

How to move beyond the same and venture into a land of discovery

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You don't know what you don't know. Those words have been bandied around forever. They are, at times, a great excuse for organisational inaction. Increasing competition and decreasing market share with diminishing exposure can create a need for businesses to move through these words and make things happen in a whole new way. In the words of Dee Hock, the founder of Visa: "The problem is never how to get new thoughts into your mind but how to get the old ones out."

Nobody can certainly know everything, yet when it comes time to being "unplugged and reprogrammed", as this demanding corporate world requires us to do, what are some actions that can be taken with the aim to "now know what you didn't know" or even "now know what the future doesn't yet know" – how does one find ways to move beyond the known?

Leaders seek to make a difference. "Same, same" will produce more of the "same, same". To know what is unknown, as leaders do so well, suggests the need to move beyond the same. So what can anyone do, those with leadership accountabilities or not, to venture into a land of discovery and open up new business opportunity? After all, leadership is everyone's job.

1. Change the people you surround yourself with

With different people come different perspectives, influenced by their experience and background. Take, for example, a millennial, who now refers to their "friendship group", a term that reflects the integration of social media practices into everyday life, assisting the filtering process of who deserves their focus.

How can we access people who can infuse difference into our lives?

- a. Embed varying ages or demographics into regular interactions – for example, visit families with teenagers, companies with exciting social clubs, sporting events that support causes.
- b. Mix with those of differing socio-economic circumstances to you – after all, they address life differently.
- c. Join clubs or social gatherings; the first few minutes will always be awkward yet beyond that, who knows what will happen.

Of importance here is that this list does not include industry networking. The virtues of business networking are indeed vast and should not be scoffed at, yet often the best ideas to challenge our thinking can be found from outside the workplace.

2. Identify what the world is prioritising

The world around us constantly demonstrates what is popular and in demand yet it will do so in whispers. To change, maximise the possibility of capturing new whispers and minimise the same old broken records from

being heard. This can be achieved by answering a set of questions at the end of every day such as:

- What did you see today that piqued curiosity and excitement?
- Why did that bring new energy to you?
- How could that be applied in your job, product or future dream?

Another aspect to keep an eye out for is new and differing fusions, with “fusions” being defined as two entities that were designed in isolation of each other with their own purpose, yet now have come into relationship and support each other. A great example of fusion is Google and automobiles, in their possible future contribution to driverless cars.

What two forces did you observe come together that facilitated an unexpected shift?

To be able to pick up on these whispers and identify the fusion of two unrelated entities, you need to be tuned in. To be so, we need space in our minds and hearts. Busy people can be the poorest creators, inventors and leaders, caught in a vacuum of focus within the colouring-in lines. Improvisation standup comedians are some of the best with “newness” because their senses are alive and uncluttered, their imaginations are wild and their willingness is wide open.

Open your eyes and mind to difference and you will find it, and sometimes if you are lucky, it will even find you.

3. Question everything that was right at a previous time in your life

Colour within the lines. Why? Is the world going to fall apart if colour goes beyond the lines? In my world it wouldn't, yet could it also open us to experiencing things we've not done before?

Every evening, why not identify three fixed opinions your day encountered and, once identified, take an action that would show them who's boss. Or take it further by asking “What if ...” to see what your imagination is capable of. What if it was twice the size and half the price? What if the result could be opposite? What if the customer wasn't always right?

For a business to be competitive, it needs to be grounded in its core services yet able to connect with changing market demands. Businesses have a great opportunity to blend, twist, shake and fuse current thinking and approach. When this is done with the customer's needs in mind, magic truly can happen.

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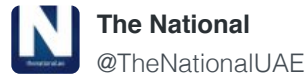
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Saudi Arabia

Two people were killed and 100 injured in a triple blast at the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia, on the eve of Eid al-Adha. The blasts occurred in the courtyard of the mosque, which is one of the most sacred sites in Islam. The attacks were part of a series of bombings in Saudi Arabia that have caused the death of at least 100 people and injured hundreds more. The Saudi government has blamed the attacks on a group of extremists, but the details of the plot remain unclear.

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