

The Symes Report

Edition 4

Moving on up

Re-define your thinking,
future-proof your career



FULL STEAM AHEAD

What do we want?
Women in technology
When do we want it?
NOW

SAY SOMETHING

Resisting the bystander effect

UP FOR A CHALLENGE

Meet paralympian MATT LEVY

The Symes Report is the business magazine produced by Symes Group to celebrate the work we do and the individuals we meet who have an interesting story and embody what we stand for. It is also a platform for Symes Group to present thought leadership around current philosophy in communication, leadership and work trends.

About Symes Group

At Symes Group we believe the key to business success is in eliminating social challenges. Founded in 2009, we are leaders of the imagination race – transforming organisations to be diverse, creative and superhuman all of which are essential ingredients in a thriving utopian world. We are transforming businesses in response to an age that requires an entirely different approach to people strategy. Robotics, virtual reality and artificial intelligence are a reality today and most definitely in the future. All of these impact on an organisation's people.

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"To thrive is to inspire, to inspire is to care.
This is business with heart."

Jessica **SYMES**

SYMES GROUP TEAM



Jessica Symes



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from the editor

A change is as good as a rest, apparently. Yet many people struggle with change. We fear the unknown and try to avoid the risk of failure. Our quest for safety and the reassurance of familiarity sees us resolutely stuck to unsatisfying, meaningless jobs, complaining bitterly. Many of the people in this issue have been responsible for immense change – themselves or their professional lives, or in challenging the status quo or popularly-held beliefs. Their stories serve up inspiration in spades.

And what better place to change your thinking than at a conference of innovative thought leaders.

Three of the major ones Symes Group is involved with: World of Business Ideas, 9 to Thrive and Women in Technology, provide exactly that – the opportunity to step away from the day-to-day, get some fresh insights and take some big mental pictures.

Wobi's theme this year was humanification, which ties closely with creativity.

Vital to innovation – yet historically overlooked – creativity is starting to get attention in the workplace. In this edition of The Symes Report we delve into it: why we need it, who has it and how to get it.

Happy reading.

– Ingrid Green

from the publisher

With each and every edition we publish of The Symes Report, I am overwhelmed at how many inspirational stories of courage, resilience and mental toughness are out there in the business world. I am humbled by the tenacity, creativity and entrepreneurship of the individuals and organisations Symes Group works with and I am sure that you will agree that this edition is another beautiful read, put together by the very talented Ingrid Green. I am very grateful to Ingrid for her dedication and incredible contribution and I thank her for this wonderful collection of stories and interviews that make up The Symes Report.

Symes Group is going through an exciting growth period, with the release of our new *Career Coaching Cards*, launch of our digital learning and challenge platform *Coach Me Digital* and my first book *Career Confidence*, to be released this year. Symes Group continues to design and deliver people development and coaching programs across a diverse array of industries and organisations. Our flagship offerings: *Presenting with Impact*, *Creative and Design Thinking* and *Communication and Collaboration* continue to add value to our clients' people objectives. We look forward to another great year ahead. Enjoy this edition and thank you for your continued support.

– Jessica Symes



Time for a new direction?



Are you unhappy in your career, but not sure exactly why? Or feel like you need a new direction but don't know where to start?

Jessica Symes, founder of Symes Group, has worked in learning and development for more than a decade, and encountered many people in this situation.

This led her to create a simple but effective tool to help find a solution.

"I developed *Career Coaching Cards* to facilitate coaching conversations."

Jessica says.

"They act as a catalyst, providing ideas to explore and help you consolidate your thoughts about life and work. You can use them independently, or with a friend or colleague.

"If you're seeking meaning, direction and purpose, these cards are the perfect starting point. They're a convenient and inexpensive way to get thinking, talking and sharing."

The cards can also be used in a group and are particularly useful as an icebreaker activity.

There are plenty of applications for this little "power pack".

"Anytime you want to spark conversation ahead of brainstorming or training sessions, they just get the ball rolling. They're the perfect first step on the road to career confidence."

Tips for using your cards

Alone: Develop and explore new ideas. Ask yourself the important questions.

With a friend or colleague: Facilitate a coaching conversation. Delve a little deeper into what is truly meaningful for each individual.

In a group: As an icebreaker when making introductions, ahead of training or brainstorming sessions.

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Moving on up

The robots are coming. Are you ready for them? Symes Group's Jessica Symes talked to Ingrid Green about career confidence and the future of work.



The business world has massively changed and is disrupted. So should we be frightened or excited?

Jessica Symes, founder and CEO of learning and development company Symes Group, has spent a lot of time with a lot of businesses and she says a theme is emerging.

In order to stay relevant and ahead of the competition, organisations are striving for innovation, but many of them are going about it the wrong way, Jess explains. Many companies are afraid to let go of their hierarchical structures, policies and procedures that stifle the very creativity they need.

“Organisations are spending a little bit of time and money on trying to develop creativity in their people, but not connecting the dots into how that might apply in the employees' everyday lives.”

“Time is not the currency of innovation. If you are still expecting people to work between certain hours, in a certain way and tie their hands with regard to their ability to make decisions, you will not be creating an environment that fosters creativity.”

“Organisations might have an objective around creativity and innovation, but aren't radically changing their conditions and working environments to promote it.”

“The expectation on an employee today is to be creative and innovative, but the challenge is how do you achieve that within boundaries, when creativity is all about breaking the rules, failing, experimenting in a non-linear fashion and employers are still afraid of that. How can you measure that? And how does that not look like poor performance? How does that not look like wasting the organisation's money?”

“To produce the billion-dollar idea, you need to have your people producing a whole lot of ideas that go nowhere.”

Jess says businesses can take an academic approach – there are formulas and principles of how individuals and groups can think more creatively, laterally and outside of the box – but the standard day in the life

of a worker in the future will look a lot different to what it is now.

“We are still only at the very early stages of really understanding the true essence of creativity – that has been in place for thousands of years – in a corporate setting; what the benefit would be and what organisations have to let go of to truly embrace it and allow it to foster.”

Jess says we may need to wait for certain generations to leave the workforce, those with fixed ideas around what a working day looks like. The radical change that's needed won't happen as long as that fixed mindset prevails.

Jess often encounters people unhappy in their careers and has some strong advice for anyone in that situation.

“Kylie Owen, who heads the people and culture department at Cisco, describes it as a two-way bargain – the employee needs to come to the party just as much as the employer, it's not just take, take, take.”

Individuals, Jess says, really need to take responsibility for their experience at work.

“Most of us work in comfortable, motivating and stimulating environments, but it's the individual's choice to see it in a negative or positive light, and focus on what is going well.”

She also says it's impossible for big companies to respond to changes in the economic environment as quickly as small start-ups can.

“Commonly, the gripes that I hear today are the same gripes that I heard a decade ago.”

People often complain about the technology.

“There needs to be a level of reality – to overhaul the technology system in an organisation that has 14,000 employees, is not as easy as it seems.”

“Employees need to see themselves as one part of a huge system, and develop a more realistic view of what's possible.”

“You also need to understand where you fit.”

Some people are more suited to entrepreneurial roles, and some need structure, while others don't.

“Most of our client base have education, opportunity and choice. If you're not happy, find another opportunity that you are more suited to. It can be really affronting to have that presented as a possibility, but you don't have to stay, you can leave.”

“So it's about taking ownership – of your experience at work and your career.”

“There are no free lunches in this world, and no mind-reading boss that will know that you want more responsibility or opportunities if you're busy complaining about the responsibilities you already have.”

“The employee of the future requires a growth mindset, positivity, an understanding of teams and others, and be clear that it's not all about you.”

And what do employers need to do to build the best possible relationships with their staff? Jess says organisations want their people to be loyal and engaged, but that may not be realistic.

“It's going to look very different. My prediction is that we're going to have a workforce where employees, contractors or consultants will be cross-pollinating across different organisations, not just for variety. You might have a management consultant that works for Deloitte and Tesla, and when those two companies collide, how beneficial would that be for business?”

“Employees are going to demand autonomy – when they work, where they work, how they work, and that loyalty to one brand, I think that's going to fade out.”

“Employers also need to ensure nothing in their staff's outside lives are being compromised by their work, if they want to get the best out of people. Flexibility is absolutely essential.”

“Symes Group believes there is still a misery epidemic in Australia. For businesses to survive the next decade they will require enormous amounts of creativity and innovation. Their people need to be happy and love their work. The organisations that get it will survive, the others won't.”

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"Creativity is all about breaking the rules, failing, experimenting in a non-linear fashion, and employers are still afraid of that."

From p8

"We'll see radical change in the next decade; already we're seeing brands drop at an alarming rate.

"At Symes Group we're going to assist and support organisations to be able to think more creatively, be more creative, and maintain an environment that fosters it. It's a slow process with a lot of obstacles.

"But most of all we're passionate about – one person at a time – helping individuals get in the driver's seat and

take ownership and control of their own careers.

"We'll be launching a digital coaching platform this year and continue our work in career confidence.

"Dramatic changes can come from individuals taking control of their own learning, their own development so they can contribute in a really positive, productive, creative, innovative and energetic way to any organisation they choose to join.

"We want to see a future where we're

no longer having these conversations around poor engagement and unhappy workers because everyone will self select where they want to go. It's about work-life integration.

"We believe in a really exciting future of work and a positive one.

"The robots are coming and there's a lot of fear surrounding the loss of jobs that technology and AI will bring, but I'm really excited to think about what will happen in the space of creation of jobs. The future is bright."

Four Cs for career confidence

Collaboration. Traditional communication skills. How skilled are you at getting along with people? Get skilled in communicating effectively with others, some who may be vastly different to yourself. Create, develop and maintain positive, purposeful, professional relationships. This is effortful and requires thought, thoughtfulness and consideration. Ask: how is my choice of words going to impact the person I'm talking with? Don't play the blame game – if you have had a number of bad relationships with colleagues, don't assume they are being difficult. They are a challenge to your underdeveloped communication and leadership skills. We naturally gravitate to people who are like us, which means we don't become practiced at

communicating with people who are quite different to us. There are theories, practice and knowledge around communication and collaboration, it's not instinctive.

We have two jobs – the job that you actually do and communicating and collaborating with others in your workplace.

Clarity. What do you actually want to do? What do you love? What's your passion or interest? What are you good at? What are your strengths? What's your purpose? Most people don't ask themselves these questions, but we need purpose to have career confidence and to feel like we are contributing to society. It can be illuminating and it can be vastly different to where you've ended up.

Confidence. No one can give this to you, you need to take responsibility for it yourself. We don't all need to be an extrovert just to feel good about ourselves. There is a science behind confidence and it's about self efficacy and understanding that the human spirit is hard-wired to suffer. It's effortful to be happy and to look at things in a positive light – that's why even people with a lot of money can still be miserable.

Creativity. Everybody is creative, it's not just about art or performing. It's our ability to think of things in a different way. It's everywhere, it's allowing what might be possible to enter your mind, and think of new ways of doing things. This is satisfying and gives you confidence.



"We want to see a future where we're no longer having these conversations around poor engagement and unhappy workers."

Drive to succeed

Emily Duggan has gone where no girl has gone before – driven in the Kumho V8 Touring Series. She started out with no help, backing or experience, just a burning desire and a whole lot of grit. Ingrid Green tracked her down.



I'm not sure I've ever met anyone with more tenacity and determination than Emily Duggan.

A long-time motorsport fan, Emily decided she wanted to be a race car driver.

Previous knowledge: Nil.

Background in the sport: Non-existent.

Support: Almost zero.

Enthusiasm: Well I guess it better make up for everything else then, right? And it did.

With a little support from three (non-industry) friends, she did what everyone else told her she couldn't do – race cars.

Barbie dolls were the order of the day for her three sisters in the early years, but Emily found supercars way more interesting.

"There's just something inside that pulls you to something. You know when you find your passion, and it's 100 per cent you? That's what I had, but I didn't realise it until later."

She became an executive assistant, but a plan was beginning to form.

"You can be anything you want to be.

"Why not do what I want to do? It all went back to racing, that feeling I had when I was a kid, watching,

"So I thought, why not go do it?"

At 22, her first trip to Sydney Motorsport Park to watch a drifting event had her hooked.

"The atmosphere, the vibe – I just loved it."

Naturally, she wanted to go straight to V8 Supercars, but she researched the categories to find out what was within her budget.

She saved up, contacted the organisation to check if girls were allowed to race, discovered the XL Series (Series X3), and was offered a lap in a car. That sealed the deal.

Next: the car.

She found one on a website.

"I looked at it and thought everything looks fine to me, but I better get someone else's opinion."

She asked a friend with a little bit of car knowledge to have a look at it. When he found out what she wanted it for he was, suffice to say, taken aback. The ensuing conversation is a little surreal.

"He said, 'who's going to help you?'"

"I've got the ute, I'll hire a trailer, I had this whole plan."

"What if something goes wrong?"

"Then I'll put it on the trailer and take it home and try to figure out how to fix it."

He offered to come along to her first meet, then she was on her own.

She rented a storage facility and hired a trailer. And then she just got on with it.

"When I actually bought my trailer, I picked it up from Cronulla and towed it home, all the way through the city at

peak hour to Dural. Now I'm like, how the hell did I do that? How did I have the courage to do that?"

But she didn't think about it, she just did it.

"I could have spent six months watching events and talking to people but I thought, chuck yourself in the deep end. You've just got to do it."

But it was worth it, because she loved the racing.

No one ever taught her what to do, but at the first race she was determined to beat two people, and she beat five. Second race it was eight. Third race saw her get up to second place, then miss her braking marker and spear off the track. She recovered, finished the race, and learned a well-timed lesson in staying focused – but she knew she could drive.

"It's like natural instinct – how to pass, how to manoeuvre the car. I don't know where it comes from."

Emily was the first female to race in the Kumho Tyre Australian V8 Touring Car Series, the unofficial third-tier of the V8 Supercar competition. She's philosophical about the achievement.

"It's great, but it ran for 20 years, and in 20 years no female has been on the grid, and I'm the first. I just think, there should have been others.

"So yes, it's a great achievement but I look at the big picture. I just came into motorsport recently, how am I the first one?"

Recently she's raced internationally at the Philippines Endurance Challenge and came eighth in the Coast Hire Newcastle 500, part of the Australian Supercar Championships.

She's also won a one-hour endurance race with an option of competing with one or two drivers. Naturally, she went solo.

"Supercar races are an hour, and that's not endurance for them."

Her training was remarkable and again, she devised it herself. She thought about the level of fatigue she'd experience in the race and how best to simulate that in training.

"I would wake up at 11.45 at night, go to the gym and work out.

"If you're in the car for an hour you're going to be fatigued, but your last lap needs to be as perfect as your first lap.

She also used a brain training app when she woke up and after she'd worked out, to help her stay focussed and mentally prepared.

"It was a bit extreme but hey, I won it!"

Emily's chosen pursuit is obviously male dominated in the extreme, but she barely gives that a thought.

"I don't look at myself as a female driver, I look at myself as a driver."

But she admits her ability to multitask is a bonus.

"Our tyres aren't the greatest and my engineer always says: 'Our tyres are like men, they can't brake and turn at

the same time'."

But ultimately the playing field is pretty level.

"It's more about being mentally fit and physically fit, and anyone can achieve that."

So why the physical fitness?

"The cabin can get to 66-70 degrees inside, plus your suit is about three layers; you're covered from head to toe. You're sweating because it's such an intense environment."

She says it makes it easier to stay calm and make rational decisions too.

"The fitter you are the more relaxed you'll be and the slower your heart rate is."

These days she has a little more help with her car, in the form of an engineer and two mechanics.

"An engineer is critical for the series I'm racing at – national support category four supercars."

He provides the synergy necessary to get the most out of car and driver, and converting technical details into language that Emily can understand.

"I'm not in motorsport just to compete, I'm in to win. I want to climb as high as I possibly can."

And then there's sponsorship.

"Every dollar that I earn that doesn't go into rent or bills goes straight into motorsport. Without support from sponsors I can't continue to keep pushing the boundaries.

"Nothing in my life has been given to me easily, and I don't think it ever will be, but I'm satisfied with that, because I know I've got it from hard work and dedication. And it is a lot of hard work, and a lot of sacrifice – sleep, nice clothes.

"I have quit so many times. You get home from a day when everything's been crap and think, why am I doing this?"

"But then the very next morning I start again."

So what is it that keeps bringing her back?

"The competition. I'm a very competitive person, I'll turn anything into a competition."

And of course the need for speed.

"Being in the car, going straight, is great, but taking a corner at 170 kays – that's incredible. You're on the limit, your tyres are just at that point where they're about to let go – that's what I love.

"In that moment you have no clue how fast you're going.

"I don't look at the speed, gears, nothing.

"All I'm looking at is that race track, that corner that's coming up, I need to block that person behind me, I need to block them – that's all you're thinking about.

"The fastest I've ever gone is 270, but I want to go a lot faster."

I have a feeling she will.



How to make the impossible possible – Emily Duggan

"Start with what you know, use what you have, and the rest will follow."

"Just do it. Everyone in my life told me I couldn't do it. They couldn't see what I could see. I knew that I could be successful. If I met Craig Lowndes and he told me I couldn't do it, I might listen."

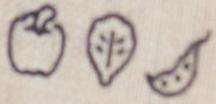


Emily's mental and physical preparation is immaculate. Top: leading the field in Newcastle.

Money, nature and nurture

There is no one sure recipe for success. Peita Pini didn't just focus on financial gain, but aimed to boost environmental responsibility and help fund a humanitarian cause - two extra ingredients that mean she can enjoy success and sleep well at night too. She talked to Ingrid Green about her journey with The Swag.




THE SWAG™

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Peita Pini, a businesswoman with a conscience.

When starting their own business, most people tend to stick to the territory they know and have experience in. Most people, that is.

Having worked in sales in the media industry, Peita Pini knew nothing of online retail, manufacturing, textiles or the patent and trademarking process but she didn't let that stop her. She saw a need.

Weary of the extent of food waste in her home, she set out to fix the problem. She created The Swag.

Her invention would reduce food waste and packaging, saving consumers a lot of money, and prove wildly successful to boot. But the motivation behind it was entirely different.

While on maternity leave with her second child, Peita watched a documentary about human trafficking and Destiny Rescue Australia's efforts to get children out of the sex trade.

In tears, she headed straight for her computer. She registered The Swag trading and domain names, purchased the URL, set up the company and began the patenting and trademarking process. She had to help, and this was how.

Her goal was to create a revenue stream to help fund Destiny Rescue's work and she believed she had a means to do it. The details? She'd work that out as she went along.

What followed was an impressive tale of innovation, faith and tenacity. It had all started with her rural upbringing.

"Growing up, we were very conscious of food waste and when I had kids it started to come back to me."

Years of trial and error in her own kitchen had resulted in a system that worked.

"I started to recognise that fresh produce was suffocating in plastic bags."

Her mum's method of wrapping fresh herbs in a damp tea towel got her thinking – and experimenting.

"I started making prototypes."

Eventually she came up with the washable, multi-layered, single pocket final product.

"It creates this beautiful little greenhouse effect, where the vegetables can breathe and hydrate, so they stay alive and nutrient-rich for much, much longer."

Spurred into action by the documentary, it was time to get some advice. She sought it wherever she could.

She spoke to experts in natural fibre options and their availability and sustainability, then visited factories in

India to negotiate manufacturing. She navigated the patent and trademarking processes and researched freight options.

"Much to my husband's horror, I bought thousands and thousands of Swags".

But Peita knew she was on to something, because they worked so well. "I had a really good feeling, I was just buzzing with excitement about launching my product."

After years of development, she went live.

"I launched The Swag through my personal Facebook page. The stock wasn't even in the country, but she was okay with that. Our web developer said 'Look, we do this all the time, and you might not get a sale for two weeks'".

So the post went up.

"I was at my girlfriend's house, we posted The Swag video and we had a glass of champagne to celebrate, we were very excited".

Peita's friend Lauren, determined to be the first customer, went online to buy it.

"And there were already five sales".

"We were amazed! I looked at the sales, and I had no idea who the customers were.

By the time Peita drove home she had more than 50 orders. "I literally burst into tears. It was actually happening."

The original 14,000 units? "We were out of stock in no time at all".

Natural and eco-driven Nourished Life, one of Australia's top online retailers approached her.

"I had no idea what I was going to say or what my wholesale prices were going to be.

"On the spot we did a deal.

"They listed The Swag and we could not keep up with their orders. It became one of their best-selling products, and it broke all their social media records for a newly launched product.

"They said they'd never seen a product launch as successfully as The Swag."

There are now more than 200 retailers stocking The Swag range in Australia, plus a distributor in New Zealand and the US. The size and frequency of Swag-laden containers just keeps growing.

And it didn't just impress consumers, her product quickly drew attention from other quarters.

Peita applied to audition for Channel 10's reality business show Shark Tank.

When she got the casting call, she decided she could do without the distraction, but they were persistent.

"They said very few people get the opportunity to make it to casting."

So, bunch of Swags under her arm, she gave it a shot, first fronting up to a panel of business people.

"I didn't really think about my pitch, I thought I'd just go in and talk about my product.

"And they loved it."

Two months later she was on the show. Her invention got Peita an hour in front of the sharks – successful business people and experts at transforming ideas into lucrative empires – a strategy and mentoring deal with Richards Group, and a good six minutes of airtime.

"Shark Tank's been fantastic for publicity, tapping us into a whole new audience that we couldn't have reached as a small business."

Last year was huge for Peita. In July, Swag Australia started donating a portion of every product sold to Destiny Rescue – whose goal is to end child trafficking and sexual exploitation.

In August they became a partner of 1 Million Women – women and girls from every corner of the planet building a lifestyle revolution to fight the climate crisis.

Most of Swag Australia's success has been driven by satisfied customers. The product simply works so well, it quickly convinces doubters.

"Over seventy per cent of our customers have heard about The Swag through friends or family."

The Swag is robust and will last for years, but at the end of their life, simply cut out the care label and compost them with no impact on our planet or wildlife. "Swag customers start looking at other ways they can reduce food waste or single use plastics in their home. The Swag triggers an awareness of how natural and reusable products can often be better than their toxic counterparts.

"We're even eating plastic now. If the fact that plastic is killing our marine life and wildlife doesn't worry you. Just think, those plastic particles are breaking down and the fish are eating it, and then we're eating the fish.

"Plastic is ridiculously toxic to the human body.

"When we waste food, we're taking that food off the global food market which means we're literally taking food out of the mouths of the hungry.

"In the future, many of our children might not be able to afford to buy fresh produce.

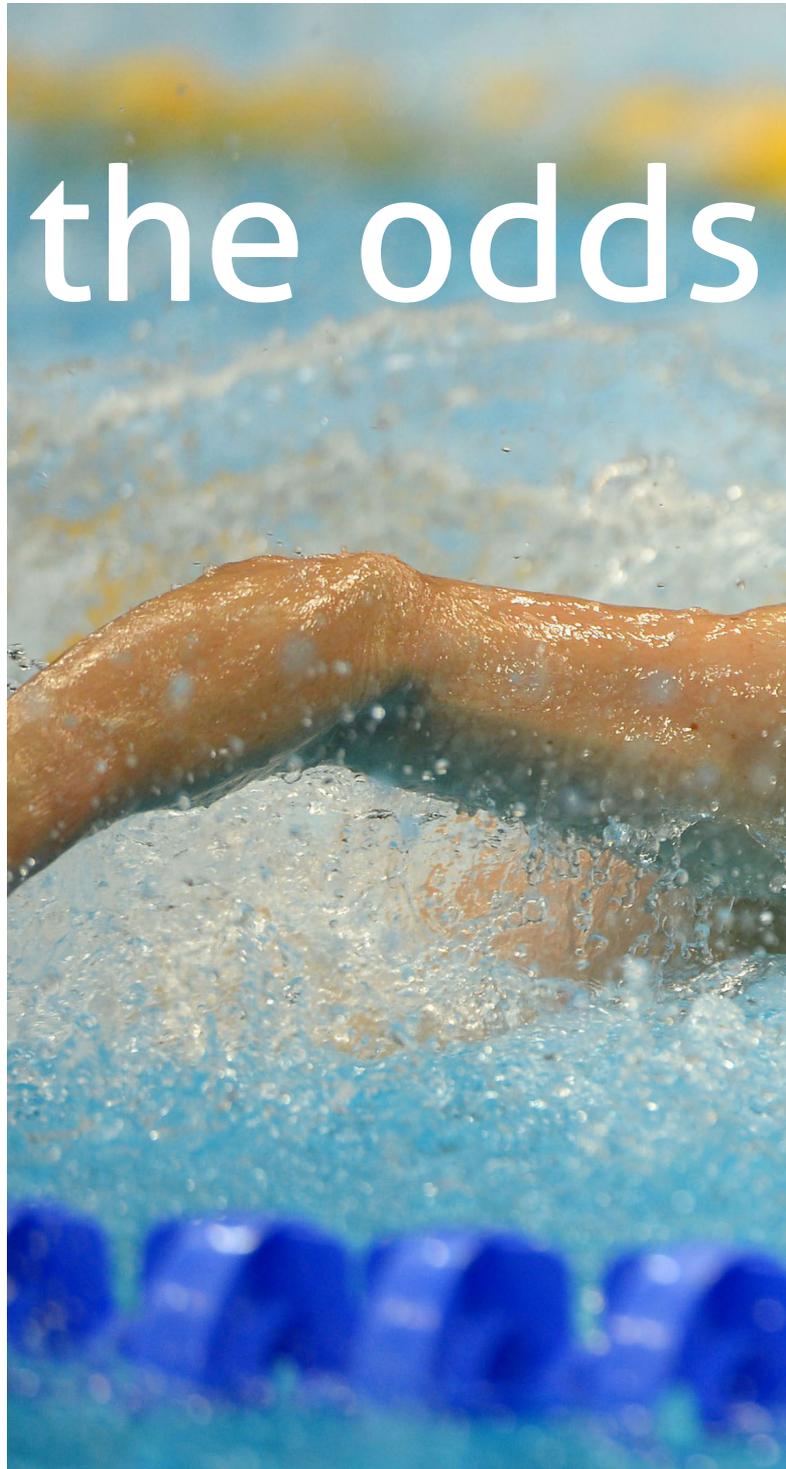
"There are a lot of things we can do," says Peita. "There's plenty of ways we can help with reducing food waste and single use plastics. What's most important is that we all do something."

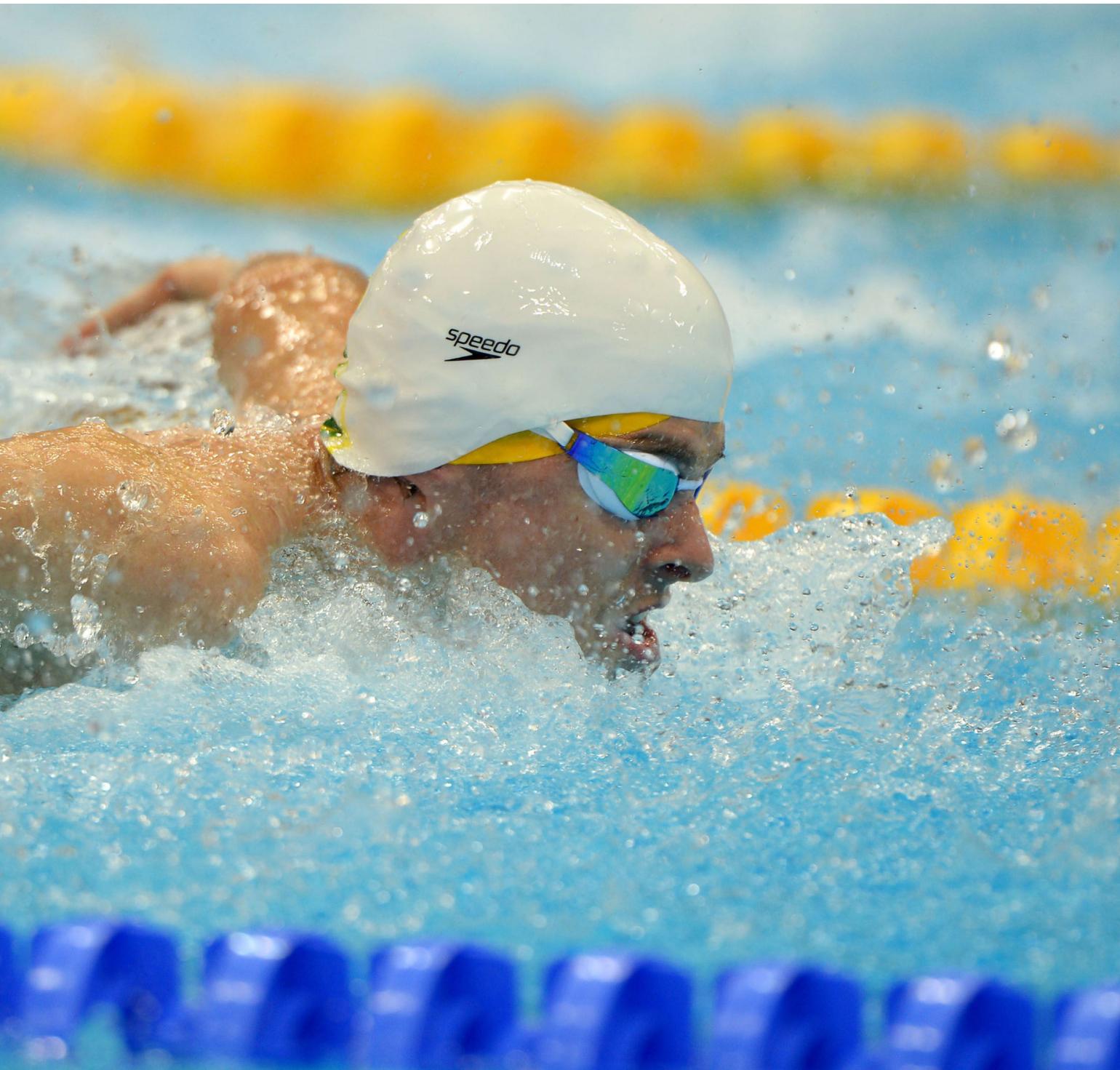


"Much to my husband's horror, I had bought thousands and thousands of Swags. I just had this really good feeling."

- Peita Pini

Against the odds





Matthew Levy has cerebral palsy, is blind and has endured around 50 surgical operations. In spite of this he possesses an attitude most of us would envy.

"I compete in swimming to show myself that I can achieve whatever I want, not what I am limited by."

– Matthew Levy



Google “inspirational” and Matthew Levy’s photo might just pop up. The word challenge is used so much these days, I hesitate to include it. But the difficulties most of us face in our daily lives pale into insignificance alongside the myriad physical and emotional hurdles Matt has been dealt in his 31 years. But overcome them he does and there’s a lesson for all of us in how he goes about it.

Matthew has cerebral palsy. He was born 15 weeks premature and had his first operation two days later. He is legally blind and has endured around 50 more operations – on his heart, lungs, brain and ears.

Does he feel sorry for himself? No.

He holds an Order of Australia, swims three hours a day, six days a week and has an 18-year-history representing his country in the sport he loves. He was recently awarded Australia’s Paralympic Swimmer Athlete of the year, and appointed to the Commonwealth Games Athlete Advisory Committee. He has held four world records.

Extraordinary? Yes.

And equally extraordinary is the matter-of-fact way he describes his accomplishments. I assume he must possess the confidence and single-minded tenacity requisite in so successful an athlete, yet he is neither arrogant nor self-absorbed, but warm, friendly, interested.

Matthew may bear the physical legacy

of his early start and many surgeries, but his mindset is one to be envied. He recognises the adversity he faced, but instead of focusing on his limitations, sees only his own potential.

Matt began swimming for health reasons and got really serious at 12 when Sydney hosted the 2000 Paralympic Games.

Since then he’s competed in four Paralympic games: Athens, Beijing, London, and Rio de Janeiro. He’s just returned from the Japan Open, testing the water ahead of the 2020 Paralympics, and found it to his liking, bringing home five medals: four gold, one silver.

Earlier, the Pan Pacific Championships earned him a more than respectable haul of five gold medals, a silver and two personal bests.

His swimming career has seen him presented with seven Paralympic medals, 12 from the World Championships and one gold from the Commonwealth Games.

One of the biggest challenges, he says, is holding down a day job that accommodates his hefty training schedule and frequent travel.

He’s grateful for the flexibility of his employer, Westpac, where he’s worked in business analysis for more than eight years.

That flexibility, he says, has allowed him to chase his dream.

Work and training provide a good balance in his life too, where one can

provide a welcome escape from the other on a bad day.

Matt’s website lists his heroes as his parents. They have been a huge support, he says, getting him to training in the early days and cheering him on at events.

Family and friends, along with his fellow squad members, have been a major contributor to his success – always been there for him and always stuck by him.

“Positive people, people that you trust to be able to get you to that starting line.”

His philosophy is simple. “There’s always a light at the end of the tunnel, and there’s always someone worse off than you.”

He tries to live and compete as the best version of himself that he can be, and sees everything as a learning opportunity – from his own experience, or from other people on a daily basis.

“I can only train to the best of my ability to do personal bests, I can’t determine what my competition’s going to do. It’s the same in life, you can only plan for what you see in front of you, you can’t really plan for what’s going to happen.

“There’s no point doing something the same way day in, day out, you always have to try and reinvent yourself or you’re always going to get the same result.

“And it gets boring.”



The secret of my success

Success through ABO: Adversity, belief, obstacles.

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U – You create the tools to success. Change mindset to banish doubt, and train to be the best version of yourself that you can be.

Create your action plan. Learn to love finding new ways to better yourself.

Create your inner circle. Find people you want to be around. The right people will understand what you're doing and where you're going, share your journey and motivate you.

Engage the key people in your circle. How can they improve you as a person? What can you learn from them? How can they make you grow?

Strategise what you need for success and how to get it.

Stay focused. Find motivation through small goals within big goals.

It's all about your attitude and behaviour, your willingness to learn, and the people around you.



Matt Levy has faced many obstacles, but his determination showed early on and never waned.

Full STEAM ahead



How do we get more women into "non-traditional" careers, and why is it so important? Symes Group gets some insights

Lina Patel Chief Operating Officer Code for Australia



Please describe your current role.

My official title at Code for Australia is Chief Operating Officer. My unofficial title is Chief of Getting Things Done.

When someone in government says yes to partnering with us, through any of our three programmes (Fellowship, Sandpit, Tech for Non Tech), I turn up and make it so. Once we have a particular programme up and running, I make sure things are humming along well for all involved.

How did you get where you are?

I've had more of a career the verb – defined as “to move swiftly and in an uncontrolled way” – rather than career the noun – defined as “an occupation undertaken for a significant period of a person's life and with opportunities for progress”.

I cut my teeth in professional services and discovered my niche in financial services. Perhaps more accurately, I cut my baby teeth in IT advisory / tech risk management when I joined KPMG straight after high school, through their cadetship programme. After nine years, I suspected there was more to life than what I'd experienced in the firm and wandered out into financial services – ostensibly in search of work/life balance. It was at NAB that I found myself incapable of being in a business-as-usual role and had a rich career in process and business change programmes of all sizes and scales.

What sparked your interest in tech?

I was very familiar with computers from an early age and was never discouraged from messing around on them. It's something I've had around me since a young age.

I was born into a privileged life in Kenya and my family was quite well off which meant that we could afford the latest tech. In the early 80s my dad

brought a Commodore 64 home and we could play and experiment with it. After we moved to Australia, my mum remarried and our step-dad was an Atari reseller who ran a computer store in our neighbourhood. From the early 90s I was surrounded by Ataris in various states of disrepair and again, wasn't discouraged from pulling them apart or playing with them.

Why is it so important to have women in the technology sector?

At Code for Australia, our work is based on the belief that the problems we face cannot be solved unless a greater number and diversity of people become involved.

We believe that collaboration and openness are key to designing, developing and deploying solutions that meet everyone's needs.

As a woman who has grown up working in and around technology, I believe there would be less harassment and discrimination experienced by women in the tech sector, if there were more women around (especially in leadership) – it's a no-brainer.

Lastly, so we don't end up with products like the first release of Apple's HealthKit app which didn't ship with a period (ie menstrual cycle) tracker, despite this being relevant to the majority of women who use their product. Or Carmat's fully artificial heart implant which fits 86 per cent of men and is only suitable for about 20 per cent of women.

Why are women so under-represented in the field and how do we change that?

Because leaders of technology companies are not doing enough to address the systemic barriers to the full participation of women in the industry.

The responsibility falls fair and square at the doorstep of the industry -

if tech firms don't create work environments and teams where women feel welcome and want to be part of, they will never be able to attract and retain more women in the field.

At Code for Australia, in the four-and-a-half years we've been around, we have employed ~60 people. Roughly half have been women or non-binary and also roughly half have been migrants, ie people not born in Australia. If we, as a relatively small organisation, can achieve these stellar stats, I question how larger, better resourced tech organisations have failed.

How does human-centred design fit in with your philosophy?

It is the core of how we work.

What is Tech for Non-Tech?

We are passionate about digital fluency for decision makers. At Code for Australia we believe that great things happen when innovative leaders are digitally fluent.

Tech for Non Tech is a one-day workshop that demystifies the internet — how it works and how things are built to work online — and empowers leaders to make better decisions around investing or directing digital projects or endeavours, on behalf of their organisations and in service to the humans using their service.

In the words of Karen Spencer of Netsafe: “Being ‘digitally literate’ means acquiring the skills to make and create meaning and select technologies to do so. Being fluent requires competencies and capabilities that go beyond the skill level.

“Someone who is digitally fluent not only selects tools and knows what to do with them, but can explain why they work in the way they do and how they might adapt what they do if the context were to change.”

– By Lina Patel and Grace O'Hara



Arcadis' mentoring day culminated in students, teachers and Women@Arcadis Champions tackling the Cape Town water crisis with some insightful and astonishing solutions. One of the students shared: "before today I wasn't sure what I wanted to be, and now I know...an engineer".



Let's go girls



Design and consultancy giant Arcadis is tackling the engineering gender imbalance issue in an innovative and proactive way – that also happens to be a lot of fun.

Earlier this year they invited high school girls with an interest in science, engineering or technology to a day of mentoring, career guidance, collaborative activities and to celebrate all things STEAM for women all around the world – and Symes Group got to help out.



Left: Julie Lee of PWC. Above: Barbara Harvey at Symes Group's exhibit.

In touch with tech

As the region's biggest conference dedicated to gender diversity in tech, this event is a must-attend for women of all levels and skill sets working in technology.

Last year's inaugural event sold out and its success meant it was no surprise that this year's one did too, and with more than twice the attendees.

Inspiration, energy, meet like-minded people.

Workshops on building confidence, using the right body language and marketing yourself.

Speakers this year included Melissa Verner Green, head of Melbourne Agency & Government at Facebook, Deloitte partner Flavia D'Alo, Microsoft CTO Vajira Weerasekera, VP at IBM Asia Pacific Rianne van Veldhuizen, and Katharine Barnett, director of employee success (JAPAC) at Oracle. Clinics covered career advice and taster classes for anyone wanting to give coding a go.

Themes covered the future of technology, business strategies, career guidance and personal development, and the rising success of startups down under.



Above: Michaela Jeffery-Morrison of Maddox events made sure to get her copy of The Symes Report. Right: Career advice from Jessica Symes and Miles Toomey of Symes Group. Far right: Jessica with Vajira Weerasekera of Microsoft.



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*"Never. Never be afraid to do what's right,
especially if the wellbeing of a person or an
animal is at stake.*

*Society's punishments are small
compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul
when we look the other way."*

– Martin Luther King



walk on by

Lifting the lid on the bystander effect

Say something. Why is it so hard? Why do we continue to hear stories of violence against good Samaritans, bullies going unchallenged and sick or injured people being ignored? Barbara Harvey, Symes Group's creative director and designer of their newest workshop, explains the phenomenon with Ingrid Green.

Too often we hear of people in distress being ignored by passers-by.

Situations where no one wanted to “get involved” exist in everything from verbal racial attacks and domestic violence to medical emergencies. But humans are supposed to be sentient beings, capable of empathy, sympathy and kindness. We’re supposed to help each other. So how does this happen?

The bystander effect is an unpleasant social phenomenon where, in an emergency or if someone needs assistance, the greater the number of people around the less likely those people are to help, according to Barbara.

“So if you collapsed on a street in the middle of a city, the more people there are around you, the more likely they are to step over you. In a small country town where there’s one or two people walking past, they would be more likely to stop and help.”

Bystander effect was originally known as the Genovese syndrome after a 1964 murder in New York City where 28 year-old Kitty Genovese was robbed, raped, and stabbed to death outside her apartment building. The attack took place over 30 minutes, and was seen or heard by a reported 38 witnesses. Nobody called the police, nobody shouted out, nobody helped.

It was such a horrendous case of public apathy it made headlines in the New York Times, sparking widespread public outcry and inspiring psychologists John Darley and Bibb Latane to investigate the concept, later known as the bystander effect.

Darley and Latane went on to examine bystander reactions in a number of social experiments.

Actors were planted among varying numbers of subjects in a room where smoke seeped from under a door. The investigators found people alone in the room would react quickly, calling out or seeking help. But when subjects were surrounded by actors who didn’t move, they too ignored the potential threat.

In another scenario a woman could be heard crying out from another room that she had hurt her leg. When alone in the room 70 per cent of subjects reacted, but when an apathetic actor was present that dropped to seven.

There have been many cases over history where bystanders have failed to help; victims have been racially abused on public transport while other passengers have sat by and not responded; during the Rwandan Civil War the global community took too long to react to widespread genocide

and up to a million people were killed; some six million European Jews died in the holocaust. The bystander effect can happen on a massive scale, sometimes with devastating consequences.

So why are people so reluctant to help each other? Some of the causes are well-known, and fairly understandable.

“The flight, fright, frozen, freeze reaction is a basic human response – people do tend to run away or freeze,” says Barbara.

“Also, group think describes the idea that we take our cues from others to assess the situation. If an alarm goes off in a shopping centre people will look around to see if anyone else is reacting: if no one else thinks it is an emergency then maybe it’s not.”

There’s also diffusion of responsibility.

“We gauge whether we’re equipped to respond, for example we might drive past a car accident and think if we’re not a nurse or doctor the emergency services can deal with it,” she says.

“Often people will only step in if they feel qualified to do so, like Adelaide anaesthetist and cave diving expert Dr Richard Harris, when he heard about 12 boys trapped in a cave in Thailand earlier this year.”

People who don’t feel they have the skills, however, won’t step in. But ironically, it only takes one person to step in and then others will follow suit.

There is only a small chance that the right person will be there at that moment, so even if someone is not qualified or experienced, they can still make a phone call or get outside help.

Another factor is ambiguity. “Sometimes it’s not clear if a situation is an emergency, or how you can help. If someone had a heart attack nearby and you’d had CPR training, you’d know what to do, but if someone was lying on the street looking dishevelled, or in a domestic violence situation, it may be hard to gauge how to help, or if you should at all.”

And then there’s safety – people may feel threatened if they step in. We sometimes hear of cases where genuine heroes get hurt, like a surgeon in a Melbourne hospital who was allegedly king hit after approaching a group regarding smoking in a non-smoking area. He died when his life support was switched off four weeks after the incident.

According to Barbara, the safety issue is frequently raised in discussion at Symes Group bystander effect workshops. Many people in Sydney tell of being verbally or physically abused

for helping somebody out. Interestingly, they say it wouldn’t stop them from helping again.

“Sometimes too, a lack of general empathy may be a factor. Judgement may be clouded by unconscious bias, as outlined in Malcolm Gladwell’s 2005 book *Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*.”

Gladwell describes studies into the speed at which we make judgements. In prehistoric times, humans needed to react quickly to perceived threats but today we continue to make snap judgements when our survival is no longer at stake. Our modern lives are busy so we make quick judgements about who we help and who we care about, and the people we neglect or ignore are those who we judge. A UK study involving an actor lying on steps in a public place showed that passers-by would react differently according to his appearance. If he was dishevelled or unkempt they would walk past, but if he was wearing a business suit they would stop and try to get help.

Charity fatigue in Australia means our empathy often switches off. The many charities and causes in our society mean we can only afford to care about a few of them.

The bystander effect appears to be widespread and ingrained. But according to Barbara, the news is not all bad.

“It doesn’t seem to be getting worse.” Hans Rosling’s 2018 book, *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We’re Wrong About the World – and Why Things are Better Than You Think*, explores that. The book opens with a short survey about global social issues like poverty.

“Global poverty has gone down, access to water and sanitation is better than ever, leaders are more accountable, we’re quicker to react to humanitarian crises and there is a bigger focus on social innovation, but we think the world is in a worse place.”

Research in 2011 on the bystander effect replicated the experiments done in the 60s, but with a difference. Researchers noticed that the early studies weren’t entirely representative of human behaviour and found that if one person stepped forward and did something, others would follow suit.

What those later studies showed was the answer is just do something, anything. “As long as you feel safe, do something. Make a phone call, go and get someone else if you don’t feel safe. It might mean you go and speak to the person in distress, or call the police. Whatever it is, if you do something it’s better than nothing.” That something might just make all the difference.



What prompted you to design the bystander effect workshop?

"The Australian Film, Television and Radio School expressed a desire to provide an education series to their students outside of their core subjects around social issues, social phenomenon, leadership and professional development and professional skills. It's unique and quite remarkable – students won't be tested at the end.

"What I love about the concept is these are skills that will be really important to their development and careers, and also as filmmakers it's really important and valuable to be across broad social phenomena like the bystander effect – it could be worth considering as a concept for

film. "Symes Group chose me to develop the programme and deliver it. Symes Group associate Pearl Tan was excited, commenting on how suited I was.

"Which is true; I have a particular passion for social impact. I'm very interested in understanding why we care, and why we walk past?"

"I think that comes from my background growing up in Third World countries, and having lived for many years in South Africa, wondering how a whole country could experience apartheid. I did a lot of research as I found it fascinating.

"Also, how did the rest of the world just stand by? That's also fostered an interest in Rwanda."

"Sometimes too, a lack of general empathy may be a factor."

Time for change

Women no longer have to endure careers that don't serve them, fulfil them, or fit their lifestyles. At Symes Group we are constantly impressed and inspired by people who have taken control of their lives, made big changes, or followed their dreams. We talk to three of them.



Michele Chevalley Hedge has a new role. Story overleaf.

**Michele Chevalley Hedge
sought a deeper purpose
in her career. She's now
helping people
withstand the rigors of
modern life as a
nutritionist, author and
corporate wellbeing
speaker.**

What prompted you to quit a corporate career to become a nutritionist?

I always wanted to study medicine but when I began nutritional medicine it was the perfect combination of my love of food and medicine. I had my three children and I was ready for a deeper purpose within my career.

What's your health philosophy, in a nutshell?

Moderation! There is no diet in the world that will work as well as moderation - extremes do not work but 'a healthy view' does. My absolute belief is that wellness is a four-pronged approach - nutrition, exercise, sleep and connection are the necessary ingredients in preventative wellness.

And how do hormones fit in?

My new book, The Healthy Hormone Diet, provides a 28 day plan on how to rebalance hormones naturally. Too many people are exhausted, lack energy and are gaining weight and it might just be their hormones.

If you wake up feeling tired every day even though you've had enough sleep, or have trouble losing or maintaining weight even though you watch what you eat, or go to bed feeling tired but wired and unable to sleep, these are signs your hormones are out of whack.

Another indication is if weight accumulates in your tummy area. If you feel hungry all the time, moody and anxious for no particular reason, this suggests imbalanced hormones. You may have cortisol overload from poor food choices and stress. A sluggish thyroid could hijack your weight. Elevated insulin levels could lead to increased testosterone that contributes to polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS), which affects fertility. Excess oestrogen could cause heavy periods or cystic breasts. Hormones play a significant role.

Good nutrition affects every cell and hormone in our body. The stress hormone, cortisol, plays a role in weight, sleep and libido. It can become out of whack from sugar consumption and too much caffeine and alcohol.

The thyroid, our metabolic hormone, is linked to energy, weight and brain function. It's affected by sugar and diets that are low in essential nutrients such as iodine, selenium, iron and B vitamins. If you have a compromised thyroid, you need to avoid inflammatory foods such as gluten and sometimes dairy.

Oestrogen is a protective hormone found in women and men. For women, oestrogen protects the brain, helps anti-ageing and fertility. Its function is influenced by the state of our liver and

digestion and how well these organs clear out toxins from sugar and processed foods.

The hunger hormone, leptin, signals to our brain when we've had enough to eat. It's affected by too much sugar, especially fructose, and poor sleep. People who consume excess sugar feel tired but wired.

Testosterone is the hormone of vitality in both men and women. It's influenced by sugar, alcohol, sleep, vitamin D and zinc.

Serotonin is the happy hormone with 85 per cent created in our gut. Hidden sugars, poor carbohydrate choices and artificial sweeteners contribute to poor gut health. It makes sense that when we eat clean, real food and the gut is healthy, you feel better thanks to serotonin.

There are a million and one diets and eating plans out there, and many of them directly contradict each other. Who do we believe?

Diets are often fad and short lived. There are elements of some diets that are worth considering but this is based on a personal health history and their biochemistry.

I think it is important to be taking advice from qualified nutritionists who work from both an evidence-based research perspective but also have clinical experience. Meeting the needs of your patient, in your practice and feeling their emotions, overall wellbeing and watching their nutritional transformation.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing people in the workplace today?

Stress and the 'tired but wired' employee. Both are affected by many things but good nutrition can underpin and improve both of them. A stressed person who is tired is not productive, energised and kicking goals. I think a bit of corporate wellness education can improve productivity and profitability 50 fold! And the good news it doesn't have to be extreme... it can include coffee and wine!

What is the one most significant thing thing people can do to improve their wellbeing?

Remember one thing...

Everything you excel at in life has taken a bit of time and planning. Why not take a little bit of time and planning for your nutrition which underpins every aspect of your physical and mental health? Because you cannot buy back your health once it goes sideways and you cannot do anything without good health!



" I think a bit of corporate wellness education can improve productivity and profitability 50 fold. And the good news it doesn't have to be extreme... it can include coffee and wine!"

ABOUT THE BOOK

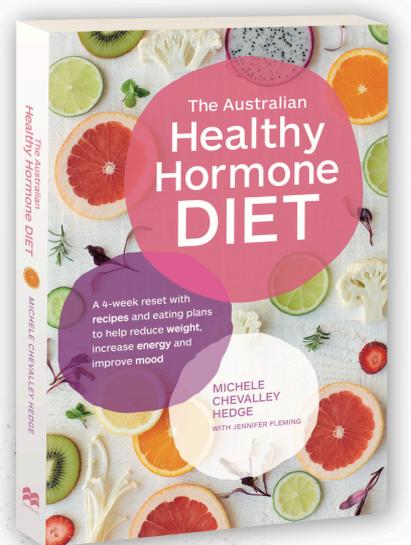
What's happening with your hormones?

Are you carrying extra kilos, even though you watch what you eat? Do you feel exhausted at the end of the day, and sometimes even when you wake up? Do you have a low-level nagging feeling that something just isn't right?

Michele Chevalley Hedge, a qualified nutritionist in private practice, sees countless patients whose busy lives leave them feeling depleted and burnt out, and these symptoms are often linked to hormone imbalances. Aside from teenage mood swings, menstruation or menopause, it is little-known that hormones play a crucial ongoing role in our most vital bodily functions. If we upset the finely balanced interplay of our hormones - say, by eating processed foods, not getting enough sleep or living with too much stress - we can easily fall into hormone chaos. This can strike women and men at any age, but it's often not until midlife that the full impact is felt.

Michele's four-week plan encompasses nutritional and lifestyle changes to help get your life - and your hormones - back on track. Each day of the plan features tailored advice and a nourishing recipe to help your body 'reset' so that you once again feel energised and fighting fit. Michele also provides you with tips on how to make positive, lasting changes to your lifestyle that will stay with you long after the four-week plan is over.

EXTENT - 240PGS
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"Even if you don't have symptoms, even if you're not sick, these products are still for you – they could contribute to your

What do you do when your doctor tells you that you need to leave the industry you love, and the only one you've worked in?

Clare McGrowdie is a hair and make-up artist of more than 20 years, with experience in salons, editorial, film and red carpet – and she loved it. After seeking medical advice for persistent health issues, she was eventually given the diagnosis: multiple autoimmune and endocrine disorders.

The implications were devastating – her job was making her sick. The high-end, professional products she handled all day, every day comprised a combination of chemicals her body simply couldn't take. The career she loved was causing inflamed skin and chronic fatigue so severe she couldn't continue to do it.

So she went "clean" – and hit another setback. She set out to replace the luxury skin care and make-up she was accustomed to with safer versions. But there weren't any.

"I had to find products that worked, but were natural and non-toxic.

"You've got health food store and make-your-own, and both of those didn't appeal to me at all.

"It's an incredibly confusing world too because a lot of things are marketed as natural, but actually they're far from it."

But it got her thinking. If, as a professional, she struggled to find safer cosmetics, imagine the challenge for those outside the industry.

So Bond Clean Beauty was conceived.

It all came down to the ingredients.

"Basically we don't stock anything that can lead to a carcinogen, that can lead to any disruption, whether that's endocrine, neurological, or organ

toxicity. "So anything that helped create what I have, that's off the list."

She's even narrowed it down to one list: Bond's Baddies – what we don't put on our skin.

She says she still has a long way to go, but the change has made a huge difference to her own skin and health.

"Wearing makeup is now just like wearing skincare, with a bit of pigment in it. A lot of them are really quite healing as well."

So she now has first-hand, professionally documented evidence of the power of going natural.

"But even if you don't have symptoms, even if you're not sick, these products are still for you – they could contribute to your future. And they're great products to use."

And the products aren't just good for us.

"Sustainability, where they source their products from, and their entire production is an important part of the process too.

"Their impact on the environment and whether they're animal friendly and human friendly as well.

"One of them sources from the Amazonian rainforest. So they actually help upkeep that rainforest. Three per cent of their profits go to that.

Another is completely wind-powered.

"I'm hoping it'll become the norm." Her biggest challenge has been public perception.

"It's that false mindset of naturals don't work."

Ironically she says, the active ingredients in skincare are the natural ones, while the synthetics merely act as a carrier, provide fragrance, or prolong shelf life.

She also had no business experience.

"Had I had a little bit more awareness I probably wouldn't have been so grandiose in my ideas."

But naivete, she says, worked in her favour. Guilty, as we all can be, of overthinking, she says having to deal with things as they arise, worked better than being aware of them from the start.

She threw herself into it headfirst, rather than taking the cautious approach.

The positive people she has surrounded herself with though, have given her the support and knowledge to see it through.

"Particularly people having faith in me. People have been really excited in this idea, and they see the future in it."

So she says she's found her niche in life, effectively turning a distressing medical diagnosis into a positive career change.

"Being able to stay in the industry that I'm in, and have a job that's a little bit more suited to my energy levels is great."

Before Christmas she opened her first bricks and mortar store on Oxford St in Paddington and she has plenty of ideas for the future – like introducing special evenings featuring wellness and health experts. Watch this space.

And her advice to others?

"Have passion. Find something that you really love."

If she didn't have that, she wouldn't be able to do what she does.

"Find mentors, people who can help you and support you."

And what does she want women to know about beauty?

"Listen to your skin. Work with it and don't get stuck on one product.

And find your own way.

"It's not as daunting as a lot of people think it is. There are no rules.

"They're just guidelines, it's a creative industry.

It's all about having a play yourself," she says.



Going clean

Claire McGrowdie loved her career in the beauty industry, but her job didn't love her. She told us how she coped when she found out the chemicals involved were making her physically sick – and how she turned that into a positive.





One idea proved a gift

Marta Barbayannis had always wanted to start her own business. The stars aligned when she came up with a great idea and needed a more family-friendly career, so she took the plunge.

"I created GiftWell because I personally have a real use for it, and it has been encouraging to learn that other people feel the same way."

Please give us a brief overview of your venture.

GiftWell is a mobile phone app that allows people to make gifts or donations of cash electronically.

Put simply, any time you would give cash with a card, or pool money for a common cause, GiftWell is the way I see everyone transacting on these occasions. Instead of making a special trip to the ATM and purchasing a card, a gift of cash can be made via the app accompanied by a special personal message to the recipient, saving users both time and money.

The GiftWell app can be used for weddings, birthdays, christenings, fundraisers, baby showers or office gifts for a colleague. Its application is varied and once enough people have the app on their phone making gifts of cash, putting in for a group present or giving to a fundraiser will be super quick and easy.

GiftWell is convenient, safe and great for everyone. It is free to download the app and costs nothing to create an event. All transactions are handled securely via PayPal or Stripe.

What prompted you to start your own business?

I worked for employers from the time I left school until I had my first child. There are various reasons why I found comfort in working for other people – capped responsibility levels, a sense of camaraderie with colleagues and reliable pay cheques – but I have always wanted to start a business.

When I had the idea for GiftWell the timing was right for me to finally do my own thing – I was on the verge of going back to work after having taken time off to have my two boys.

How difficult was it to make that first leap?

It was really hard for me to tell my boss, who is also my mother-in-law, that I was going to take some time away from law to pursue my start-up. It was difficult to decide not to return to the family business and a job I loved. I am lucky enough to have felt true job satisfaction; I worked with wonderful people and bosses who cared about their staff.

Deciding to take a sabbatical from the law to pursue a venture that was little more than an idea at the time was a bit unexpected.

In other ways, it felt like the right

move because I always had that voice in my head telling me to be brave and go out there and be my own boss one day. I believe in GiftWell and I want to share it with people. That has been motivation enough to make my move.

What have been your biggest challenges?

What wasn't easy was taking the road less travelled, and the feeling that I was letting my workplace down. But there was also a gut instinct saying, "you have to do this".

The biggest challenge has been to shelve my career and go against the grain of the conventional path I had carved out for myself, especially in circumstances where I was very happy in my job and being welcomed back after a few years away. It is much easier to leave something when you're unhappy – it makes more sense to change things up in that situation.

And your greatest triumphs?

The best part of this journey so far has been seeing the GiftWell app come to life and receive a positive reception since its launch. I created GiftWell because I personally have a real use for it, and it has been encouraging to learn that other people feel the same way. My longer-term vision is that GiftWell appears on most people's phones and that everyone uses it as a convenient way to transact in their everyday life.

Social media is new territory for me and I must admit that every time someone likes a post or follows GiftWell I feel excitement. There is something really powerful about people supporting each other and I am overwhelmed by the number of people who like the GiftWell app and who have gone out of their way to tell me so.

What has helped you along the way?

Unconditional support from my husband who is my best friend and who has known me a long time, above all else. Any time I feel like I need a boost to keep persevering I turn to him – he is a very hardworking person himself, who has always believed in me and my dreams to have a business of my own.

A solid network of friends, family and people in business has also been critical. I have a particular close friend who is very supportive yet honest and

always happy to give an opinion or advice. Sometimes I think it takes just that one person who can tell us the things that we know deep down but that always sound better coming from someone else.

Being told to just go for it by someone you respect can make all the difference.

What advice do you have for women considering going out on their own or unhappy in their jobs?

I think the biggest message is to stop thinking too much about it and just do it. Consider the worst thing that can happen and if you can handle that, take the leap.

I'm not saying be reckless. A bold move is a good idea if you have a solid plan in place and you are prepared to connect with the right people, back yourself and work hard. I once heard someone say that an overnight success takes 10 years to achieve. I find that these words help me to keep going and be patient.

From what I have seen from successful people around me, hard work always pays off in the long run if you are prepared to put your head down and listen to your inner voice and your customers.

My advice to anyone who wants to go after an idea they believe in is to surround themselves with a supportive network of people – friends and family who will be there to celebrate the victories and have their back when the chips are down.

There's obviously a spectrum of scenarios when it comes to a start-up. Some ventures require huge amounts of capital and risk, and others don't. Some ventures can begin with a toe-dip alongside a day job, others need full time 12-hour days from the get-go.

One of the most valuable things people can do if they're unsure about timing is speak with a career coach, to help them assess exactly where they're at in the scheme of things. Making the decision to leave a job, even when unhappy, is not easy when it means entering the unknown.

Above all, however, the greatest rewards happen when risks are taken. Having some comfort in the idea that no challenge lasts forever, that most things can be turned around at times of failure, that plenty of people have done this before us, and that every experience is an opportunity to learn has been reason enough for me.

CREATIVE

METAPHOR
AS GENERATION
EMPATHY
GE DIVE



SYMES

RICAL

ON GROWTH MINDSET DIFFERENT

MAGINATION

ERSITY MINDEULNESS

AUTHENTICITY

CENTRE

USE COLLABORATIVE
RACT

Runaway to the circus
Let's see you juggle
Any tricks on the Diabolo?
How about some Hula Hooping?

Outside the box

Innovation - everyone wants it. Whether they're in business, technology or education, organisations can't get, or stay ahead without it. But there's an important step in the process that's often overlooked. Creativity.



The case for creativity

Why creativity?

Historically considered a soft skill, or not considered at all, creativity is starting to get attention.

Businesses have seldom taken active steps to encourage it, prioritising procedures, knowledge and experience. In an age of improved (or improving) communication, agile workplaces, open offices and a focus on employee engagement, creativity hasn't been pushed. Where presentation, sales or leadership skills are an accepted part of learning and development, creativity gets overlooked, feared even. Many people don't consider themselves creative and avoid taking part in anything that might expose that. But here's the thing – it's vital. Its value lies in its crucial role in the innovation process. Creativity leads to imagination, which leads to innovation. And all businesses need innovation. What we need, is to show people how to tap into it.

Creativity significantly helps create a culture that fosters innovation in business.

At Symes Group we believe that creativity, far from being an abstract concept, is a process with recognisable, repeatable steps that can be applied in normal work practices.

In many organisations though, understanding of the creative process

and the development and execution of creative solutions and ideas can be under-developed.

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.” Albert Einstein

As we move towards 2020 there is no doubt that the entire workforce needs to be more adept at critical thinking, creativity and complex problem solving, in order for organisations to grow, thrive and survive.

Organisations need not only to have their workforce develop the skills required to think more creatively, but also to ensure that their systems support the process of creative, collaborative thinking and is not in opposition to it.

Embedding the creative process requires the ongoing support of the organisation so that it is fostered at all levels and is integrated into all work practices. For some organisations this requires systemic change.

When creativity is thought of as an abstract concept, it is difficult for individuals to improve their creative skills and to integrate them into their work. It is also difficult for organisations to set goals and strategies around abstract concepts.

Symes Group has built a framework and methodology around the creative process that includes 10 steps and

defines sets of behaviours and capabilities connected to each step. The process is tangible and practical and can be applied by anyone.

The importance of understanding creativity and the process:

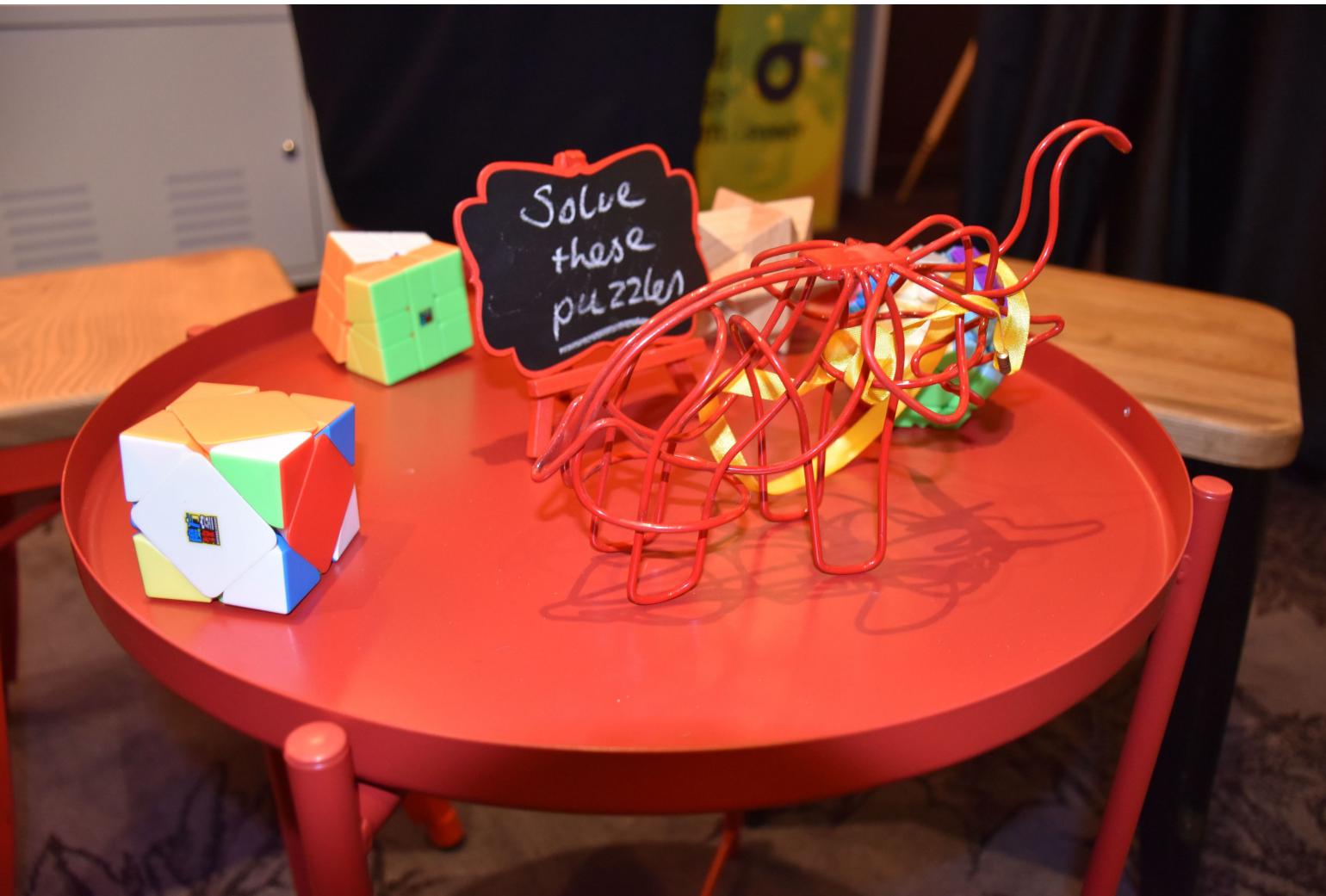
Learning about the creative process and the behaviours and capabilities required for the process has three benefits:

- Individuals can navigate through the process confidently as they will be able to identify each of the steps as they experience them.
- Individuals can increase their creative potential by working on behaviours required for each step, exercising their “creative muscle”.
- Organisations can (and must) integrate the process into working style/method of operation.

Commonly though, the perception of creativity is misconceived, individuals stall at stage one of learning, a lack of diversity impedes creative behaviour, which are either absent, underdeveloped or in opposition to what is required.

Sir Ken Robinson, global expert on creativity, argues that creativity is the most crucial 21st century skill we'll need to solve today's pressing problems. And according to a report produced by the World Economic Forum, creativity will become one of the top three skills workers will need by 2020.

– Jessica Symes



"We are in the imagination age. Organisations need to prioritise innovation, and embrace creativity. It may seem unreachable, but it's not. There's a science behind it."

– Jessica Symes

"Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist."

– Pablo Picasso



Above: Sodria board director George Savvides.

Left: Kylie Owen of Cisco and Amy Baxendale of Arcadis.

Right: Symes Group's Barbara Harvey.

Symes Group like to do things a little differently and they had some surprises up their sleeve at the World of Business Ideas conference this year.

Creative director Barbara Harvey designed and manned the creative playcentre, an interactive space designed to get people talking, thinking and ... playing.

"When we saw that Sir Ken Robinson was speaking about creativity we thought it would be so fitting to create a space for the delegates to engage in creative play," Barbara said. "We wanted the space to be fun, childlike, colourful, engaging and, above all, to tickle a creative spirit that might be forgotten about."

In between presentations, delegates were invited to try their hands at puzzles, art, juggling, or playing the xylophone – all in the name of creativity.

"The two most popular items played and engaged with were Lego and play dough. And when we invited Sir Ken Robinson to the playcentre he loved seeing the play dough, saying 'I love play dough, it's not used enough'."

Barbara said the challenge to show their creativity was confronting for some.

"There were so many people that came up had a look and declared to me 'Oh, I'm not creative', walking away a

little afraid. Which is so interesting because I believe that the biggest barrier to a person's ability to be creative – and especially to think creatively – is their belief in how creative they are. If you think you're not creative or can't be, chances are you won't be."

But people got the idea.

"The second day people started to really open up," she said.

"Some of the great moments included delegates dressing up with the masks and boas, lots of conversations while making shapes with play dough and a few jamming sessions with the xylophone and ukuleles.

The concept proved a huge success.

"Overall I had an absolute ball. I was completely in my element, talking to random people trying to encourage them to juggle, drum and play. I had so many interesting conversations with intriguing, intelligent and insightful people.

"I hope we were successful in bringing some colour and fun to the WOBI foyer 2018."

World of Business Ideas general manager Australia Malisa Milnarcic was delighted with the playcentre.

"It was a beautifully designed space where senior-level executives were able to let their inner creative child run free by drawing, juggling, playing

instruments and games.

"It captured the attention of many executives, along with world creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson."

Symes Group also had a number of invited guests at the conference, including representatives from Microsoft, Arcadis, Westpac and Cisco. A special "think tank" lunch was mediated by Sodria board director and former Medibank Private CEO George Savvides. George got the group talking, posing questions like:

What do we need in leaders?

How do leaders invest in change for tomorrow – break through the vortex of inertia?

Sir Ken talked about doing away with the hierarchy in the workplace.

How do we achieve this?

George also touched on empathy, citing Fred Lee's book *If Disney Ran Your Hospital: 9½ Things You Would Do Differently*.

It described the power of empathy in the healing process, highlighting the value of striving for it in the workplace.

The lunch provided a welcome opportunity for guests to interact and discuss some of the concepts covered in the talks.



World Business Forum
WOM

The business of helping others

**Big corporations put so much emphasis on profits, growth and shareholders, it's easy to get caught up in that mindset.
For some though, it's all about people.**



For Violet Roumeliotis of Settlement Services International, social justice comes first. Story overleaf.

S

ettlement

Services International (SSI) is a community organisation and social business that supports newcomers and other Australians to achieve their full potential.

Our work grew out of the migrant sector, but our client groups are now as varied as the Australian population.

We work with all people who have experienced vulnerability, including refugees, people seeking asylum and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, to build capacity and help them to overcome inequality.

We advocate for the people and communities we serve. Our goal, through funded or our self-funded initiatives, is to empower people to change their lives.

Where did your career begin? Were there any key turning points?

My 30-year career has been in the leadership of large not-for-profit organisations.

My mission is social justice for all and I advocate for disadvantaged people to be seen, heard and valued.

I believe that people are key to unleashing each other's potential. It takes just one person to make a gesture or give someone a real sense of belief in themselves.

That person for me was my dad. My parents arrived in Australia in the mid-1950s from post-World War II, Greece and a bitter civil war. They wanted to offer a better life for me and my sisters.

Dad could not pursue his university studies and with mum had to reinvent himself. As hard as that was, he always instilled in us a sense of belief that we could do whatever we wanted. Our aspirations were only limited to how big we could dream and how hard we were prepared to go get it.

This led me to focus on providing services to vulnerable communities, while applying a strengths-based approach in the areas of settlement, community development and social enterprise.

What are the greatest challenges your clients face?

A common challenge among new arrivals is improving their English. Many want to learn as they understand it will improve their work prospects and open up many other opportunities for them in Australia.

We also help newcomers navigate Australia's complex social support services. SSI assists new arrivals in not

only setting up these services but ensuring they understand the benefits available to them.

Finding a sense of belonging is another challenge. Refugees and even people who have migrated voluntarily or have lived in a community for years can struggle to find where they belong.

We run a number of events and initiatives to help support every Australian, new and established, find their place in their community.

Fortnightly we hold Community Kitchens where community members collaborate in performance, workshops, activities and cooking. We invite everyone to participate in the sharing of language, faith and customs and help make our community strong through our shared diversity.

We also recognise that one of the most effective ways to help the people we support is through economic participation; building a true sense of identity and contribution in one's life. This has led to our extensive investment in research, service design, corporate partnerships and social enterprises.

Programmes such as ParentsNext, EmployAbility, Youth@Work and Ignite Small Business Start-ups illustrate our tailored approach to better career pathways and access to work.

What are the greatest challenges for your organisation?

One of the most consistent challenges we face is changing hearts and minds to create an inclusive, welcoming society.

The media often focuses on personal prejudices or agendas which can drive and add fuel to conversations which do not reflect a majority of Australian's attitudes.

From my experience I believe the majority of Australians are incredibly open and welcoming to newcomers and the contributions they make to our society.

For example, at a recent event, Uncle Ray Davison of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and Elder of the Gadigal People shared his perspective on multiculturalism as a First Australian. He said whether you have been in Australia for one year or 1,000 years, this land sustains us and has become a part of us, making all of us Australian in the most literal sense of the word.

Given our staff are our most valuable asset in achieving our goal of growing an inclusive and welcoming society in Australia ensuring their wellbeing is also a critical challenge for SSI.

Many newcomers have experienced significant trauma in their journey and

this can have a significant knock-on effect for our staff, who support them on a regular basis.

We train our staff to not only support newcomers who live with the effects of trauma, but also to recognise the effects this interaction might have on themselves and their colleagues.

From a broader perspective, the community sector is facing growing community needs against a background of limited funding.

The Community Council for Australia (CCA) has highlighted that 'Charities and not-for-profits serving the same communities may need to work much harder at collaboration and possible mergers ... not just because it is in their interests but also in the interests of the communities they serve'.

And the greatest triumphs?

In SSI's six years we've experienced unprecedented growth. We've grown from 60 to 700 staff, from a \$9 million to \$110 million business and from working on our own to 45 partnerships. One of our greatest achievements has been in providing settlement support for a large range of people from different backgrounds. In 2016-17, SSI supported 10,000 refugees settle in Australia. From this one flagship programme we now have 14 programmes that support many different individuals and families who are experiencing vulnerability. This might be homelessness, unemployment, forced displacement — or even a combination of these.

I am also extremely proud of our work in establishing SSI as a respected voice in migration and settlement services on a global stage.

Our Ignite Small Business Start-Ups is an excellent example of the commitment and innovation of our staff, who built an amazing grass roots concept into a fully functional social enterprise. It came about from identifying a need and developing a tailor-made solution to fulfil it.

Ignite supports migrants from all backgrounds in establishing their own successful business in Australia. It's often the case that newcomers have a great vision for successful business opportunities, but simply lack the knowledge of Australia's complex business practices to capitalise on their ideas.

Ignite provides business advice and assistance which enables newcomers to make an informed decision before starting up their business.

Ignite has now gone international after the licence to use the business framework was sold to government entities in Canada.



How to help

We have many ways people can support the communities we work with. An extremely rewarding way is to become a volunteer. We have hundreds of volunteers that work in varied community and corporate roles including: mentoring, coaching entrepreneurs, teaching English, gardening, playgroups and assisting in social enterprises.

Our existing corporate partners and their staff engage with us in a range of ways including:

- corporate volunteering
- workplace payroll giving
- sponsor events
- host a fundraiser
- employment or work placement
- bespoke projects.

We'd also would love to hear from potential partners and any ideas they may have about enhancing the work we do.

Lastly, as we are a charitable organisation, people can donate to SSI.

To find information on volunteering, corporate partnership and donating visit our website (www.ssi.org.au).

"One of the most consistent challenges we face is changing hearts and minds to create an inclusive, welcoming society."



There's something about flowers that just makes people happy.

They can transform a room to give a real sense of occasion for any event, from a business conference to a wedding or social event.

And then they get thrown away.

As an event manager, Anita Howell was dismayed at seeing this happen time and time again.

"A lot of people are flying out after events, a lot of people are going out, or they're travelling by public transport. They don't want to take flowers home with them. Unfortunately they just get wasted.

"I always thought, I wish someone would do something, so I didn't have to do this, then one day I thought – I can do something."

Having worked as a nurse, and for not-for-profit organisations, she had seen plenty of people who were going through a hard time and were isolated, with little or no support.

"Some of them go through horrible things like cancer treatment.

"Even going through ageing can be very isolating. Having no one around, they can almost feel invisible. And what a beautiful way to let them know that they're not invisible – that someone cares, that someone's out there, thinking about them and wants to wish them well."

So she quit her job and started Perpetual Blooms.

Her service involves collecting flowers after events, rearranging them into individual posies and distributing them to not-for-profit organisations.

"I feel like everything I've done, all the experience I've got, has culminated into this role. I feel like it was something that I was just meant to do, and it feels so right. I just have to make it work."

The charities that receive the flowers tend to involve some form of residential care, like women's shelters.

"They're at a really low point. For a lot of these women, they're scared and they are removed from their contacts.

"The staff are just so overwhelmed, and they say 'It's just so lovely to be able to give our clients something that's not a basic need, something just for them, and something beautiful'.

"It just helps a little bit, at a really bad time."

Other recipients include parents of children going through long-term medical treatment and cancer treatment patients and their partners.

"It's all about making sure no one feels alone, and no one feels invisible."

Anita gets a lot out of the service she offers.

"When I'm making up a bouquet, I want it to be special for the person

getting it. I want them to feel like they're important. The bunch has to be really lovely because I want them to feel like they deserve it.

"I really don't have the words to express how much I get out of it. I have the best job.

"You just cry a lot.

"We're all so blessed. You've already given your guests a wonderful day, why not use your flowers to give someone else a wonderful day?"

– Ingrid Green

How to help

Anyone can engage Perpetual Blooms to repurpose their event or surplus flowers.

Anita will pick up flowers straight after the event, rearrange and deliver to a not-for-profit organisation nominated by you.

Collect the vases and spent blooms for recycling and composting once they've been enjoyed a second time.

Donating your event flowers through Perpetual Blooms turns the entire cost of your flowers including the floristry and the Perpetual Blooms fee into a tax deductible donation which could be a great saving for a newly married couple.

Perpetual Blooms will also co-ordinate a letter of thanks from the recipient organisation, to assist with claiming the tax benefit.



Sending a smile

Throwing out event flowers? Think again



Anita Howell says she feels like she's doing the work she was meant to do.

A right dressing-up

Dress For Success a giver of clothes and confidence

By Ingrid Green

Jodie was referred to Dress For Success by a social worker provided by family support.

Her confidence had suffered as a result of finding it difficult to get employment after being out of the workforce for a few years while raising children. Having previously worked in the same job for a long time, she was daunted by the prospect of preparing a resume and going to a job interview. She's also struggled with depression.

Keen, however, to find a better job and support herself and her boys, she called Dress For Success and told them her story.

"From the moment I called them they were so inviting and understanding, they don't look down on you. They do nothing but encourage you and make you feel good about yourself."

She attended a makeover, where a stylist helped her find clothes for an interview, right down to foundation garments. "They make you feel like it's a safe place. You don't feel intimidated and you don't feel scared.

"It definitely made me feel more confident and I am willing to change

and challenge myself.

"They put bright colours on me, it made me feel good.

She now goes to Dress For Success every Wednesday for their employment workshops.

"Having compliments from random people makes you feel amazing.

"Normally I'm all about my boys and making them look perfect, making sure their hair's perfect. It was time to start looking after myself."

At the weekly workshops Jodie has the opportunity to attend mock interviews.

"The workshops are amazing. They really help. The first time I felt like I was going to pass out. [The staff] were encouraging me without pushing me.

"You get so much out of it. It's really boosted my confidence.

"Yesterday I had a mock interview and it was so much fun. I would never had said that one or two months ago.

"Once you get comfortable you get to go to an interview somewhere else."

These involve panel interviews with up to three people.

"So many people go through the same thing. If you've worked at one job for a

long time.

"You get scared, you get depressed. We just wouldn't be feeling good about ourselves if it wasn't for Dress For Success.

They're also helping her find her passion. "They sent me a brochure about work in the automotive industry. I said: 'Oh, I love cars!'"

The time and care from the people at Dress For Success had really made a difference to Jodie's confidence.

"I want to start something totally new and I'd love to learn, do whatever it takes, training.

"This time I want to challenge myself. I want to have a management-type role within two years. I want to do it for myself and for my boys.

• Symes Group thanks Jodie for sharing her story and we wish her the very best in her future endeavours. If you would like to help the Dress For Success program, see their website about donating clothes, holding a donation drive, becoming a corporate partner or referral agency, or volunteering your time.

"Normally I'm all about my boys and making them look perfect, making sure their hair's perfect. It was time to start looking after myself."



Dress For Success is a global not-for-profit organisation dedicated to helping disadvantaged women into the workforce. They provide corporate and formal attire and styling advice, job interview and resume writing assistance and a friendly, supportive environment. Jodie told us about her experience.

People at heart

A business conference with a difference

The World of Business Ideas Forum never fails to disappoint. It's a wealth of progressive thinking, hope and inspiration. This year's event was, once again, a highlight. Ingrid Green reports on a big couple of days.



"Technology should be at the service of people, not the other way round." – Chris Stanley

The World Business Forum's World of Business Ideas invariably promises a formidable line-up of the most inspiring, progressive and innovative thought leaders in the world, and this year they didn't disappoint.

Speakers covered technological futurism and strategy in organisational architecture to insights from a F1 driver's seat; the 2000-strong audience were amply entertained as well as informed.

Wobi's content director Chris Stanley kicked it all off, spotlighting the humanification theme. We need to focus on the qualities that make us human, he said, and put people back at the heart of the business. He reminded listeners of the importance of tapping into the creativity of staff to understand and meet consumers' needs, and that technology should be at the service of people – not the other way around.

Leading authority on creativity and innovation Sir Ken Robinson has almost become the face of the event. His opening keynote, delivered with a trademark deadpan manner and biting wit – just this side of PC – once again made him a popular speaker.

The 4 Disciplines of Execution author Chris McChesney expanded on workplace culture, citing a principle from US statistician and management consultant W Edwards Deming – if a problem involves the majority of staff, for the majority of time, then it's a problem with the system, not the people.

The bestselling author explained why execution is more difficult than strategy (because day-to-day workload always feels more urgent), and that it relied on four basic rules: focus, leverage, engagement and accountability.

Focus means narrowing down the whirlwind of ideas; there will always be more than there is capacity to execute. First, ascertain the Wildly Important Goals (WIGs). Then, like air traffic controllers landing planes, leaders must track all WIGs, but ensure each team gives their attention to just one at a time.

Leveraging that focus means acting on the lead measure – it's more effective, easier to monitor and

influenceable by the team than the lag measure.

Keep a compelling scoreboard to engage team members. Moving it to game status and keeping score means people will play differently. Of course, the game needs to be ultimately winnable.

Finally, create a cadence of accountability. Strategise push, not pull – people won't disappoint their team. Have each member ask: What are the 1-2-3 things I can do this week to increase the lead measure?

Key takeaway? Always choose the urgent over the important.

Behavioural science expert Kelly Peters shared her insights. She explained how scientific method could be applied to marketing. By applying the basic building blocks of empirical observation, theories of root cause and hypothesised solutions, we can judge using quality of evidence. It's helpful, she said, to think like scientists who approach their observations by first trying to prove themselves wrong.

Technology futurist Shara Evans took delegates away from business strategy for a while and into the future.

Augmented reality, driverless cars, the 1200km/hr Hyperloop, aviation drones, artificial intelligence and regenerative medical technology are all on the horizon.

Such concepts were only recently wild imaginings, and the ability to execute them needed careful regulation. Ethics needs to be carefully considered, and robots will need to be taught empathy. Our new world looks volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous. It is up to us to design the future we want to live in.

Alan Mulally has an impressive backstory, originally heading Boeing in the US.

Eyed with suspicion when handed the wheel at ailing automotive juggernaut Ford, he silenced critics by promptly returning the company to profitability.

His big secret? Culture.

In pole position for a change was staff engagement. At his retirement in 2014, he had hoisted employee satisfaction from 40 to 91 per cent. It was a priority; 40 per cent meant: "That's 60 per cent who are only working for salary, not to build the cathedral."

And it worked. Ford was the sole major US car manufacturer to dodge a government bailout at the height of the late 2000s recession.

His advice in business? First, have a business plan, then repeat it at every opportunity – every meeting, every conference. Implement a communication strategy that ensures everyone knows it. And that means everyone; make sure all corners are represented on the leadership team (not just the cool kids).

Also vital: emotional safety. Humour in the workplace is encouraged – but never at anyone's expense.

Author and founding director of the Wharton Leadership Program Stew Friedman took the stage on the second day of the event.

Societal and cultural shifts meant we needed a different way to think about leadership, he said. And not just about work, about life.

Former professional race driver Mark Webber took the conference in a different direction.

He shared his insights and lessons he'd learned during his time reaching "the Everest" of motorsport, winning the Formula One, an exceptional feat for a non-European.

He said belief in himself was crucial to his success, that it was all about ego, hunger and tenacity. And, of course, the whole team.

Red Bull, he said, managed to pull together a group so passionate that in their first winning season they collectively put in 1200 hours of extra, unpaid work.

There was immense trust involved in motorsport teams, he said, so good communication was paramount, and any issues were dealt with immediately.

Bonds were also strengthened by keeping families involved (annual Easter egg hunts for the kids included), keeping the work environment enjoyable, encouraging members to maintain their health and fitness, and making decisions fast and with a minimum of political toing and froing. Relevant takeaways for any corporate leader. The World of Business Ideas conference, as always, provided a valuable and inspiring two days of innovative and exciting speakers. Symes Group is looking forward to it next year.



Top: Symes Report editor Ingrid Green and one of our previous issue's stars, Vajira Weerasekera, Above: Ingrid and Jess had a great time chatting to people at the stand, while Barbara Harvey (right) manned Symes Group's Creative Playcentre.

At the pulse of innovation



Sir Ken Robinson has dedicated most of his career to releasing creativity.

It was, he said, at the pulse of innovation, yet most people spent their entire lives unaware of their full capabilities, and settled for less.

He stressed that humanification was desperately important; that we had lost sight of what makes us at once collectively human and uniquely different.

Talent and creative resources, he said, were like natural resources in their abundance, and far more diverse than traditional education would lead you to believe. These extraordinary gifts were often buried and, like natural resources, needed refining and cultivation.

So how did that apply to business? The human lifespan had lengthened,

while that of companies was getting shorter. Many failed, and those that endured were the ones that reinvented themselves. Even great companies didn't simply fade away, he said, they collapsed, like empires, after reaching a critical point.

Technology could destroy entire industries, and rapid advancement – especially in artificial intelligence – meant we couldn't today predict the changes ahead.

So what does business need to do to survive? Stay on the pulse of innovation.

As humans we have an infinite capacity for imagination – the ability to visualise concepts not present, revisit the past, and predict the future.

Imagination, he said, was often taken for granted, but only through it could

we achieve creativity, which led to innovation.

Companies need to create an environment that fosters creativity. There is a misconception that only some people are creative, and there is a tendency to separate them in the workplace. In truth, most talents are not gifts, but the product of passion and dedication.

Values too, are changing. The drive for profit and shareholder value at any cost will give way to conscious capitalism, existentialism and a circular economy. In the future, success in business would depend on harnessing the creative abilities of entire teams. It is only within a culture that truly values each individual's ideas, that creates a safe place to share ideas, that innovation is possible.

Leading the life you want

Stewart Freidman is a professor at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, and bestselling author on the subject of work/life integration, leadership and the dynamics of change.

He says that rather than the binary work/life balance, good, organised strategy can mean four-way wins: in work/career, home/family, self (mind-body-spirit) and community/society. The digital age means we can be more committed to ideas and meaningful work; that we have the ability to connect but also to disconnect.

He says in this digital age we're just beginning to understand how to harness the tools to help make the world a better place, rather than isolating ourselves. He also advocates the importance of sharing your

challenges with others, because it has so many benefits – making us aware that we all face similar challenges, gaining fresh insights and helping with creative thought, along with the rewards that come with helping others – like learning more about yourself.

In order to be real and act with authenticity though, we must first clarify what's really important to us. Establishing where we're going in life provides inspiration, direction, stability and purpose.

Being real though, can be tough. It takes courage to stand up and say what's important to you.

During his talk at Wobi, Stewart presented a number of exercises to help develop the skills to be real, whole and innovative, and for

integrating work and the rest of your life. These are expanded in his latest book, *Leading the Life You Want*, where he illustrates them using six successful and prominent people, including Michelle Obama and Bruce Springsteen. Exercises tend to be simple, practical ways to focus on values and skills, including tracking and reflecting, planning and organising, appreciating and caring and creating value in the world.

According to Stewart: "Successful people make it their business to be conscious of what and who matter most. Their actions flow from their values. They strive to do what they can to make things better for the people who depend on them and on whom they depend, in all the different parts of their lives."



The 2018 Ausmumpreneur Awards in Melbourne was a glittering success for Symes Group, with Jessica Symes claiming silver in the Business Excellence category. Congratulations! Pic: Jam on Your Collar

Women on top



Left: 9 to Thrive: Jessica Symes and Barbara Harvey in party mode. Above: Violet Roumeliotis (right) was among the speakers.

9 to Thrive is touted as a two-day festival bringing together 10,000 women for talks, panels and workshops from entrepreneurs, CEOs and creatives at the top of their game. The line-up of speakers at the Sydney event was indeed impressive. Something for everyone? You bet – and more. They included Sweaty Betty PR founder and director Roxy Jacenko, Bumble’s Australian lead and director of marketing Michelle Battersby, Emmylou Loves founder Emmylou McCarthy, co founder of Auburn Tigers women’s AFL Amna Karra-Hassan, social justice advocate Fadzi Whande, race car driver Emily Duggan and TV presenter Rachael Finch – all to the beats of DJ F.A.D.J aka Claire O’Shea. With such a varied and savvy schedule, it was difficult to decide which ones to see between adventuring through the myriad exhibitors. They spanned Bras and Things and Glamazon to Her Lawyer and Aussie Home Loans and everything in between – including the Symes Group team of course.

A huge and crucial part of working in a leadership role in any organisation is the ability to communicate – to direct reports, superiors, wider staff, clients ... perhaps a board or shareholders.

It doesn't matter how good you are at your job, your career will be influenced by your ability to listen to people, decode what it is they're really trying to communicate, and respond appropriately. And the cornerstone of this process is conversation.

Most of us spend a lot of time having conversations of various forms, but some people are clearly much more effective than others at ensuring the conversations they have strengthen relationships and are productive, rather than waste time and destroy trust.

Why is conversation so important in organisations?

Trust is of the key trends influencing how we are expected to lead. The trust deficit describes the loss of trust society has in the key institutions of business, politics and the media. Trust is being discussed at the highest levels – it was on the agenda at this year's Davos Summit, by the World Economic Forum. It is an issue for every person in every industry.

Many of the seeming endless series of scandals made public clearly show senior leaders and politicians acting in ways which appear to be entirely self-serving, so it's little wonder the public has become increasingly cynical.

Also, the relationship between employer and employee has fundamentally changed. It used to be long-term, now it is increasingly transactional. We don't build the relationships we used to have with employees, and perhaps not the loyalty. We can't assume that people

will stick around anymore, so planning is difficult.

Technology, particularly the voice it has given people, has had an impact. Anyone can be a celebrity – buy yourself enough followers and you can be an influencer, it doesn't matter if you know anything or not. But even the average person, thanks to technology, can feel heard. How do they feel coming into work if they don't feel they're part of the conversation? If they can't say what they think?

That, in part, has led to the death of deference. We no longer automatically respect people because of their age, rank or profession. People now must earn respect.

We work in a knowledge-based economy; we're no longer all about manufacturing, where outputs could be controlled and measured. We need to focus on intrinsic motivators rather than extrinsic ones.

While the need for good communication, good conversation is more important than ever, our workplaces often harbour barriers.

Peter Senge, US systems analyst and author of *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*, attributes "the disease of the hierarchy" to compel people to say what their senior managers want, not need to hear.

Employees frequently don't believe management is really interested in hearing what they think – often because that is what experience has taught them.

Sometimes people think what is needed is action and that too much talk is unproductive and a waste of time, and many people prefer to use technology, rather than have an in-person conversation. Email is often an excuse not to talk. As leaders we need

to quit command and control, and take up co-creating and collaboration. Talking.

We need to think about how we communicate. We need to think about having conversations.

Good conversation is based on a number of distinct skills. While personality – our innate strengths and preferences – influences our ability to use these skills, we can work on them, develop them, and improve them.

UK communications expert Dik Veenman has significant experience in this field. Founder of *The Right Conversation*, a team of consultants and researchers specialising in organisational performance, Dik's specific expertise lies in improving the quality of conversations within organisations. His clients include the BBC, Bank of England, Toyota, Virgin Trains, Ernst and Young and British Telecom.

Much of Dik's recent work has been in the area of researching the enablers and barriers to better dialogue in the workplace.

Facet5 joined forces with *The Right Conversation* to create the *Facet5 Superskills Report*. Extensive research showed that there was a correlation between personality and how people naturally show up in conversation against the superskills. This report measures your natural preference, approach, and what you're more likely to pay attention to, not learned behaviour (which also plays a big part). It helps individuals identify strengths, along with areas to develop or manage. For anyone interested in developing conversational skills for any aspect of work or personal life, a workplace personality profiling system, such as *Facet5*, can be a useful tool.

– **Ingrid Green**

'It's little wonder the public has become increasingly cynical.'

More than words

Why it's time we started talking ... about talking





Power of Personality: Facet5 The personality tool of choice

Facet5 is one of the most modern and advanced measures of personality available today. Used worldwide, Facet5 supports human capital management for individuals, teams and organisations, consistently adding real value.

The five-factor model of personality is widely accepted as one of the best ways of describing the fundamental building blocks of personality and behaviour. Facet5 measures these five factors precisely and quickly to give the most accurate and easily applied portrait of individual differences in behaviour.

SIMPLE LANGUAGE

Facet5 provides an easy-to-understand framework and a simple common language, readily adopted by teams and organisations, to help solve business related "people problems".

VALUE NEUTRAL

Facet5 describes, explains and predicts behaviour in non-judgmental ways, so teams and organisations alike can easily understand and utilise the power of personality.

FOR MANAGEMENT

Specifically designed by psychologists for use by management, Facet5 helps people at all levels understand personality theory and how it can be used to get the best from people.

GLOBAL APPLICATION

Available in more than 30 languages and with corresponding norm groups, Facet5 is used by organisations on every continent.



Want to know more? Contact Symes Group on
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