crf
CORPORATE RESEARCH FORUM

CRF Annual Conference

BUILDING & SUSTAINING GREAT ORGANISATIONS

RETROSPECTIVE

2021 CRF PROGRAMME

CRF Annual Conference

BUILDING & SUSTAINING GREAT ORGANISATIONS

RETROSPECTIVE

CRF's annual conference returned in hybrid form this year, with 268 attendees gathering online and in-person in London on 12th October for a day of networking, learning, and exchanging ideas.

Our topic this year was **Building and Sustaining Great Organisations**, a timely concern given that the capacity of organisations to adapt and renew has been tested throughout 2020 and 2021.

Together with academics and expert practitioners, we explored the defining features of a great organisation, discussing how to create success, develop great people, deal with failure and implement high-growth strategies. We learned what is required of leaders to build, renew, and sustain great organisations. We examined the role that failure plays in innovation. We discovered a tool for understanding how people and organisations learn. We took a fresh look at how business strategies are developed, with an emphasis on clarity and inclusion. Finally, we considered the qualities of agile organisations.

We hope this Retrospective, with its videos, summaries, speaker insights, and key takeaways, will help you apply the learning points to your own organisational challenges. And we hope to see you all for our International Conference in Athens in October 2022.

CRF Annual Conference

CONFERENCE TAKEAWAYS

1. Organisations need to go broad but also deep as they develop business strategies, including a wide range of employees, meaningfully, in the process. Inclusive strategy development is important because people need clarity and purpose about their role to deliver strategy successfully.

2. Acceptance of failure is imperative if organisations want to learn how to experiment and innovate effectively.

3. People – and organisations – learn along an 'S curve', moving from a slow-growth launch point to a sweet spot of rapid progress to, finally, mastery. When an individual – or an organisation – reaches mastery, there is a risk of complacency; this is the time to jump onto a new S curve of learning.

4. An exciting vision, a clear business plan, a dynamic culture, distinctive values and high-performing leadership are key components of a great organisation.

5. To build and sustain a great organisation, leaders must show openness, trust, and vulnerability while setting boundaries. A great leader constantly renews him or herself, and knows when they have reached the limit of the contributions they can make to an organisation.

6. In the face of unprecedented disruption, agility and resilience will be critical to organisations' future success and survival. Yet many organisations still have operating models that cannot keep pace.

7. Truly agile organisations are able to unlock the passion and purpose of people. They access their people's capabilities when and where needed, they have self-governed ways of working, they are modular (comprised of discrete entities that can be configured in different ways), and they are organisations in which humans and machines work together in harmony.

CREATING, DELIVERING, AND EVALUATING YOUR BUSINESS STRATEGY

IMD REAL LEARNING. REAL IMPACT.

Prof. James Henderson, Professor of Strategic Management, IMD Business School

James Henderson is Professor of Strategic Management at IMD Business School. His areas of interest are strategy under uncertainty, competitive and corporate strategy, and strategy execution. He helps companies achieve and sustain competitive advantage at all levels through directing custom specific programs, facilitating workshops and teaching.

▶ WATCH JAMES' SESSION SUMMARY HERE:

PROF. JAMES HENDERSON
PROFESSOR OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, IMD BUSINESS SCHOOL

How do organisations create, deliver, and evaluate great business strategies? Research shows that strategic purpose and clarity have the greatest impact on financial performance, and that this impact is most pronounced among middle managers. Therefore, a top-down, 'tell and sell' approach to strategy does not cut it. Instead, in today's more diverse and inclusive world, organisations need to get the level of inclusion right at the beginning of the strategy process, to ensure the rest works out well.

In his session, James defined inclusion along two continua: breadth and depth. Breadth of inclusion refers to the number and diversity of employees concerned in the strategy creation process outside of the leadership team. This could be a few (such as a task force) to the whole organisation. Depth of inclusion can be seen along a participation-to-commitment continuum. *Participation* simply is the request for information from others, with provision of recommendations. *Involvement* is the provision of data and enablement of discussion. *Engagement* is data, discussion and being part of the decision making. *Commitment* is data, discussion, decision making and emotional commitment to making it happen.

James used several examples to illustrate the importance of inclusion along these two axes of breadth and depth.

- **Wide breadth, little depth:** At Roche Diagnostics Germany in 2015, early in the strategy development process, all 900 employees were surveyed about the organisation's future. The ideas were incorporated into its new strategy, resulting in significantly higher levels of engagement, according to engagement surveys administered post-strategy development.

- **Middle breadth, middle depth:** Stora Enso's CEO in 2011 decided the way forward could not be with this own non-diverse team. He included others through a 15-person Pathfinder shadow board. Pathfinders (who had applied for the position) learned from other industries and provided recommended options for growth (not decisions) for the company going forward. Pathfinders was then followed by Pathbuilders, a larger program of 600 in total. The results of the employee engagement/management surveys post-programme gradually improved over time.

- **Middle breadth, very deep:** The CEO of NetApp Europe in 2010 decided a broader and deeper level of inclusion was required for building out the strategy. He opened the process to a wider community of approximately 40 key opinion leaders in the organisation. This larger group not only came up with options, but also collectively decided and personally committed to their Must Win Battles going forward. They were so convinced by the approach that they subsequently used it with their strategic channel partners.

- **Large breadth, middle depth:** In early 2018, the CEO of Roche Diagnostics CPS division opened the strategy process to the whole organisation. Over six months, they achieved 50% inclusion (800/1600), conducting approximately 50 three-hour workshops with 70 internally trained facilitators, resulting in 11,300 ideas that were collated, understood, synthesised and fed back to the organisation. The result of the 'Build Our Organisation Strategy Together' (or BOOST) approach was a jump in engagement scores.

James' challenge to HR is to provide the evidence that inclusion is the way forward, despite the the barriers to proceeding in this direction – typical pushback on process (too long), potential retreat from it during crises, being too open and democratic, failing to get commitment, empowering employees with additional pressures, creating false expectations, and worrying about disclosure. James concluded his session by asking attendees the question: 'What will you do next to move your organisation in this direction?'.

James Henderson's session slides are available upon request.

KEYNOTE SESSIONS

PARTNER MASTERCLASSES

crf
2021
CONFERENCE

BUSINESS STRATEGY

SUCCESS THROUGH FAILURE

SMART GROWTH

THE HOWDENS STORY

THE AGE OF AGILITY

CREATING, DELIVERING, AND EVALUATING YOUR BUSINESS STRATEGY

Q&A

Q How does the behaviour of the executive team and how they operate together influence the success of a strategic rollout?

A *Executive leaders need to show openness, vulnerability, and a willingness to let go in order to be inclusive in an effective way. The strategic message also needs to be consistent across the executive team. You can't have leaders doing it 'their way' as this causes problems.*

Q When you include tens of thousands of people in the strategy process, how do you account for power bases and micro-climates in the organisation? What about the unintended consequences of inclusion?

A *There are many dilemmas with moving in a more inclusive direction. There are dilemmas of process and of commitment. Will parts of the organisation go rogue? But, on balance, if we collect all the ideas and have people's engagement, the positive, intended consequences are likely to overwhelm the unintended ones. For example, at one organisation an unpopular decision (restructuring) resulted from the inclusive strategic process. But engagement still went up at that organisation because the broader base of employees clearly saw the connection between strategy and purpose.*

Q What financial investment is required for this kind of inclusion in strategy development?

A *Costs can be high in terms of time and money, but high engagement and increased acceptance of difficult decisions from staff are the payoffs.*

Q Thinking of the challenges with this approach, in terms of being successful, did you set up boundaries or constraints to avoid any 'no-go' territory?

A *Yes. There were boundaries in terms of giving people information (the ready-to-launch ideas that the executive team had already created). There were also boundaries in terms of structure – where to play, how to win, and an exercise with Legos that allowed participants to explore the trade-offs in decision making when there are many projects and limited resources available to fund those projects.*

FURTHER RESOURCES

Henderson, James. 2021. **Five Steps to Build an Inclusive Strategy.** *I by IMD.* https://iby.imd.org/brain-circuits/five-steps-to-building-an-inclusive-strategy

Intro to I Quarterly Magazine. 2021. *I by IMD.* https://vimeo.com/616089805/44486a9993

Jordan, Jennifer and Sorell, Michael. 2019. **Why You Should Create a "Shadow Board" of Younger Employees.** *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2019/06/why-you-should-create-a-shadow-board-of-younger-employees

Killing, Peter, Malnight, Thomas, and Keys, Tracey. 2006. **Must-Win Battles: How to Win Them, Again and Again.** *Financial Times / Prentice Hall.* https://www.amazon.co.uk/Must-Win-Battles-How-Them-Again/dp/0132459582

★ CRF MEMBER OFFER FROM IMD BUSINESS SCHOOL

OWP Dubai: 'Reset for Growth' – 27 November – 1 December 2021

OWP Dubai, the first in-person edition of IMD's signature programme since the onset of the pandemic, will be a very special event, dedicating five high-impact days to learnings from the disruption. How are we changed? What have we learned? Together we will celebrate resilience. We will take stock and then leverage key learnings, enabling you to shift from survival mode to a better future – your reset for growth.

CRF members are eligible for a special rate with IMD – please contact **Mette** at CRF or **Göran** at IMD to learn more.

KEYNOTE SESSIONS
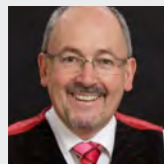
PARTNER MASTERCLASSES

crf 2021 CONFERENCE

BUSINESS STRATEGY

SUCCESS THROUGH FAILURE

SMART GROWTH

THE HOWDENS STORY

THE AGE OF AGILITY

CREATING SUCCESSES THROUGH FAILURES

Stephen Carver,
Senior Lecturer in Project Management, Cranfield University

Stephen Carver lectures in Project Management, Action, Execution and Implementation at Cranfield University. He previously worked in the oil industry and for Virgin, with project and risk management experience in most sectors. He is a prolific writer, much sought-after speaker and highly regarded as a global expert in Risk, Influencing and Crisis Management.

WATCH STEPHEN'S SESSION SUMMARY HERE:

STEPHEN CARVER
SENIOR LECTURER, CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

Failure often marks the road to success. It is through acceptance of failure that organisations can learn how to experiment and innovate effectively.

In his session, Stephen compared NASA's approach to space exploration with that of Elon Musk's SpaceX to illustrate the critical importance of failure to organisational success.

NASA, despite initial spectacular successes in space exploration (such as the moon landing), has become an organisation mired in a culture of fear and lacking in top-level vision. Space exploration is a dangerous and precise science, and the people working at NASA are among the most highly intelligent any organisation could hope to hire. Yet NASA launched the Challenger space shuttle in 1986, despite knowing that it would explode and kill all of the astronauts on board. It was culturally easier for NASA employees to say 'there are no problems' than to speak up with their knowledge of certain failure. NASA did not learn from this failure, and in 2003 it was repeated with the explosion on re-entry of the shuttle Columbia. In 2011, NASA stopped missions altogether, and today the United States relies on Russia for access to its international space station.

In contrast, SpaceX, Elon Musk's startup, has become incredibly successful, despite the fact that Musk knows nothing about space exploration. There is no forgiveness in space – you have to get everything exactly right to avoid disaster. How could a disruptive innovator with limited knowledge and a background in making cars and solar panels possibly be successful in such a demanding area? Stephen cited the following qualities that have been key to Musk's success in space (and business more broadly): Musk believes in failure, low costs, and reusability, and he is innovative, ambitious, visionary, and disruptive. Musk believes that if an organisation isn't failing, it isn't innovating enough. In SpaceX, he has created a flat organisation, comprised of diverse people who skew young and have fun with their work. He has articulated an overarching vision – 'to get to Mars' – and his organisation relies on smart people to come up with smart answers, quickly. Initially, SpaceX had countless failures while the world laughed at Musk. But by 2014, the company had gained enough credibility to be given an opportunity by NASA to do business together. And in recent years, SpaceX has made a success of that opportunity, achieving what experts have long said is impossible, at a fraction of the cost.

Stephen Carver's session slides are available upon request.

CREATING SUCCESSES THROUGH FAILURES

Q&A

Q How important are perspectives on failure — failure to you might not be a failure to others?

A *It's a question of how you deal with failure, how much energy there is in the organisation to move things beyond the failure. Organisations tend to ask who is to blame, how did it happen, how do we change the process? Instead, organisations should approach failure with the attitude that it happened, how do we learn from it?*

Q Does tolerance for failure depend on the organisation type, e.g. are listed companies less tolerant?

A *Yes. Elon Musk's approach is that if his organisation goes bankrupt, it doesn't really matter. If it happens, it happens, and he'll start again. Try to sell that to a shareholder! So yes, tolerance for failure will vary, but all organisations should be looking to maximise their tolerance for failure within their constraints.*

Q Could Elon Musk not focus his energy on solving this planet's problems rather than space exploration?

A *This is a question of human nature. Musk wants to get to Mars because he thinks we have messed things up too much here. But then someone like Bill Gates wants to fix things here. It is useful to have a balance between these kinds of views, rather than one being right and one being wrong.*

Q What is the link between fun and organisation effectiveness? How do we make fun more normative in an organisation?

A *Having younger staff helps! As you get older, you become more risk-averse. When you are young, you are not like that. Organisations shouldn't throw away all the grown-ups, but most organisations are not young enough. Organisations also need to be more flexible about how people contribute. It's ok to let talented people come in and out of the organisation — it's what people contribute, not how long they stay. Someone might come in, make a brilliant contribution for a few years, get burned out and take a year off to go surfing, then come back and be a brilliant contributor again.*

SMART GROWTH:
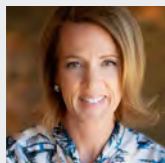## IMPROVING YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM TO IMPROVE THE COMPANY

Whitney Johnson, CEO, Disruption Advisors, Author and Executive Coach

Whitney Johnson is one of the 50 leading business thinkers in the world (Thinkers50) and an expert on disruptive innovation and personal disruption. She has written widely on disruption and is a co-founder of the Disruptive Innovation Fund with Harvard Business School's Clayton Christensen.

WATCH WHITNEY'S SESSION SUMMARY HERE:

WHITNEY JOHNSON
CEO, DISRUPTION ADVISORS
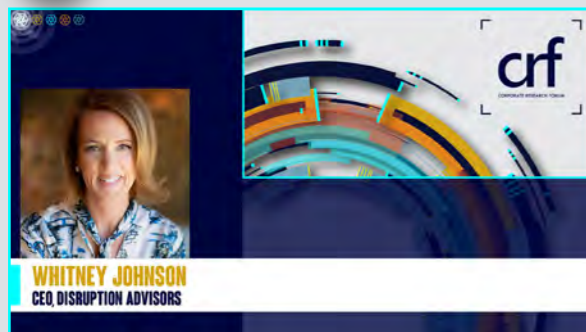
In her session, Whitney introduced the S Curve of Learning and described its people applications.

Nearly a decade ago, Whitney realised that the S Curve could be a powerful concept for helping individuals better manage their careers. Based on the diffusion curve popularised by E.M. Rogers, the S Curve of Learning models how, as someone develops competence within a new domain of expertise, he or she moves up the learning curve. Growth is slow and effortful at the outset. This launch point phase is followed by rapid upward progress as the person acquires new skills and learns to overcome setbacks: a stretch that Whitney thinks of as the sweet spot. At the peak is mastery – a time when work becomes easier, but learning slows and the curve flattens, because there is little left to learn. When that happens, it's time to jump to the bottom of a new S Curve, put in the effort and experience the thrill of climbing again.

S CURVE OF LEARNING™

LAUNCH POINT   SWEET SPOT   HIGH END

SWEET SPOT

GROWTH

TIME

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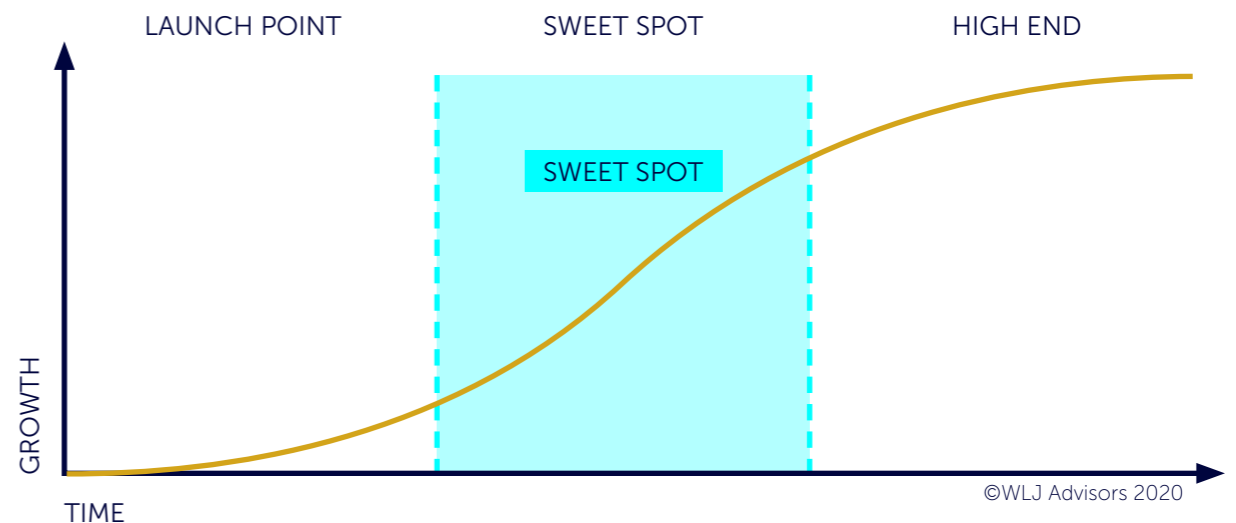
The S Curve of Learning doesn't just help people manage their individual careers. It's also a valuable tool for managers – a simple, visual way for leaders to drive conversations and decisions as they build a great team. Zoom in, and you can evaluate where an individual is on his or her curve. Then, use that information to tailor a talent development plan to maximise the strength of that single thread and its contribution to the whole cloth. Zoom out and you can direct how the individual S Curve threads weave together in a harmonious tapestry.

When one understands the S Curve of Learning, there are a variety of valuable applications, including talent development, succession planning, and team configuration.

Whitney Johnson's session slides are available upon request.

SMART GROWTH IMPROVING YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM TO IMPROVE THE COMPANY

FURTHER RESOURCES

For more on the S Curve of Learning, listen to the **Disrupt Yourself Podcast**, Episode 80. For how to apply this concept to teams, read _**Build an A Team**_. The introduction is available to read here.

And to learn how the S Curve applies at the company-wide level, Whitney's new book, _**Smart Growth: How to Grow Your People to Grow Your Company**_ will be published in January 2022.

Q&A

Q There is a difference between individual and organisational mastery. Does the model apply to organisations as well as to individuals?

A _Yes. An organisation that has achieved mastery can become complacent and vulnerable to disruption. Companies need to create space for the individuals within them to disrupt and thus constantly self-renew._

Q The S Curve is a great tool for assessing the present, but how can we use it when thinking about how to plan for the future?

A _Start by asking, given where we're trying to go as an organisation, how do we need to move things around? Do we need to move people in sweet spots to mastery? Do we need more people launching around new capabilities?_

Q Feedback is a dilemma for many people. How should you give it? Can it be useful if it's not honest and direct? And yet how do people respond to negative feedback?

A _One of the most generous things any of us can do is to give feedback. It is generous because it's uncomfortable. It creates all kinds of psychological warfare in our minds. But giving feedback shows you are invested in the person. It's useful to start with feedback from day one. This builds neural pathways for feedback and builds a sense of comfort and safety for both participants. Being direct and honest is essential, but it needs to come from a place of genuine caring for a person._

Q Do S curves work better in some sectors than others?

A _It can be more intuitive if you come from an industry that is familiar with it, but the S curve is applicable to all because growth is a universal human longing. Ultimately, it is a tool that is agnostic as to industry._

Q When working with CEOs, at which point in the curve should you discuss their legacy to the organisation, and how do you go about doing it?

A _On any given S curve, a person reaches mastery at around three years. CEOs often stay longer than that. You want to help them start thinking about what's next when they are still in their sweet spot. You want to help them see mastery as A summit, not THE summit. Otherwise, they will hit a plateau._

★ CRF MEMBER OFFER FROM WHITNEY JOHNSON

Whitney Johnson would like to offer you an opportunity to take the **S Curve Insight™ assessment**. Learn where you are on the S Curve and how to implement the seven accelerants to grow both personally and professionally. Please **click here** to sign up. You will receive the assessment on Monday, October 25th.

BUILDING A GREAT ORGANISATION:
THE HOWDENS STORY

Matthew Ingle, Former Chief Executive, Howdens Joinery

Matthew Ingle founded Howdens Joinery Group in 1995 and was CEO until 2018. As part of the MFI Group, Howdens grew rapidly. Its 'worthwhile for all' culture, unique business model, innovative products and relentless focus on customer service set it apart, and in 2017 it was ranked the 7th best large company to work for by *The Sunday Times*.

Founded in 1995, Howdens is a business created from Matthew Ingle's vision of an organisation that would support builders to deliver the complex task of designing and fitting kitchens for their customers.

The company began as a trading division of MFI, with 40 people, 14 depots, seven kitchen ranges, and barely £1M, in revenue in its first year. By 2020, the company had 793 depots, a turnover of £1.5billion, and pre-tax profits of £185 million.

During his tenure, Matthew not only oversaw Howdens' rapid and exceptional growth, he also became CEO of the wider MFI Group. He successfully dealt with a dwindling MFI share price and resolved legacy issues in the MFI business which had led to a business collapse as a result of the 2008 financial crisis. Matthew and his executive team resolved MFI's legacy issues while ensuring that suppliers, employees and pensioners did not lose out, and in parallel continued to grow the Howdens business.

How did Matthew build and sustain such a successful organisation?

- The company has an exciting vision, clear business plan, dynamic culture, distinctive values and high-performing leadership. The idea that business should be worthwhile for all involved is a founding principle, as illustrated by the company's profit share model. Each depot is allocated a percentage share of its profit, which the depot manager allocates to staff at his or her discretion. This founding principle has shaped the business model and strategic decisions for more than 20 years, and it continues to be at the heart of what Howdens does.

- Howdens has a unique, highly decentralised business model. It only sells to trade customers and operates its own state-of-the-art factories, which results in a highly flexible supply chain.

- Trust is critical. Local depots build trusted partnerships with trade professionals and depot managers are autonomous, with significant local discretion. This creates an entrepreneurial, competitive environment where people strive for success.

- As leader, Matthew (now retired) recognised that people are at the heart of the business. Trust, the ability to ask for help, courage, curiosity, and a willingness to empower and work for the majority of people in your organisation – who want to do a good job and help the organisation grow and succeed – are key leadership qualities. Equally, it is important that leaders know when they have had their 'day in the sun', and pass the reins to someone else once that day has passed.

Matthew Ingle's session slides are available upon request.

Q&A

Q Can you say a bit more about the importance of courage?

A *Once you've made a decision and pushed it through, don't think about the stressful time spent debating it. You can be worried, but avoid fear. It comes down to context. What is going to be the best outcome in this? As a senior leader, you've got to do the right thing by the business and by yourself. You're being judged at that moment. Examine yourself and be ready, because that moment will come.*

Q When bad apples turn up in an organisation, what should you do?

A *There are different kinds of bad apples. There are the well-meaning ones who just don't fit the organisation. Then there are the other ones, those who try to line their boots. As leader of the organisation, you have a fundamental choice. Are you going to run it for the 95% who will make it better, or for the 5% that are undermining it? Bad apples fester and do well when they think no one is going to speak up about it. So it's very important as a business to make boundaries clear and hold people accountable to them.*

DISRUPTION, DISRUPTION, DISRUPTION: THE AGE OF AGILITY
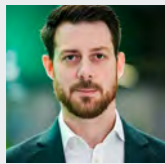
Kent McMillan, Managing Director, Talent and Organisation, OD Global Practice Lead, Accenture

Kent McMillan leads Accenture's Global Organisation Practice, working with executives to re-imagine operating models and embrace change. He has over 18 years' experience across industries, helping clients to deliver on their growth, agility, productivity, and sustainability objectives. He recently received a US patent for Accenture's organisation analytics and design platform.

FURTHER RESOURCES

The Resilient Operating Model. *Accenture.* 2021. https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/insights/strategy/resilient-operating-model

Busting the Myths of Agile Transformation. *Accenture.* 2020. https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/insights/strategy/coronavirus-busting-myths-agile-transformation

Move Fast to Thrive: Intelligent Operating Model. *Accenture.* 2019. https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/insights/strategy/move-fast-thrive

In closing comments, Kent outlined that those organisations armed with operating models that enable them to continuously adapt are more likely to prosper. He observed that, in the face of unprecedented disruption, the only certainty is that agility and resilience will be critical to organisations' future success, and survival. He shared that Accenture's research showed that 93% of executives said their very existence is jeopardised by operating models that can't keep pace. And 74% felt they would need to completely rethink their operating models to be more resilient as a result of COVID-19.

This means that we have to reimagine the way we work, and that only by unlocking data and exploiting the latest technology will organisations be able to achieve new levels of performance and agility. And, as we heard from the great speakers during the day, this will require a paradigm shift from historically mechanistic to more organic ways of working.

Kent referenced James's earlier comment about the need to move to more inclusive strategy development, execution and evaluation, and Stephen's insight about the need to embrace failure as a winning strategy. We learned from Whitney that you need to actively (not passively) grow yourself and your people to be able to grow your company, and that you need the right business model and an empowered, high-performing culture as described by Matthew.

Finally, Kent left us with the five characteristics of truly agile organisations, that when embraced would deliver a nearly threefold earning advantage (according to Accenture research):

- **Human** – unlocking the passion and purpose of people
- **Liquid** – seamlessly accessing capabilities where and when needed
- **Enhanced** – human and machine working in harmony
- **Living** – increasingly empowered, self-governed ways of working
- **Modular** – creation of discrete entities that can be configured in different ways

Kent reminded us that our speakers had provided great examples of companies that display these characteristics – Howdens, Amazon, and Formula 1 to name a few – and shared his thoughts on how we truly can build and sustain a great organisation for the future.

Kent McMillan's session slides are available upon request.

Achieve Breakthrough™ Ambition. Unleashed.

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Bird & Bird

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VITALITY IS VITAL –
MAKING THE SHIFT FROM HIGH-PERFORMANCE TO HIGH-VITALITY

When it comes to developing teams, organisations conventionally focus on high-performance. But, whilst it is essential organisations deliver extraordinary results, the demand for high-performance can easily create a pressure-cooker environment that ebbs away at sustained accomplishment. Other domains, such as sport or on stage, view high-performance as 'moment-in-time' occurrences. But many organisations are unreasonably, and perhaps unconsciously, expecting 'always-on' high-performance from their people in their pursuit of creating a 'high-performance culture'.

In their session, Achieve Breakthrough argued that what most organisations need, if they are to truly challenge the assumptions from which they are operating, is sustainable high-performance. Thus, they encourage organisations to look beyond performance, to instil a commitment to overall vitality.

Most definitions of vitality include the concepts of both energy and strength. They also encompass the idea of enduring energy, a capacity to self-renew. Creating vitality in teams is the same – the strength of a team comes from its internal energy and capacity to refresh. It is about ways of being rather than ways of doing, and it requires alignment with all other teams and the organisation as a whole. This requires more than simply 'fixing' dysfunctions; it's also about cultivating an environment of results-focus, personal growth and fulfilment – conditions that give life not just to one isolated team, but to the whole organisation and beyond.

Whilst most People professionals would argue they are doing all they can to bring a sense of purpose and opportunities to learn and develop to their organisation, attendees at this session unpacked how crucial it is to ensure that the pursuit of the results your organisation is striving for should be the source of your people's personal growth and fulfilment. Otherwise, well-meaning People initiatives could be inauthentic – sticking-plasters that keep your people performing for now, but that will ultimately – and quickly – lead to burnout.

Organisations that operate from a paradigm of high-vitality understand this. Their cultures give people the energy and capacity to be curious as well as productive, capable of identifying and making the next impossible thing in their industry possible before their competitors – known or invisible – do. By operating from a context of high-vitality you get high-performance, but by operating solely from a context of high-performance you get burnout. So if you were to start looking through a lens of high-vitality today, what organisational breakdowns would you bravely call out? What bold declarations would you make? And what and who would you reward and acknowledge?

Achieve Breakthrough™ Ambition. Unleashed.

Bella Blazewicz, Strategic Lead Consultant

Ric Bulzis, Senior Partner

FURTHER RESOURCES

Alexander, Wayne. 2021. **From Dysfunction to Vitality – How to Build Teams That Thrive.** *Achieve Breakthrough.* https://thinking.achievebreakthrough.com/leadership/from-dysfunction-to-vitality-how-to-build-teams-that-thrive

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EQUIPPING GEOGRAPHICALLY DISPERSED LEADERS WITH CRITICAL SKILLS FOR TOMORROW, TODAY!
A CASE STUDY

A successful international manufacturing organisation needed to prepare for a new phase of growth, reviewing and developing the critical skills required for the future, while facing the pressure of a global pandemic.

The HR leadership partnered with APS to do more than just define behaviours and assess the current situation. Identifying the potential strengths and gaps enabled specific skills to be targeted and the introduction of an online skills development system, providing live practice on serious, real-life interactions and leadership challenges. Short and time-effective individual and group exercises were specifically designed and allowed globally dispersed leaders to receive detailed personalised feedback with actionable outcomes. The organisation has been able to cost-effectively integrate the results to help identify talent and develop future leaders.

Strategically, the business has integrated the behaviours into their own performance management system to drive further collective development.

- This session looked at the way APS has approached moving beyond knowledge and focused on assessing applicable skills.
- With new hybrid working, managers and leaders need to have the ability to practice in a safe, virtual environment that emulates this new reality.
- Hogan assessment data allows for the use of validated predictive information to be combined with assessed performance data to enhance talent identification and development.

aps

👤 **Rob Field**, Learning and Development Director

👤 **Heather Mahoney-Slaughter**, Senior Learning and Development Consultant

FURTHER RESOURCES

Skills Development System: Virtual Leadership Skills Development. *APS.* 2021. https://www.advancedpeoplestrategies.co.uk/talent-development/skills-development-system

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Contact **APS** for a FREE demonstration.

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THE LEGAL CHALLENGES IN THE BATTLE FOR TALENT
IMPLEMENTING A GLOBAL D&I POLICY

Regardless of the sector in which you operate, the one thing of which there is always a shortage is good people. Implementing an effective diversity and inclusion (D&I) policy is a powerful tool in the battle to attract and retain talent. However, devising and executing a global strategy which covers the entire life cycle of the employment relationship can be challenging and requires careful navigation. Actions which are legally permissible and/or culturally acceptable in one country can be a showstopper in another.

In this session, Bird & Bird took the opportunity to explore some of the legal and practical issues surrounding the implementation of a global D&I policy, including the impact of data privacy laws on the use and collection of diversity data, the challenges of engaging employees across borders and cultures and how best to navigate the risk of litigation arising from progressive D&I initiatives. They also shared their experience as to the importance of understanding the cultural and legal framework in which you are operating in order to devise a comprehensive D&I strategy that is both legally compliant and effective.

Key takeaways from the session include the following:

- Beyond the intuitive, anecdotal and moral considerations in favour of more diverse and inclusive teams, awareness of the business case for D&I has significantly increased in recent years, especially at leadership level. Research has shown that companies with more diverse workforces are now much more likely than ever to outperform their peers with respect to innovation, profitability and competition. D&I continues to be central to talent attraction and retention. Applicants and employees are increasingly expecting companies to have a tangible and impactful approach to D&I that drives sustainable change within the workforce and goes beyond policies and procedures alone.

- D&I is now a key people management priority but when implementing a global D&I strategy, organisations with an extensive geographical footprint will need to navigate the differing (and in some cases conflicting) legal and cultural norms that apply in the various countries in which they operate. Companies with a global presence are likely to be faced with a patchwork of local laws and practices, which can often act as a stumbling block when trying to put in place progressive D&I initiatives across the business as a whole.

- It can be difficult to implement a truly global agenda that is still respectful of the cultural differences that undoubtedly exist within businesses operating internationally. Not only is the degree of separation between personal and professional life greater in some countries than it is in others but there can also be a cultural reluctance to voluntarily share personal information in the workplace.

The quality of employee feedback and engagement on D&I issues can therefore vary across regions and jurisdictions, especially where existing representative bodies do not always see this topic as a priority.

- There are also legal challenges that arise from a global D&I agenda. In particular, employers should be mindful of local data privacy laws when collecting and using diversity data and also the risk of falling foul of anti-discrimination legislation which is by no means uniform across countries or regions, even with respect to the characteristics that are protected. Many organisations have recently announced progressive D&I commitments, including targeted outreach programmes, aspirational hiring quotas, banning all-male shortlists for roles and 'returnship' programmes for those who have taken a career break. However, in the context of recruitment and promotion, there is a clear potential for litigation and companies do need to tread carefully to avoid the risk of claims for discrimination and unfair dismissal.

- HR are increasingly becoming the boardroom leaders on this topic and are heavily involved in executing the company's D&I strategy on the ground. Clear and effective communication of company values and culture is key to getting staff on board with the efforts you are making, even those who may not feel like they directly benefit. It is also important to be as fair and transparent as possible in your decision making to mitigate the risk of employee disputes and litigation later down the line. Employee engagement and listening exercises are also critical to ensuring that your agenda meets the expectations of your workforce and is inclusive of all employee groups, wherever they are located.

Bird & Bird

👤 **Furat Ashraf**, Senior Associate, International HR Services

👤 **Ian Hunter**, Partner and Co-Head of the International HR Services Group

FURTHER RESOURCES

HR Data Essentials Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity. *Bird & Bird.* 2021. https://www.twobirds.com/en/hr-data-essentials/international-perspectives/articles/equality-diversity-and-inclusivity-chart

Ethical Workplace Webinar: The Limits of Positive Action. *Bird & Bird.* 2021. https://watch.twobirds.com/the-ethical-workplace-the-law-in-2

Ethical Workplace Webinar: Diversity Monitoring. *Bird & Bird.* 2020. https://watch.twobirds.com/bird-birds-ethical-workplace-hr. Key takeaways from this webinar can be found here.

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SHIFTING MINDSETS
HOW ORGANISATIONS BECOME AND REMAIN GREAT

Great organisations remain great by understanding, anticipating and adapting to changes in the wider ecosystem in which they operate. However, execution of those strategic shifts is fraught with challenges which typically make it a slow, disconnected, and painful process. Often, organisations remain focused on formulating (rather than executing) strategy, or focus their attention on operational, procedural, and technical issues while missing the point. Execution is about people and specifically their ability to shift mindsets that support the behaviours that are required now.

During their session, BTS looked at how organisations can more effectively execute strategies and change by focusing on their people. Attendees explored how organisations can prompt mindset shifts by working through connected experiences that confront leaders with what their future organisations require of them, drive stronger alignment that ensures people understand their role and contribution to strategy, and build the capabilities required to execute the strategy. In particular, attendees looked at the BTS LeaderLab as the prime vehicle to deliver powerful, connected experiences that accelerate strategy execution.

Drawing on over 35 years of experience supporting clients across industries, BTS showed how LeaderLabs, and the business simulations within them, have helped organisations across industries meet their execution challenges.

Attendees left the session with the following key takeaways.

- Organisations typically struggle with executing strategies due to three recurring challenges: execution is slow as organisations don't transition from formulation to execution quickly enough, disconnected as they struggle to break through the different siloes, and often painful as people struggle to make sense of what (new) strategies mean to them.

- Strategy execution is about people and engaging them is critical for success. We have identified three key elements for execution: alignment which ensures people understand how they contribute to strategy, capability to use specific skills in the context of the end-to-end business, and the ability to shift mindsets to display behaviours consistent with strategy.

- Accelerating execution requires an integrated approach that brings together the organisation's specific challenges, complexities and uncertainties of deploying strategy, the leadership behaviours required to support it, and the coaching to embed this into the flow of work.

- The BTS LeaderLab has supported organisations to meet these challenges by bringing together different methodologies such as business simulations to put leaders through powerful, compelling experiences tailored to their challenges, providing a realistic but safe space to practice strategy, cutting through siloes, developing empathy and understanding of other functions, and ultimately accelerating their ability to play their part in executing strategy.

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Anna Breu, Director BTS Europe

Dr. Ignacio Vaccaro, Senior Director BTS Europe, Head of Strategic Alignment & Business Acumen

FURTHER RESOURCES

The Enterprise Thinking and Mindset Simulation
In this video we break down one of today's biggest threats to large businesses and explore how to leverage strategy modelling and business simulations to break up silo thinking, embed new ways of working, and increase collaboration across boundaries to drive enterprise thinking. https://bts.com/video/enterprise-mindset-business-simulation

Strategy Execution and Business Transformation:
Going from strategy to execution can be challenging and risky. In today's environment of constant change, organisations must inspire the behavioral mindset shifts required to effectively execute their business and culture strategies. https://bts.com/services/strategy-execution-business-transformation

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FUTURE-PROOFING L&D

HOW TO CREATE THE BEST LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN A HYBRID WORLD

EY Lane4
Workforce Transformation

👤 **Liz Campbell**, Partner, EY Lane4

👤 **Amy Walters**, Head of Research, EY Lane4

In their Masterclass, EY Lane4 took discussion way beyond the immediate shift towards hybrid working and explored the full context L&D teams are operating in, specifically discussing how learning is increasingly important in an era where:

- continuous reskilling is a requirement for all
- people want, and expect, learning that is targeted to their unique needs and context.

We discussed where L&D is today and needs to be in terms of supporting people to continually evolve and adapt as their role changes. The conversation highlighted how L&D teams need to refocus on adaptive learning rather than simply providing time-poor learners with more choice. EY Lane4 also argued that to remain relevant in this new era of work, L&D needs to evolve from a function that provides learning and development to one which delivers ongoing performance improvement to the business.

They then highlighted four key shifts L&D teams need to make to future-proof their strategy and deliver ongoing performance improvement:

1. Integrate learning-in-the-flow-of-work and work-in-the-flow-of-learning
2. Develop adaptable, autonomous learners
3. Build a culture where continuous learning is inevitable
4. Give learners what they didn't know they needed.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Learning Reimagined: The Four Big Shifts L&D Need to Make in a New Era of Work. *EY Lane4.* 2021.
https://bit.ly/30ryQuU

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RAISING THE BAR:
HOW TO ACTIVATE A TALENT MARKETPLACE, INFUSED WITH NEW WORK STANDARDS

Attendees at Mercer's Masterclass learnt how great organisations can democratise work through a fluid talent marketplace and heightened work values. In the session, Mercer covered how responsible, innovative employers reshape and create new work opportunities, increase quality of work, invest in people and adapt with agility to meet the needs of business transformation.

They showed practical examples and insights from Mercer and World Economic Forum research on the six pillars of new work standards being embraced by sustainable organisations. They shared insights from discussions they've had with some leading organisations on how they are building the new work standards in their organisations, the number one reason for investing in a talent marketplace and how they are using work design to improve the talent.

Key takeaways from the session include:

- Employees don't want to work for you, but with you. This requires a rethink in how we attract people and redefine the future of work.
- With the new work standards there is an imperative for all organisations to be clear on what they value, and how they want to make progress against this agenda in 2022.
- Making progress on an internal talent marketplace is an accelerator for the new work standards such as flexibility, employability, inclusion, equity, wellbeing and sustainability.
- Work design is at the heart of good talent marketplace implementation, considering a range of options of employment – for example, gig, freelance, alliances and project work.
- There is a new way to avoid costly and brutal multi-year transformations that works in harmony with the new way of working.

Mercer

👤 **Kate Bravery**, Global Advisory Solutions and Insight Leader

👤 **Lisa Lyons**, Workforce Transformation Leader, Mercer UK

FURTHER RESOURCES

Achieve Flexibility and Agility Through Skills-Based Practices. *Mercer.* 2021. https://www.mercer.com/what-we-do/workforce-and-careers/mercer-skills-edge.html

The Future of Work Is Here. *Mercer.* 2021. https://www.mercer.com/our-thinking/career/the-future-of-work-is-here.html

★ **CRF MEMBER OFFER FROM MERCER**

CRF Members are warmly invited to join Mercer's upcoming webinar on **Why business transformation should be on top of the HR agenda?** on Thursday, October 21 at 2.00pm CET / 1.00pm UK.

Once a buzzword, "Transformation" has become a matter of survival. Many organisations simply cannot succeed without effective remote working, digitalisation of work, and agile workforces. The current environment demands shifting gears – from gradual evolution to rapid transformation. To ensure sustainable growth of companies, business leaders have to change constantly and much faster than in the past. Supporting strategy implementation and business transformation strengthens the corporate responsibility of the HR function.

In this session, Mercer experts will share insights and best practices around how people management made KION Group master their digital transformation and understand how KION Group overcame the challenge of implementing corporate strategy and strengthening identity with the cooperation of communication, HR and strategy, creating relevance for teams and individuals.

Please register **here**.

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FAIL FAST, REFRESH, AND BOUNCE BACK!

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David Cumberbatch, Partner

David Langdon, Partner

RHR's Masterclass explored the ways in which businesses can both identify and develop resilience. Attendees had the opportunity to take a practical look at resilience indicators, at the individual and organisational level, which indicate high levels of resilience or not.

The session illustrated how resilience shows up – through language, decision-making, and leadership impact. Attendees took a broader look to appreciate the longer-term impact of resilience on culture and its resultant contribution to change readiness and innovation. RHR shared techniques and highlights from a case study, as well as diving deep at the individual level to appreciate state and trait factors.

In terms of development, attendees explored a variety of techniques from cognitive reframing to positive belief cycles and neurological forms of forced thinking that shape outlook and perception.

The session revealed ways businesses can leverage data to monitor and track individual and collective resilience for mission critical roles and move beyond generic engagement surveys.

CRF Annual Conference

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ORACLE

Peakon A Workday Company

PSYTECH INTERNATIONAL

rhr RHR International

FURTHER RESOURCES AND OFFERS FROM CRF PARTNERS

Glint

Employee Well-being Report: Data-driven Insights Into People's Happiness and Success at Work. *Glint.* 2021. https://www.glintinc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Glint-May-2021-Employee-Well-Being-Report.pdf

HireRight

Cleverton, Peter. 2021. **2021 Benchmark: EMEA Regional Spotlight.** *HireRight.* https://www.hireright.com/emea/blog/2021/09/2021-benchmark-emea-regional-spotlight

2021 Global Benchmark: EMEA Summary. *HireRight.* 2021. https://www.hireright.com/emea/resources/view/2021-global-benchmark-emea-summary

Imperial College

Campher, Frans. 2021. **New Ways of Working Require New Ways of Leading.** *Imperial College London.* https://www.imperial.ac.uk/business-school/blogs/executive-education/new-ways-working-require-new-ways-leading

The Imperial College and Corndel Executive Development Programme. *Imperial College London.* 2021. Learn more about this level 7 leadership programme, which can be funded through the Apprenticeship Levy tax, here.

★ All CRF members are eligible for a **15% discount** off our range of **short courses** covering topics such as leadership, digital transformation and innovation. For more information contact one of our **programme advisors**.

Manpower

ManpowerGroup Employment Outlook Survey – Q4 2021. *ManpowerGroup.* 2021. https://www.manpowergroup.co.uk/the-word-on-work/meos-q421

The Human Age Newspaper, Edition 12: The Great Jobs Reset. *ManpowerGroup.* 2021. https://www.manpowergroup.co.uk/the-word-on-work/the-great-jobs-reset

LHH

Resetting Normal. *LHH / The Adecco Group.* 2021. https://info.lhh.com/l/591171/2021-09-16/4292dj/591171/16317844927CtlbztI/Resetting_Normal_2021_The_Adecco_Group.pdf

New World of Working. *LHH.* 2021. https://info.lhh.com/l/591171/2021-09-16/429c5v/591171/1631785297pj5hpgyl/LHH_New_World_of_Working_external_SHORT_20210907.pdf

LinkedIn Learning

Talent Market Drivers Since the Start of Covid: United Kingdom Report. *LinkedIn Learning.* 2021. https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/resources/talent-strategy/talent-trends-covid-report/united-kingdom

Mind Tools

MindTools for Business: Innovate, Dominate, or Decline. *Mind Tools.* 2021. https://emeraldworks.com/resources/research-and-reports/strategy/innovate-dominate-decline

MindTools for Business: Learning Performance Benchmark. *Mind Tools.* 2021. https://emeraldworks.com/research/learning-performance-benchmark

Oracle

Oracle Human Capital Management. *Oracle.* 2021. https://www.oracle.com/uk/human-capital-management

How Business Analytics is Changing the HR Game. *Oracle.* 2021. Infographic. https://www.oracle.com/business-analytics/solutions/changing-hr-game

★ Free access to thought leadership blogs and tips on building a learning culture and skills for an agile organisation.

Peakon (a Workday company)

The World of Work in Data. *Peakon.* 2021. https://peakon.com/heartbeat