen Rehders, MD NTT DATA Germany

As businesses continue to evolve their use of automation, what does this mean for leadership? AI and machine learning promise massive efficiency gains, but at what cost? Effective leadership in today's agile businesses means connecting on an emotional level with each employee. An algorithm will never replace an empathetic leader.

In Star Trek: The Next Generation, the android Commander Data attempted to understand what it meant to be human. He failed to understand empathy and humour, as ultimately, he was attempting to reduce these human characteristics to algorithms.

Machines are ideal when large quantities of information have to be processed. But using algorithms to make human-centred decisions is something to be avoided at all costs.

A study by Oxford University identified which professions were most likely to benefit from using AI, and which professions could be replaced by

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Saying that all management decisions could, in the future, be made by an AI, is too simplistic – and misunderstands one of the most important aspects of modern leadership: the ability to empathise.

machines. Surprisingly, the study mentioned doctors, lawyers and even teachers – all of which rely upon a level of human compassion and not simply the analysis of data.

Another role that is often pointed to as being ideal for automation is management. However, saying that all management decisions could, in the future, be made by an AI, is too simplistic – and misunderstands one of the most important aspects of modern leadership: the ability to empathise.

Leadership by machine?

Apple's CEO Tim Cook, speaking to graduates at MIT in 2017, said: "I'm not worried about artificial intelligence giving computers the ability to think like humans. I'm more concerned about people thinking like computers, without values or compassion, without concern for consequence."

This insight, I think, is at the heart of the unique characteristics that human leaders bring to their companies. Leadership is much more than just decision-making based on data. And fostering entrepreneurship within a business delivers a new dynamic that can benefit all.

Great leaders understand the emotional aspects of management and can bring empathy to their roles. What's more, modern business leaders are prepared to expose their own emotions and personality to make stronger connections to their workforces.

Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, believes that leaders should strive for authenticity over perfection: "True leadership stems from

individuality that is honestly and sometimes imperfectly expressed."

No machine will ever be able to duplicate the emotional skills needed to lead a workforce. According to research from Development Dimensions International (DDI), organisations with the highest quality leaders are 13 times more likely to outperform their industry competitors.

Most of all, leaders also need to inspire, motivate and show empathy to a level that delivers a vital component of effective organisations: trust.

All successful executives and leaders have the trust of their employees. Their staff have confidence that the management will listen to them and act upon their concerns. Trustworthiness is also the foundation onto which authenticity is built. Employees need to be confident they can trust their leaders to be fair. When they speak candidly, this isn't punished; but embraced and listened to. This reinforces integrity, and ultimately drives the bottom line.

When an environment of trust is developed, this brings out the best in people. They think creatively. They innovate and feel they can accomplish any task, knowing they have an empathetic manager to guide them. Leaders should be confident not only in their business acumen, but also in their emotional intelligence.

The last component of what makes a truly great leader is listening. Empathetic people are great listeners. They have the ability to take the time to understand what is being said to them, and use

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> **When an environment of trust is developed, this brings out the best in people. They think creatively. They innovate and feel they can accomplish any task.**

that information to make tangible decisions. All emotionally intelligent executives can not only listen but also understand how something is being said. This appreciation of the context – and in many cases, what goes unsaid – is a powerful tool.

The trust that employees have in their managers also extends to how they approach each project and task. Taking the core qualities of the entrepreneur (creativity, decisiveness, vision, compassion) and applying them to how a workforce is organised, defines businesses that lead their sectors with world-class innovation.

The empathic executive

There are such things as happy accidents, born from unexpected detours from the set process. If we use a machine measurement to define what success or failure is, it removes the opportunities for these accidents, and the unexpected insights that could lead to the project following a new, and potentially more successful, route. Machines can't see or grasp these nuances.

Some of the most lucrative innovations come from development processes that are not well defined. Human managers can appreciate the often-vague parts of a project, as the human executive understands that a too-rigid approach can stifle creativity (which is, in many cases, where the critical breakthroughs in a project happen).

Again, trust is a core factor that teams need in their managers to allow them to pursue a course of action that is not well defined. Also, they have

the confidence that something new and innovative might result. An AI will never be able to have the level of trust a human manager has to allow this level of flexible innovation.

I've seen firsthand how empathetic leadership has unleashed our business at NTT DATA, and removed outdated practices that have no place in a 21st century enterprise. 'Unleashed' to me, means that the people across our business have confidence and trust in their leaders. This trust is, I think, something a machine would not have been able to attain. The fact that we care about each other's wellbeing – as well as the safety, security and success of the group – is what separates us from an AI.

A new generation of executive leaders is taking shape. Yes, they use the latest digital tools, including AI, to help them make good decisions. However, the decisions they make are theirs – and not a machine simply running a programme. There is little doubt that the world of work will become more automated, but it must also become more human.

In the words of Jean-Luc Picard, let's "make it so."

Swen Rehders is Managing Director at NTT DATA Germany, responsible for Business Development & Strategy. Swen has over 30 years of experience in IT and has held various management positions. He began his sales management career in the IT industry at IBM in 1985. Later, he was Managing Director of EDS (now HP Enterprise) for eight years and part of the ATOS Executive Committee.

Stop, Look, Listen: How Customer-centricity Will Save You When Everything's Changing

By Virgil Ilian, Senior Research Consultant NTT DATA Romania

The tech of 2012 saved us in our time of need. But organisations don't need to be able to predict the future; instead they must embrace customer-centred rapid-innovation, even when it may conflict with traditional ways of doing business.

True needs

Nobody can argue that 2020 wasn't a year of rapidly changing customer needs. Remote work wasn't a complete novelty, but the time constraints of implementing it turned into a major hurdle when the lockdown started. As one astute journalist noted, it was the tech of 2012 that saved us in our time of need.

It took 8 years for 3D printers, massive open online courses (MOOC) and telepresence products to perfectly fit the majority of customer needs. A decade ago, when most of these products were being developed, they weren't completely without an audience, but most customers didn't exactly know why they would need them.

That's the first lesson any innovator should remember from 2020. When the time came to truly rely on them, these technologies had already gone through several full product development iterations. As a result, having these mature products in the portfolio was immensely profitable.

Divination or deduction

Fortunately, predicting the future is not the only way to be on the right path. The 'customer needs' that validated the R&D investment were there from the beginning. We've only seen them amplified in these troubled times.

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> **Building a service and product to satisfy customer needs is about creating a long-term relationship with your customers. By making it a part of our culture, we ensure that our interactions with our customers are proactive and continuous.**

Obviously, customer-centred rapid innovation is a very powerful approach but applying it can be challenging, particularly as it can conflict with the traditional way of doing business. It might even be completely outside the comfort zone of some organisations – although this reluctance ultimately comes from lack of clarity. But customer-centred services and products can be roadmapped just as easily if there is a good sync between provider and client.

This relationship goes beyond just asking what the client wants. 'Needs' are not always represented as successfully as 'wants'. A famous and apocryphal Henry Ford quote describes this situation very well: "If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses." Discovering the true client needs means building a relationship that values two way communication. Ultimately, it's all dependent on the company culture.

In my team, we put great value on synchronisation with our clients for these very reasons. By addressing real problems and identifying the customer's perceived needs, a service or product can be created more quickly and with fewer mistakes. That's also why I involve myself in the technical discussions with clients whenever I can. When your product is built with the customer in mind, your team can respond quickly to their real needs, and that's when you can begin to deliver 'human-centred' customer experiences.

How does human-centred design help to expedite product development? Of course, we need to consider our customers and their needs to ensure that our service and products meet their requirements, as quickly and accurately as possible. But we also need to ensure that those requirements are correctly defined so that the final product will actually fit the bill.

Ultimately, customer-centricity is about listening, understanding and responding in order to make their lives easier, more enjoyable or more satisfying. It is not about designing something based on a predefined procedure, even if that procedure is followed with a certain amount of skill.

Building a service and product to satisfy customer needs is about creating a long-term relationship with your customers. By making it a part of our culture, we ensure that our interactions with our customers are proactive and continuous.

Engineering reality

The truth is that it's a new world out there. In our case, as we started to adapt to the new normal, it was clear that this client-oriented part of our company culture was of prime importance in the face of escalating confusion. Customers were faced with a reality in which the conditions of doing business were changing every day. To fit these needs, we took the proactive approach of filtering our own portfolio and looking at what kind of products and

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To better understand which directions had the most demand, we reached out to clients to clarify their goals and establish a common strategy for adapting existing IPs, or developing new ones that fit the reality of the situation.

services would be likely to gain importance.

By analysing government measures and the patterns of social movement, we highlighted a few existing topics of interest, including touchless interfaces, cybersecurity, privacy-friendly technologies and virtual assistants.

We have IPs in development that tackle issues in these categories, but at the same time, some developing needs did not fit well into the existing categories. We needed to invent new ones, for needs such as contact tracing, mask detection, social distancing and triage surveillance. To better understand which directions had the most demand, we reached out to clients to clarify their goals and establish a common strategy for adapting existing IPs, or developing new ones that fit the reality of the situation. Our virtual assistant technology has already proven to be a success and we expect the others to follow.

In short, even though it might require additional effort, customer-centricity should drive companies to constantly evaluate the situation and improve the overall customer experience. They should actively engage with their customers to understand their requirements and expectations. Customers, on the other hand, should also show interest and empathy while applying their valuable feedback to develop products or services.

Digital communication is all we have right now, so it is necessary to set up feedback loops at both ends. The feedback should be relevant to the product development process and should be provided quickly. This helps organisations identify and address the potential problems and to understand their customers' needs. Overall, customer-centric approaches may seem daunting but they build mutually beneficial relationships that lead ultimately to better products and services, and a better experience for all.
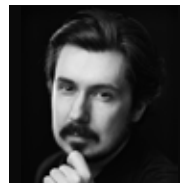
Virgil Ilian is a creative researcher, academic and entrepreneur, who's passionate about new technologies. Pushing the limits of technology has led him to become an evangelist for AI and blockchain. Virgil has taught at the Polytechnics University of Bucharest for 11 years, and spent 10 years providing consulting services for organisations that want to innovate. Virgil has a PhD in Robotics, Reliability and Machine Learning, and has been involved in several mobility academic programs around the world.

Going Systemic: Surviving and Thriving in the Uncertainty Economy

By Antonio Grillo, Design Director at Tangity

Future-proofing our organisations is only possible when we start to see the world through a new lens, and adjust to conditions of uncertainty with radical rethinking.

Survival in business, as in biology, cannot be achieved without the process of adaptation. To prevent the 'Blockbuster Effect', companies must invoke a new, systemic view of the business landscape, especially during this time of uncertainty.

The search for the elusive 'new normal' is futile, merely a retrograde step towards restoring a status quo that was showing signs of wear across the planet. What's even worse is trying to lift old structures and place them directly on top of new world conditions – for instance, transplanting the office to the home; conversations straight to video; or dumping training onto an intranet portal.

Radical thinking through a new lens is essential; a systemic view which considers products, services and business as one interconnected space.

In the new system, products are not merely accomplishing isolated tasks, but enabling entirely new services and revenue streams.

The 'adaptive status quo' mindset

Human capital is essential for growth, and the systemic view sees an ecosystem of users; both customers and employees who have a set of unique and universal needs that we must fill.
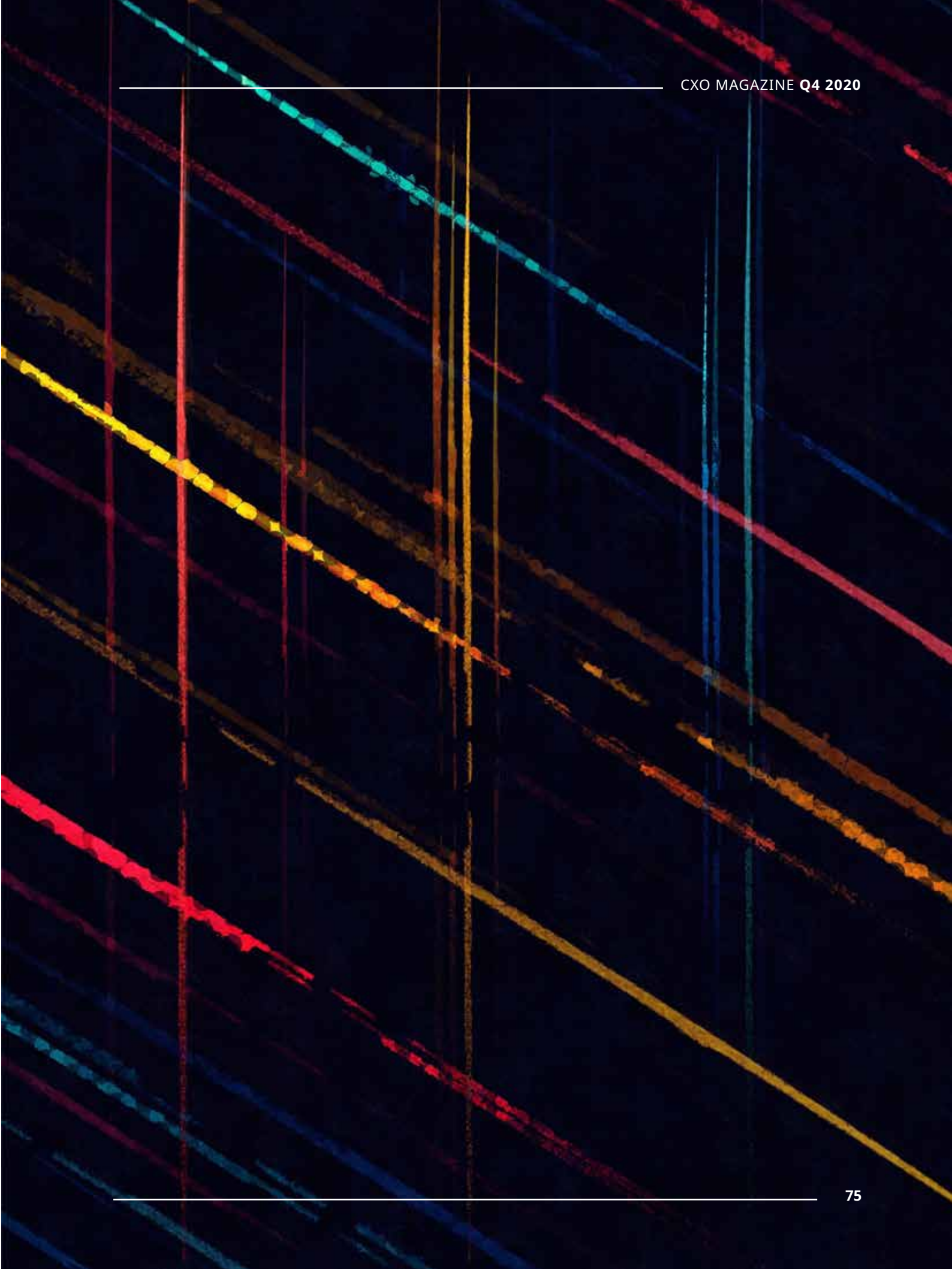
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Yesterday's sole focus on user experience in design is changing. Viewing our role as designers under a systemic lens moves the criteria from a customer focus to incorporate the entire ecosystem.

The way to build this capital is to focus on creating an Adaptive Status Quo mindset within our workforce, so that we can act together to meet the challenges that the future presents.

The mindset builds on a set of fundamental human needs that are at once social (in the way that we interact), spiritual (in the way we take on ideas and beliefs) and emotional (in the way that we process the world around us).

Valuable engagement happens at the intersection of these elements of human nature, and here we can build an adaptive status quo – which will allow business and technology to thrive, and individuals to grow, with the ability to innovate rapidly.

To create an adaptive status quo mindset, a focus on building soft skills is essential.

- Listening – understanding people's behavioural evolutions, a critical aspect of the economy of uncertainty.
- Prioritising inclusion – capitalising on the power of thought and action diversity with full workforce participation.
- Systemic view – visualising the interconnected nature of the world.
- Agility – adapting a capability to launch, test, and iterate quickly.
- Foresight – intercepting emerging ecosystems and technology to experiment.

Agility is critical

Crises tend to accelerate pre-existing economic trends and speed up the adoption rate, such as we have seen with digital payments during the pandemic. Building fast adoption principles – ideate, user-test and iterate cycles – can expedite access to new markets.

Growing an adaptable status quo mindset alongside understanding the emerging markets and technology is the key to running a profitable business in a time of uncertainty.

Consider the exponential growth of these, for example:

- The micro-mobility market is predicted to grow to $200-300bn by 2030.
- Remote patient monitoring and care market is due to grow by 8.76% in the next ten years.
- The 'Local Economy' marketplace and growth of in-home consumption and last-mile delivery.

Designing great experiences is no longer enough – they must be responsible too

Yesterday's sole focus on user experience in design is changing. Viewing our role as designers under a systemic lens moves the criteria from a customer focus to incorporate the entire ecosystem.

Environmental and economic disparities are, in part, the consequences of past design choices. Fossil

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> **As leaders, we must focus on applying a systemic, holistic viewpoint to the creation of new products, one which considers their impact over the long term on people and society.**

fuelled transport options, for example, were created to solve the problem of taking people from one place to another, but the environmental consequences were not considered.

As leaders, we must focus on applying a systemic, holistic viewpoint to the creation of new products, one which considers their impact over the long term on people and society. This represents a unique opportunity to take a leading role in the new 'renaissance of humanity', operating with a systemic vantage point to shape a new and better standard for all.

Design responsibility goes beyond the design of unique experiences that focus only on the present: designing with just the users in mind is not enough to guarantee a positive impact on society.

Keep your employees front of mind

Our adaptive status quo mindset must extend to our employee experience. No longer should we aim to control their time and limit their capability to within the scope of their tasks.

Understanding the emotional landscape and how this will naturally shift during a time of turmoil is critical to the survival of firms in the new, post-Covid-19 era.

One way to treat our employees as users is to implement a design process, or toolkit, to ensure that the core elements of employee experience – culture, spaces and tools – are available for all. At every rung of the hierarchy, the principles of accessibility must be applied. We must strive to ensure there are no economic, cognitive, physical or cultural barriers to inclusion.

The uncertainty economy

I believe we can survive and thrive in the current economy of uncertainty by living by the principles of an adaptive status quo mindset. To do this, invest in your workforce through soft skill human capital development. Capitalise on an adaptable mindset to allow for rapid product design, fast adoption and profitability; and consider all agents in the business as users. As a responsible leader, be conscious of the impact of your products, services and business over time – will they benefit society? By adopting a systemic view – appreciating the interconnected nature of social groups, our environment and industry – we can redefine our products, our services and even the very fabric of our company culture.

Antonio Grillo is Design Director at Tangity and inclusive design professor at the Design School of Politecnico di Milano. Antonio has over 20 years of experience in product and service design, across many geographies and sectors.

A Toolkit for Culture Innovation

By Cantemir Mihu, CTO NTT DATA Romania

Creating the culture for an entrepreneurial mindset to flourish takes more than a shift in management. A robust toolkit with creativity at its heart, nurtured and encouraged through day-to-day business is required for true behavioural change.

Fostering an entrepreneurial mindset in the next generation of the workforce needs not only a paradigm shift in management but a robust framework, in order to break old habits and ways of thinking. Culture, as with any aspect of business, has to be approached strategically and with a well-defined methodology. To build a culture of entrepreneurship, leaders need to be asking: how can our people be helped to be bold innovators? How do I drive the change needed for hierarchical structures to become flatter? And how do we align with the changes and shifts in wider society?

Adapting to Society 5.0

Society 5.0, a concept originating from Japan, brings the technological innovations from the digital age in which we live, in line with new social and economic needs. This new world is 'super-smart', answering very pressing questions in society (such as how to support a growing ageing population and protect our natural environment) with radical tech-based solutions.

It is so named because of the shifts in organised human activity, from hunter-gatherer (1.0) to agricultural (2.0) and industrialised (3.0), through to the information age of the last 25 years (Society 4.0). This next iteration is firmly focused on meeting real and vital needs, by leveraging the entrepreneurial spirit of the best and brightest.

Romanian culture is a natural backdrop for entrepreneurial spirit, which has invention and
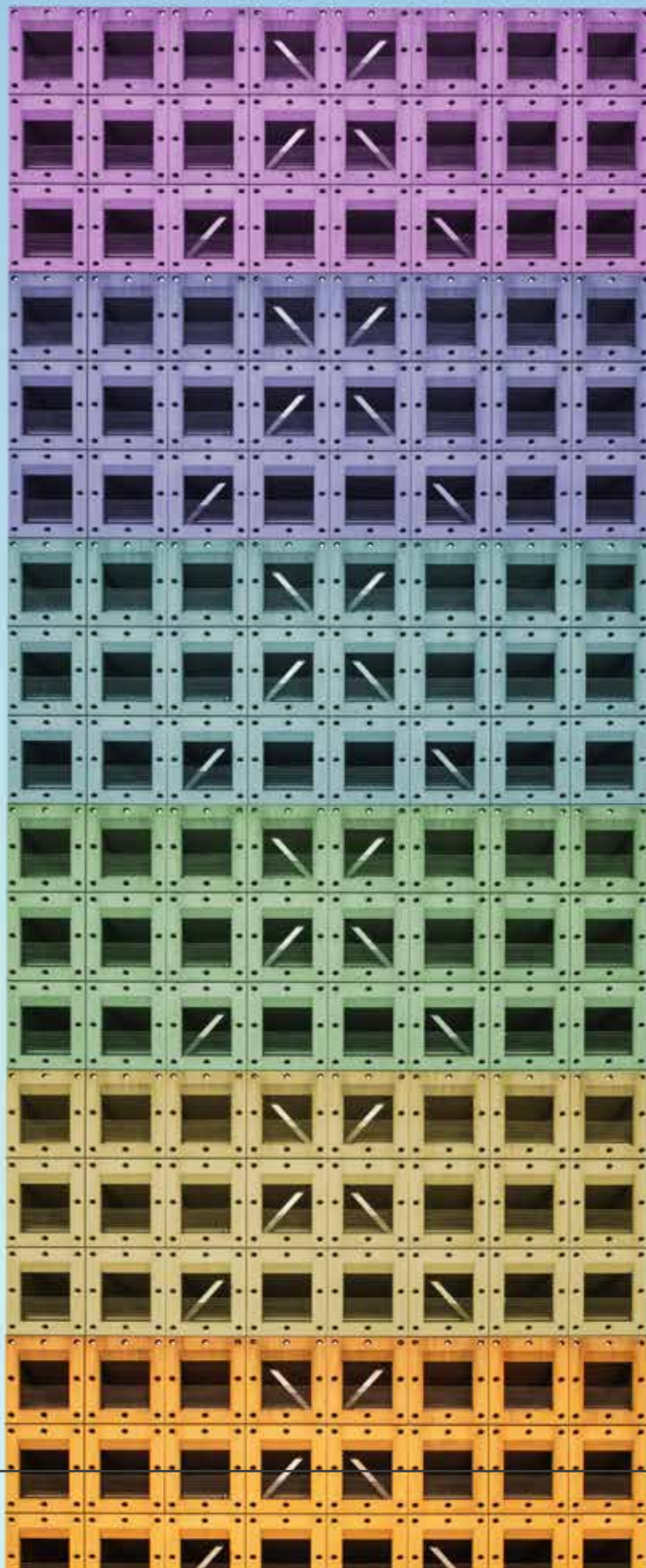
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Going from startup to medium-sized enterprise and then to global business, we have seen a steady increase in the desire to innovate amongst our people. So, we created a space for them to do this.

creativity at its heart. Both in and out of corporate culture, the innovative spirit is evident, with the numbers of self-employed higher than the European average at 16.4% of the population. It also has one of the highest TEA (or Total Entrepreneurial Activities) rates in Europe which measures the proportion of the population involved in starting or managing a business less than 3½ years old.

With several globally-renowned inventions in aviation, physics, medicine and art (including the jetpack, the discovery of insulin, and the Hyper CD-ROM), innovation is front-and-centre for many industries.

In my role as CTO at NTT DATA Romania, I have seen first-hand how technology is accompanied by creativity and advisory insight, and the infusion of young entrepreneurs is easily spotted in our customised client solutions.

Innovation in our DNA

Creativity needs to be channelled in a business environment. It has to be nurtured through a proper framework for entrepreneurial skills to manifest in day-to-day business. In our team, we approach it through the Innovation DNA Framework, which is our internal guideline for fuelling and channelling innovation ideas. From a technical person's point of view, for each idea you need a reason, a process and a methodical approach.

Over the last 20 years, going from startup to

medium-sized enterprise and then to global business, we have seen a steady increase in the desire to innovate amongst our people.

So we offered them the right space to create new solutions, and to create with more focus:

- A platform for innovation that gathers ideas
- A comprehensive knowledge database for technology, market insights and services and solutions catalogues
- Lean process
- The opportunity to internally finance their own ideas, as well as finding solutions for improvement.

All the above work only in conjunction with market environment and client needs, wrapped in a continuous change and improvement model.

Social shifts

Our digital age is known as the fourth industrial revolution, with the technology of the 1990s and the new millennium bringing never-before-seen process optimisation. Today's smart factories still focus on process and productivity automation. But the latest shifts in society from the last decade, show that for technology to realise its full potential, the human experience must be squarely at the centre.

This is the basis for Society 5.0: that the full potential of AI and cutting-edge technology is transfused with making the world better. As such, for an organisation to adapt, it needs to refactor

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> **For an organisation to adapt, it needs to refactor itself – transforming around people and nurturing innovation from within, in a fast-paced manner and with an unwavering focus on three aspects: behaviour, competence and technology.**

itself – transforming around people and nurturing innovation from within, in a fast-paced manner and with an unwavering focus on three aspects:

- Behaviour
- Competence
- Technology

Three building blocks

Behaviour

At the behavioural level, we need to understand that we are all part of an ecosystem – businesses, social groups, citizens – while technology is the vital link that gives substance to this ecosystem. Engagement on a behavioural level is the most sensitive of tasks, since you are not asking people to change the way they work, but the way they intrinsically think and judge situations. Not just for those who enter the circle of trust, but for all your employees.

This is all about vision and purpose. A consistent message, consistently and continuously reinforced through internal comms to all your employees, helps to ensure they know the organisational vision inside-out, and can make decisions with the vision as their guiding star. The vision should encourage people to come up with innovative improvements for internal processes. By assuming responsibility proactively, your people will become independent and more powerful.

Competence

Like master craftsmen, business leaders must always be improving. Change across the second level happens through improving competencies; investment in training and skills development is vital to spark the entrepreneurial spirit. With expert L&D and a focus on value propositions rather than products and services, you can foster that consultancy mindset – developing your portfolio with a firm focus on tackling your clients' needs.

Having the right tools – tested, time-efficient workflows, smart collaboration software and a reliable internal infrastructure – ensures your budding craftsmen have everything they need to create a masterpiece.

And, as we go from business-as-usual to change-as-usual, employee development programmes in Project, Change and Crisis Management are no-brainers for all companies.

Technology

The needs of our new society require us to apply quick remedies to new ways of doing things, by means of new technologies. Easy, right?

The truth is that customer expectations are the highest they have ever been, thanks to developments in tech and fierce competition in markets new and old. The question we are all asking is, of course: how do we stay in business 10 years from now?

Focusing technology back to the essential human

needs, as today's markets necessitate, requires a rather different way of looking at things, and that is where the true shift in digital transformation begins: technology growth in the sectors where primarily employees, clients or citizens are served. The answer should not only show new revenue streams from meeting new needs, but also stand its ground against socio-political and environmental challenges.

Innovation in this new context means identifying the needs of a new culture – needs which materialise with emergent technologies. Because conventional technologies can only do so much, R&D departments have now gained the function of using innovative mixes of cutting-edge tech and customer insight to solve emerging customer needs.

Within digital transformation, the IT element is simply answering the question: what technologies are required to fill those needs? No matter whether it's for internal process improvement or for marketing, the question remains the same. Innovating across the centuries, this question never changed; but today this same question is trickier to answer, giving rise to a new breed of technology consultants and IT integrators.

Transformation in both corporate and societal environments may always follow the same schematic structure, but implementing it requires experience, skill and creativity.

Building a culture of innovators

For many, the familiar structure of a toolkit or framework provides a welcome antidote to the rate of change – and by extension, the rate of adaptation required – that we're all facing, in business and in our personal lives. But disruption and change can be a very powerful catalyst for the most world-changing inventions. To build a culture of innovators:

- Invest in your employees' entrepreneurial skills
- Be clear on your expectations, and walk the talk
- Create the right methodology
- Model your business through the right framework

Entrepreneurial spirit, strong corporate culture and the technological journey towards Society 5.0 are all components of an innovation framework that empowers employees to be innovators. In this way, you can help your workforce not only contribute to clients' and stakeholders' welfare, but the whole organisational environment, and our whole societal ecosystem.

Cantemir Mihu focuses on delivering tech and innovation disruption, whilst creating the right, scalable framework for deployment inside and outside the organisation. Cantemir has worked in IT and digital for 20 years, and now leads NTT DATA Romania's overall innovation agenda, building new business models and market-driven value propositions to support their customers' goals and long-term growth strategies. He's currently studying for his PhD in Management at the Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu.

Opinion

Opinion pieces from NTT DATA's subject matter experts across EMEA.

The Question on Every Prospective Employee's Lips: "What's Your Purpose?"

By Kim Gray,
Head of Diversity & Inclusion, NTT DATA UK

The dynamic between employee and employer has shifted. People are now more selective about who they work for, placing greater importance on purpose and culture. To attract and retain talent, organisations need to be clear about why they exist, and live those values in everything they do.

Employment has changed a lot in the past decade: from the explosion of outsourcing and the demand for flexible working, to the rise of the gig economy and the 'side hustle'. The traditional concept of an 'employee' has become fragmented.

Younger workers with less inclination to settle down place high importance on meaning, purpose and value. They want to find the right 'cultural fit', and are willing to move jobs regularly until they find it.

Put your purpose first
As organisations, we therefore have a notably different challenge when it comes to attracting and keeping the best people. We need to show prospective employees what it is we stand for, and make sure those values are visible in the workplace every day.

It's no longer enough to have a cursory tick-in-the-box approach to issues like corporate social responsibility (CSR) and diversity and inclusion (D&I). We need to view them holistically, and live

and breathe our values far more transparently to earn people's trust and loyalty.

Energy attracts talent
Humans have an ingrained desire to be part of something bigger than themselves. We derive satisfaction from being part of a team and working together towards shared goals. It gives us purpose.

Therefore, a working environment where everyone is encouraged to contribute will create energy and enthusiasm. Talented people will be drawn to that energy, and they'll want to be part of it, day after day.

There's no quick solution to creating that atmosphere, though; it requires an ongoing effort to make teamwork, cohesion and empathy part of the everyday

> " Happy and productive teams are still the engines of growth. But people's motivations have changed. They want more purpose and meaning from their work, a culture of inclusiveness and an environment with high energy and enthusiasm.

culture. Here are some guiding principles we follow at NTT DATA:

1. Agree a shared goal. Without it, you won't harness the best of your people. For example, one of our principal values is to put clients first, which acts as an anchor for all of our activities. It's important to regularly reinforce shared goals like these across the whole business.

2. Embrace difficulty. The best teams are diverse in every sense, actively seeking out a range of opinions. Collaborative working should be challenging and provocative, and allow people to contribute their unique ideas rather than just going along with the majority.

3. Prioritise people, not technology. People work best when they have the devices, tools and software that allow for maximum progress and collaboration. Embrace

this 'bottom-up' adoption of technology, and ensure any major new systems or platforms are informed by your programme of cultural change.

4. Build clear communication channels. Embrace email and chat streams, but also physical forums where people can interact with peers across the business and with senior leaders. These forums should promote a culture where everyone, regardless of status, is encouraged to share ideas and feedback.

At NTT DATA UK, every member of our leadership team is actively involved in promoting CSR and D&I. Here are some of the initiatives we support in celebration of our diverse workforce:

- International Women's Day
- The Girl's Network
- Pride In The City
- World Day for Cultural Diversity
- Japanese Autumn Festival
- Mental Health Awareness Week.

Be clear, be consistent

Happy and productive teams are still the engines of growth. But people's motivations have changed. They want more purpose and meaning from their work, a culture of inclusiveness and an environment with high energy and enthusiasm.

As organisations, we must work hard to be transparent about our values and promote them consistently in everything we do. This will create a workplace where people arrive every day with renewed energy and ambition.

If They Work For You, You Work For Them

By Sanjeev Hanji
Client Partner, NTT DATA

Effective leaders know how to cultivate the environment that is most conducive with experimentation and learning, by having an unwavering focus on putting your people first.

I don't believe any leader will reach his or her full potential unless they enable others to be their best. That's why the best leaders are those who put people first.

It's not always easy, as big events understandably shift the focus. Yet great leaders make sure people are never deprioritised. They put in a continuous, conscious effort to motivate and nurture each individual.

I have had the privilege of knowing and learning from leaders who have successfully achieved this by building a learning organisation, empowering the people and equipping them with the right tools.

Building a learning organisation
Creating a culture that encourages learning is key: cultures that welcome self-reflection, honesty and even vulnerability, where it's okay to make mistakes, as long as we are on the right path.

It's the fundamental principle of the Japanese philosophy of Kaizen, which translates as improvement (Kai = change; zen = for the better). It's not something you can achieve in a workshop. Kaizen is a state of existence; it's in the bloodstream of the organisation and in the way people operate.

A learning organisation challenges individuals to think, talk, and be so invested in the business that they want to mould and shape the way it works. You know you've achieved this culture when it becomes a part of the DNA of the organisation and an everyday conversation.

I saw this first hand recently when visiting a client in Oxford. The company philosophy is to "engage every single employee within an organisation" to provide a powerful alternative to a traditional approach.

Empowering the people
Employees are not just workers. If our focus is on people, then a holistic view of their self-development is needed. Jeff Olson's book Slight Edge promotes a way of thinking that helps people make daily choices that will lead to success and happiness.

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The best leaders focus on what an individual needs and not what they need them to do.

He looks at all aspects, from work and business, to health and relationships, as each has an impact on the other.

When engaging with people in my team, none of these aspects are off the table. If someone wants to have a better Monday at work, then it could be achieved by having a better weekend. But how do you have a better weekend? Perhaps by leaving work on time on a Friday. When you put the effort into understanding the individual, you help to improve the whole person and that will directly impact their work.

The best leaders focus on what an individual needs and not what they need them to do.

Equip them with the right tools
Leaders know that people need

the freedom to fail without it being held against them, to contribute ideas that won't be shot down. Speaking at an NTT DATA executive forum, a CEO once highlighted his (what he calls) "f*** it fund". He writes this off at the start of every financial year, giving people the opportunity to experiment without pressure.

I can also draw on all the brilliant things my team is doing. Continuous improvement is ingrained in our value creation framework – it's something we genuinely aspire to.

Many organisations are already on the road to continuous learning. They may not call it Kaizen, but the principles are the same.

Leaders find ways for their

people to be recognised amongst their peers, clients and within organisation. The results follow naturally.

Reimagining Work – with Automation on Your Team

By Matthew Kearney
Vice President Strategy, NTT DATA UK

How can we design the right environment for businesses to get the most from automation, so that current and future employees can focus on the human aspects of value creation?

As organisations, we want to do more with what we've got. We want to serve customers better. We want to respond faster to emerging trends. People are key to this; human attributes such as imagination, creativity and empathy all drive progress. Intelligent automation, including Robotic Process Automation (RPA), can help us bring these attributes to the fore – if we plan for it properly.

Augmenting not replacing
RPA helps take the load off people's plates. It augments our cognitive capabilities with software-driven efficiency and speed. It's suited to all sorts of scenarios where people are working through repetitive rule-based tasks – such as:

- A finance department with a legacy ERP system that's spending five hours per day completing manual processes
- A healthcare trust that's passing thousands of payments from one cost centre to another
- A corporate finance team using complex Excel models to determine pricing and investment decisions.

Typically, 20-40% of the workload in these activities can be automated with RPA. So there's potential to free up huge amounts of human capacity.

What will you do with it?
You need a plan for how to use that capacity and get the most out of it. It's not as simple as plugging in a bot and expecting someone to pick up a new, more creative task straight away. In fact, most roles suitable for RPA have little immediate scope for imaginative work. So a key part of the implementation is thinking about how those roles need to evolve.

Different parts of an organisation should be involved when implementing RPA if it's going to add true value. It can't be a one-dimensional initiative to simply strip cost out of a process; it has to be part of a broader transformation plan that acknowledges the changing roles of people at work.

Rethink work, recruitment and culture
Line of Business heads must be involved in that plan, as they will be the ones redesigning processes and team structures

> **As the next generation of digital natives enter the workforce, there will be an expectation of automation by default. They will expect their cognitive and creative skills to be used maximally. They won't be fearing automation; they'll be demanding it.**

around new RPA-driven operating models. They need to be clear and transparent with employees on the role of RPA – and ideally co-create solutions with them to establish buy-in from the start.

HR teams should be at the fore too. As RPA becomes more pervasive, HR needs to understand what skills are no longer required and what new skills are needed across the organisation. This will feed into redeployment and reskilling programmes, and revised recruitment policies for the future workforce.

At Board level too, RPA should be factored into long-term strategic planning. As the next generation of digital natives enter the workforce, there will be an expectation of automation by default. They will expect their

cognitive and creative skills to be used maximally. They won't be fearing automation; they'll be demanding it. So how do you transition to that new type of working culture? How do you create the right digital workplace that's set up to get the best out of your people?

Planning for productivity
While RPA brings huge opportunities for organisations to increase efficiency and agility, it also brings a new dimension to the perpetual challenge of unlocking the productivity of your people.

In the same way you wouldn't automate an inefficient process, because this just magnifies the inefficiency (as Bill Gates once told us), you don't want to free up human capacity without a plan

for how to use it. You need to be clear on how people will use their extra time and energy, and create opportunities for them to focus on more human aspects of the customer experience.

No More Us and Them

By Joe Trainor
VP Digital, Telecoms, Media & Automotive,
NTT DATA UK

Why leaders need to embrace change at an organisational and cultural level to be able to manage the evolving landscape of business relationships, and how small steps can make all the difference.

Enterprises often think in terms of 'us' and 'them' when it comes to business relationships. However, the challenge today is that 'us' and 'them' is a complex landscape, encompassing relationships between the enterprise and its customers, the business and its suppliers, internally between departments, and many more. More importantly, these relationships are in constant flux and depend on shifting interests and priorities in an ever-changing landscape.

As a result, bridging the gap between us and them requires business leaders to embrace change at an organisational and a cultural level, so as to minimise conflict.

Embracing change to target the delta between us and them

This approach is already apparent in some organisations today.

Take giffgaff as an example. It is not an old company but it was created out of a traditional telco: Telefonica. From the start, the company wanted to be the antithesis of the disappointing relationships with mobile operators that customers have come to accept.

Giffgaff wanted to have 'members', not customers and not employees – everyone is a giffgaffer. Having had the privilege of working with giffgaff for the past seven years we have seen that genuine commitment to the membership concept.

As an example, this even extends to the language the company uses. The company wants there to be only one conversation taking place – whether it involves internal members or customers. So internally and externally giffgaffers do not use jargon, buzzwords or 'management speak'. Projects don't have obscure code names. Instead plain, simple language is used, not only to enable all members to understand and contribute, but also to ensure there is maximum transparency in what the company is doing at all times.

Giffgaffers, from top to bottom, embrace change to build better services – indeed, the company's entire operational structure is geared for change and for breaking down internal silos. Giffgaff builds teams that are focused on a product that they offer to members and the funnel of new ideas is driven by member needs and suggestions. Crucially, each team is made up of a diverse range of people: designers,

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product owners, businesspeople, engineers and data specialists.

This approach has accelerated the speed with which the whole company delivers change, and thus, has also driven rapid improvements to the member experience. It's no accident that giffgaff is one of the highest rated brands by net promoter score in the country.

Making change through the line – one step at a time...
Of course, it is easy to say that "we are different to giffgaff", "we have more legacy" or "we have more complexity in what we offer". And it's true that it is unrealistic to rip up established ways of working and start again. But why try to change everything at once? The most important thing to understand is that even the smallest change can impact every aspect of your business – so 'through the lines' of your business small change impacts the customer experience, your employee experience, your operational structure and your IT infrastructure.

By way of illustration, let's say a company sees that the self-help pages on its website are creating more help requests to the call-centre than they solve. Is this the content team's problem to solve? The sales team? The call centre? The IT department?

The reality is that the problem impacts everyone. So why not share ownership of the solution?

A cross-functional, 'tactical' team – with representation across each affected department – can accelerate decision-making and approvals and also find a better solution that works for everyone by breaking the problem into smaller chunks.

These dynamic, tactical teams also give you more flexibility to embrace iterative change – rather than trying to find the solution. Teams can be formed, reformed or disbanded continuously – tackling one problem, or staying together to solve other problems as needed.

To come back to our example, the end goal is a reduction in calls to the support team. But the journey to solve it involves

a content rethink, a creative redesign, a technical update, and a training programme for the call centre to advise users to self-serve better. As such the impact on the business is potentially huge.

A pragmatic solution to us and them
Breaking down the barriers between us and them is about taking manageable steps to embrace challenges and change together in partnership.

Creating dynamic, tactical teams, as epitomised by giffgaff, can help businesses be organised for change and promote a laser focus on service improvement. Identifying one area for change and working through the line creates an iterative, flexible method that, in tackling one challenge at a time, will create enormous change throughout the whole business and your ecosystem.

Isn't it the only sensible and effective way of navigating the complex landscape of us and them?

People Investment is the True Workplace Capital of the Future

By Anna Amodio,
Senior VP & Head of HR, NTT DATA Italy

How can a business's core people function bring employees together when a global pandemic is keeping them apart? Culture is more important than ever to ensure that your people know they are valued, and to maintain a healthy and thriving internal community.

There was no escaping Covid-19 in Italy earlier in the year. Concerns for personal safety alongside fears for friends, family and all people infiltrated the physical and emotional spaces that we inhabited.

We knew we needed to react immediately to send out a message of solidarity and support to the workforce. There was never a more critical time to lead by the principles of the culture that we were developing.

Equipped for uncertainty

While watching our employees rise to the challenge of working whilst facing daily adversity, we knew that we must also step up and adapt our methods to keep our people engaged and stimulated.

People engagement was already a focus: the leadership model we'd been operating under for some time is one of 'leadership by design', a collaboration between HR functions such as my team and over 300 managers to reinforce corporate identity and drive competitiveness through empowering and revitalising our employees. The result was that when the virus hit the country, we were ready to engage our people immediately.

The pillars of our leadership model – vision, passion, courage, leading-by-example and empowerment – represented a shift away from the old 'employee/ employer' culture, and onto a new entrepreneurial model. In this way, when problems arise, the workforce feels not only impassioned about finding a solution, but confident that their ideas will be welcomed, and that the infrastructure exists to make ideas a reality.

Social learning

A focus for our people and development was our 'social learning' approach, a bespoke internal project designed to be flexible, tailored and dynamic. During the pandemic, we've revisited both the competencies required and the needs of our people to reflect the changing environment.

The basis for the approach is that the process of learning

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behavioural and technical skills is not only based on individual acquisition, but is the result of a shared interaction among participants' experiences and knowledge within a community.

Our platform, Human Academy, is a space that drives the social learning philosophy, not only as a central home for hundreds of courses, but as a content hub for everyone to share their work. Once new information is published, it becomes available for all to use, and becomes company heritage. In this way, we can inspire our people to keep an up-to-date and active role in learning both soft and technical skills.

With local lockdown rules in place, the platform has been a community hub not only for idea and knowledge sharing, but also for peer-to-peer development and review. It's increased engagement,

as well as enhancing the sense of belonging and attachment to the company culture.

Coaching without barriers
Concerns for personal and economic safety have necessitated in everyone a profound change of behaviours and habits. One HR initiative which responded to these often-stressful changes is Coaching Without Barriers, a daily group coaching session where people were invited to explore both their fears and their strengths.

Often, simply giving people the forum to express their concerns can offer great comfort – to know that they are heard, and that others may feel the same.

One technique used was the 'POWER' model, encouraging participants to:
- Stay in the here and now (Present)

- Fix individual and team goals (Objectives)
- Define the strategy (Way)
- Create an action plan (Execution)
- Measure for continuous improvement (Results).

Coaching Without Barriers represented a moment of significant interaction and synergy, in a period of uncertainty.

Investing in our people has helped us weather the storm
The early investment made in creating a leadership model that allowed HR and other departments to operate as role models to the workforce has proven its value, and given a sense of orientation to people in the context of the crisis.

The Coaching Without Barriers project further enabled us to help our people develop the

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Enabling our future leaders with adaptable skillsets, which allow personal growth as well as technical and commercial expertise, has proven indispensable.

personal resilience that has been required to navigate this period.

Operationally, because of the soft skills of our people in the past seven months, we have seen no disruptions to completing projects for our customers in line with schedule and cost. There has been no Covid-19 impact on our P&L balance sheets, and alongside this, we have not had to ask for any social safety nets for business continuity.

Investing in our people truly paid off.

People first

'People First' is the core of our company culture at NTT DATA and this philosophy has proven itself over this last year.

Investment in the resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of your workforce, continuously rethinking ways of working and behaviours, anticipating changes, foreseeing future scenarios to promptly direct strategy and actions (recruiting, training, development), and creating the best workplace conditions are top priorities for those looking to invest in their human capital and enable their business to grow through change.

Facing the needs of the marketplace and our changing society was made possible by the early investment in company culture. Enabling our future leaders with adaptable skill-sets, which allow personal growth as well as technical and commercial expertise, has proven indispensable.

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To discuss the CXO Magazine, or NTT DATA services across EMEA, please contact one of the leadership team below.
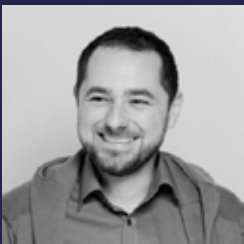
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