

Thought Leadership at Henley Business School Africa:

Innovations, Provocations, and Explanations

A white paper series based on
groundbreaking thought leadership
Ex Africa semper aliquid novi

Adapting to a new world of work and leadership

Dr Andrew J. Brough | Dr Puleng Makhoalibe | Dr Sharon King Gabrielides



Henley
Business School

AFRICA

Volume 1 Issue 3
July 2023

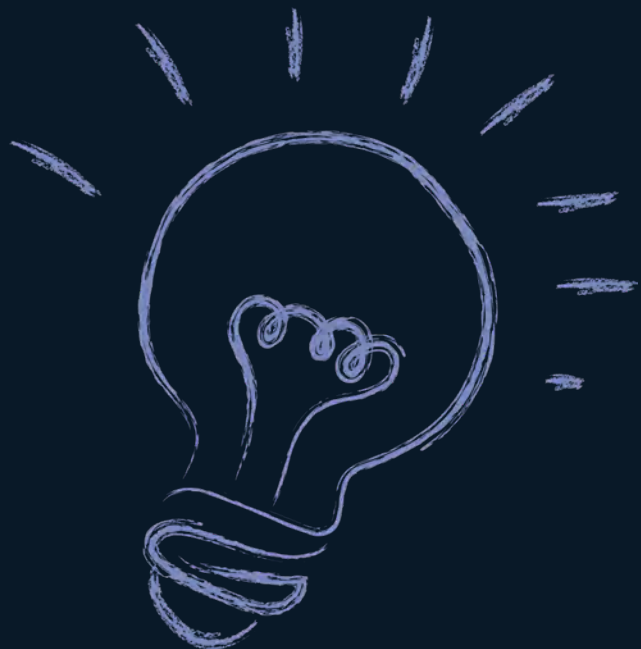
Fresh ideas for a new world of work

Two years ago, the widespread and global shift to remote work in 2020 was hailed as the enduring legacy of COVID-19. However, this is not the full story. Today, what looked inevitable has morphed into a hybrid remote model for most companies, or less frequently a remote-based approach with no set headquarters, or a remote dispensation for some employees. Nevertheless, some organisations – notably Tesla, Goldman Sachs, and J.P. Morgan – are not entertaining the remote shift at all and are actively pushing employees back to the office.

There are any number of reasons for this stance, as Dr Andrew Brough explores in his timely and thought-provoking white paper, *Making remote work, work*. There are, without a doubt, challenges and opportunities to be harnessed by adopting a remote work policy (or some variation thereof) and Andy takes us through considerations, such as security, ease of communication, socialisation, better

work-life balance, and – on the other hand – higher incidents of burnout, stress, and disconnection.

Andy's white paper is a must-read for any organisation where full-time remote work is still a reality after the pandemic. He offers practical insights into how best to improve productivity and harness digital and a means of winning the war for talent. Most importantly, he notes that 'this "work-from-anywhere" approach ... will require a virtual leadership culture, the need for self-discipline, and greater individual autonomy, cloud-based operations, technological parity, and clear protocols and systems'. The implications for virtual leadership and what Andy terms 'digital fluency' point to an evolution in the skills required by leaders of remote teams, as well as those battling to make sense of their changing role and how best to stay in sync with the needs of their organisations.



It falls to Dr Sharon King Gabrielides, a leadership development and emotional intelligence expert, to take the deliberation in an interrelated direction with her hands-on guidance for developing relevant leaders using holistic methods. In the white paper A step-by-step approach to personal leadership development, Sharon introduces the KE³YS framework, a simple and easily applicable method that can be deployed by coaching practitioners and facilitators walking the journey of self-discovery with clients who are leaders in their own right or on the leadership track.

While Sharon' framework is extremely useful in unlocking the personal awareness and self-knowledge required of leaders as they challenge the assumptions and barriers to their own development, Dr Puleng Makhoalibe offers another challenge for leaders seeking effective ways in which to apply creative, flexible, and innovative thinking to solving big organisational dilemmas. Puleng, who has an information technology background, might seem like an unlikely fit to be touting innate creativity, but when she started 'playing with design tools as a way of leading teams tasked with solving for complex problems and empowering them to harness creativity and imagination in their thinking', she found this diversity of thinking unlocked new solutions. Today, she is able to bring her technical knowledge to bear on a field of study that is increasingly being recognised by business management experts as essential to co-creation and problem-solving. Puleng's Project Artistry is created as an executive education tool, but is also written as an important white paper from a business school perspective, as we strive to develop leaders with the mettle, empathy, and authenticity to thrive amidst uncertainty.

I believe these three white papers hold value for all leaders, but will have particular relevance for those tasked with talent development and navigating changing workplace structures.

Dean Jon Foster-Pedley



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Disclaimer



Aligned with our mission, 'we build the people who build the businesses that build Africa', we facilitate open, multi-perspective conversations and the generation of thought leadership pieces, such as this white paper. However, the views expressed in this white paper are held by the author and not necessarily held by Henley Business School Africa.

Making remote work, Work

Dr Andrew J. Brough
Henley Business School Africa

On the back of the pandemic-induced lockdown measures, widespread remote work advanced beyond its infancy stage. But how ready are we to optimise the best related working-from-anywhere practices?

September 2021

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Prof. Alet Erasmus for reviewing the white paper and Prof. Daniel J. Petzer for facilitating the production of this white paper.

Dr Andrew J. Brough



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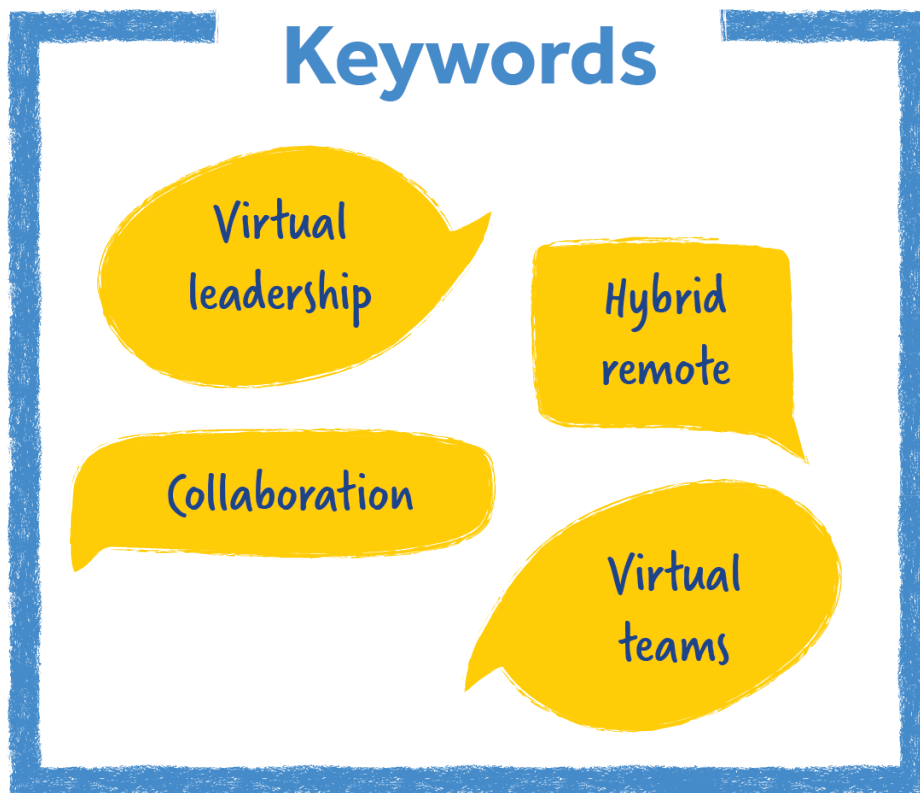
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Abstract

The world of work has shifted dramatically on the back of rapid digitalisation, which continues at breakneck speed. Digital transformation creates significant opportunities for remote working. The purpose of this paper is to explore this 'work-from-anywhere' approach that will require a virtual leadership culture, the need for self-discipline, and greater individual autonomy, cloud-based operations, technological parity, and clear protocols and systems. This paper explores key remote work terms as well as the driving forces, advantages, and disadvantages of remote work from the perspective of workers and employers. Reference is made to designing for remote work, with the hybrid remote option being explored in particular. Moreover, practical steps to improve remote working productivity – specifically culture, communication, meetings, and collaboration tools – are investigated.



Contemplating the idea of remote work

Douglas Adams, author of comic novel, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, wrote, 'We're stuck with technology, when what we really want, is just stuff that works' (Adams, 2005: 117). Undoubtedly, in today's work environment, we are more connected than ever, more online than ever, and the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed and scaled how we communicate and collaborate from a distance. An 'office in the cloud' is now the norm; work is no longer a place we go to, and many of us have entered a work from anywhere (WFA) age. However, the question is whether this 'remote way' that so heavily relies on technology really represents 'stuff that works'?

An Enterprise Technology Research survey found that the number of people who will permanently work from home will probably double in 2021 (Chavez-Dreyfuss, 2021). While remote working provides huge advantages, it is not without its challenges and will require careful organisational design, improved connectivity, and a new generation

of leaders. Despite these challenges, it seems flexible working is here to stay. Remote work is now characterised more as an issue of autonomy, rather than a matter of location (Felstead and Henseke, 2017). To work effectively, remote work needs a combination of technology enablers and individuals who understand self-efficacy (the belief that they can actually execute on the tasks required in a remote environment) (Parker et al., 2020). These elements need to be combined with a willingness on the part of the remote teams to strive for collaboration, and team leaders who are astute at leading from a distance.

This so-called 'Results-Only Work Environment' (ROWE) means that leaders need to simultaneously be much clearer about expected outcomes and deliverables and more flexible about how team members go about project execution. Before examining the topic of remote work, some key terms and definitions are presented.



Remote Work: Key terms

Remote working has made us all aware of new terminology that captures how organisations now operate:



All Remote

All-remote refers to the situation where 'each individual in an organization is empowered to work and live where they are most fulfilled' (GitLab, 2021a: 10).



Remote First

Remote first is adopted by companies that optimise remote working and consider existing physical offices as anchor venues to work from remotely (GitLab, 2021a: 14).



Digital Literacy

Digital literacy refers to an individual's capacity to source, assess, and communicate information across a wide range of digital platforms. The level of digital literacy is indicated by an ability to produce text, images, audio, and designs using technology (Osterman, 2012).



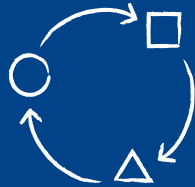
The Co-Located Team

The co-located team refers to a functional team working on a project sharing the same workspace (Schaubroeck and Yu, 2017).



Digital Fluency

Digital fluency is the ability to both 'select and use the appropriate digital tools and technologies to achieve a particular outcome' (Demir and Odabasi, 2021: 163). This requires an integrated approach and is a combination of technological parity, digital operations, collaborative leadership behaviours, and a commitment to developing the attitude and skills and seeing the value of 'going digital' (Accenture, 2020: 17).



Digital Dexterity

Digital dexterity is the ability to adapt and adopt existing and emerging technologies in a particular field to produce better results for the organisation (Rolf, 2020).



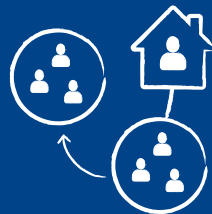
Distributed Team

Distributed team implies that a team of employees is working in various different locations (Berntzen and Wong, 2021).



Hybrid Team

A hybrid team refers to working teams that operate between multiple locations. This often presents a combination of time working at a co-located office space and time working from other locations, such as at home (GitLab, 2021a).



Hybrid-Remote

Hybrid-remote provides employees a 'menu' with several options to choose from, which may include an in-office option, a flexible work option whereby employees work in office for a number of days per week, and a remote option (GitLab, 2021a).



Technological Parity

Technological parity is meant to empower employees with all the tools and the systems they need to perform their duties from any device they may have and from any location (Kurtzman, 2020).

Acknowledging the top drivers of remote work

Remote work is not new

Remote work is not new. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, several companies had been working remotely successfully for decades. However, the pandemic has played a significant part in the unprecedented revolution towards location-independent jobs. A valid question, though, is what else may be driving this massive move towards remote work? Most likely, businesses are increasingly acknowledging the economic benefits of managing critical business interdependencies from a distance. Besides ensuring business continuity, and the cost and flexibility benefits offered by remote work, three top forces are distinguished that drive remote work: technological advancements, improved collaboration, and organisational and individual strategic thought (Ferreira et al., 2021).

Technological advancements

The increased availability of cloud-based technologies is key in facilitating remote collaboration. The separation of hardware from software, enabling the 'virtualising' of hardware and 'Bring Your Own Device', fundamentally changes how remote workers interact with employers and colleagues. This surge in cloudbased operations means that a software platform or service can be accessed remotely from anywhere in the world. As a result, companies like Microsoft saw the equivalent of digital transformation that would typically occur in two years taking place in just two months from January to March 2020 (Microsoft, 2021). The combination of a physical gateway attached to remote equipment, the central server that collects and stores data, and the opportunity for secure remote access through a web interface has dramatically shifted the need for many in-person interactions to cloudbased alternatives. These technological advancements underpin the growing need for a more flexible, collaborative workforce.

Strategic thought

Organisational and individual strategic thought play a critical role in driving remote work. The opportunity to be geographically free and to align places, people, and technology in a way that makes organisations more agile is key.

At an organisational level, a drive towards more service-sector-type jobs can enhance the move to operate remotely. A study by McKinsey in November 2020 analysing 800 jobs across nine countries concluded that the potential for remote work is 'highly concentrated among highly skilled, highly educated workers in a handful of industries, occupations, and geographies' and that, 'the potential for remote work is determined by tasks and activities, not occupations' (Lund et al., 2020: 3).

Tasks that involve updating knowledge and interacting with computers showed the most potential for remote work without losing effectiveness. Consequently, professions in financial management, management services, and information technology show the highest potential for remote work and, as such, are linked to activities more prevalent in more advanced economies.

At an individual level, now that employees have experienced remote working options first-hand, more than 97% prefer to work remotely – even if only for part of the working week – and would recommend this way of working to others (Buffer, 2021).

Improved collaboration

The need to support massive virtual collaboration is another driving force for remote work. Lean, transactional activities linked to information transfer, approvals, coordination, and decision-making are equally, and even more, effective when performed virtually (Cross and Gray, 2021). The ability to bring the best minds in the business together from any part of the globe is a key enabler and opportunities for collaboration seem almost endless when a balance is struck between the expectations of the company and individual autonomy.

What can we expect of the future world of work?

Increasingly, in the third decade of the 21st century, the Fifth Industrial Revolution (IR5.0) is a popular topic of conversation, advancing from Fourth Industrial Revolution discussions about robotics, artificial intelligence, and blockchain. Questions now more strongly revolve around innovation, purpose, and inclusivity, raising consciousness about how people and machines will perform work in a more complementary way (Joseph, 2020). Combining the very distinct, cognitive abilities of workers and the precise, highly specialised skills of robots will introduce a very new and advanced culture into the workforce (George and George, 2020). One of the many implications of IR5.0 is that professional work will be much more location independent. The 'detachment of work from a place is an undeniably important aspect of the changing nature of work in the twenty-first century' (Ferreira et al., 2021: 3).

At the same time, the relationship between trust and technology remains tenuous, if not paradoxical. Cyber security requires a 'zero-trust' approach to networks, data, resources, workloads, and devices. With people working remotely, securing networks, controlling access and usage of resources, and knowing who is risk-prone is paramount. A zero-trust approach to remote work proposes a 'never trust, always verify' approach, moving from implicit trust to explicit permission for network access. Conversely, once access

is granted, virtual collaboration between people working remotely requires the assumption of positive intent and 'swift trust'. This social contract would need to specify how teams collaborate reciprocally, exchange information, and develop shared values and expectations based on mutual trust and fairness (Riordan and O'Brien, 2012).


Focused thought would also be required around issues relating to the business case for remote work (e.g., reduced operating costs, improved employee value proposition, and broader access to a larger talent pool), employees' experience (e.g., employee engagement, and improved well-being), and overall organisational enablement (e.g., facilities, technology, and workflow) (Gartner, 2021). Clarity concerning who does the work and how work gets done in a remote context would be critical. The future of remote work also entails potential disparities between what employers want (e.g., increased productivity, adaptability, and cost reduction) and what employees want (e.g., connecting with family and community, flexibility, and lack of commute) (Mallet et al., 2021). Furthermore, it is to be expected that there will be a significant rise in the number of 'digital nomads' – employees who embrace a location-independent, technology-enabled lifestyle and who combine remote work and travel if they can connect to the Internet (MBO Partners, 2020).

Stages of remote work

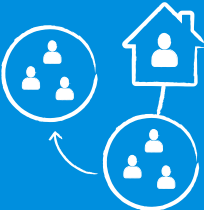
Remote work is associated with several distinct stages of evolution, which are either developed intentionally or based on the changing dynamics of the organisation or the working environment. GitLab (2021b) described these as progressing from:




No Remote
No remote – everyone is co-located in the same physical location.



Remote Allowed
Remote allowed – some workers are allowed to work away from the central office for all or part of the workweek.



Hybrid-Remote
Hybrid-remote – a scenario where part of the company commutes to one or more offices daily to work face-to-face in the same space, paired with another section of the organisation that is not co-located.



Remote-Based
Remote-based to one time zone – work is conducted largely asynchronously in a single time zone, with no headquarters, and each team member is free to live and work wherever they choose, within that time zone.

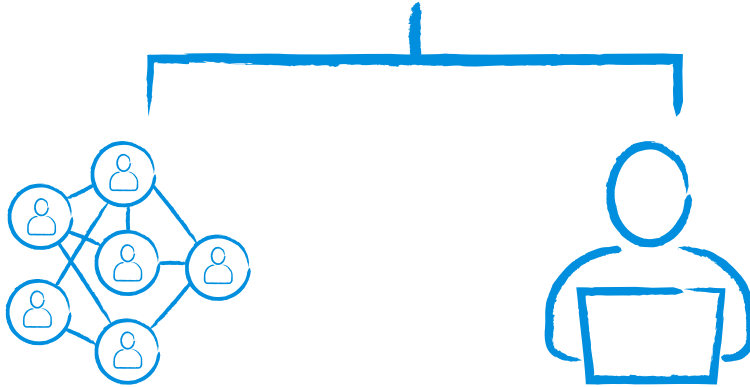
All-remote, asynchronous across time zones – there are no headquarters, and each team member is free to live and work any time and in any place they choose. Greenberg (2020: 3) notes that “ a remote team is a business that operates entirely from home offices. There is no centralized headquarters, just a registration address for business purposes.”



Advantages of remote work



Studies show that remote work yields numerous benefits, specifically higher levels of productivity and employee engagement (Choudury, 2020). However, the associated advantages need to be considered from an organisational and an individual employee perspective.



Organisational Advantages

The advantages of remote work at an organisational level include the fact that employers have access to a global pool of remote expertise. This means that companies can remain highly competitive in a very unpredictable market (Ferreira et al., 2021). More specifically, it is proposed that 'The main advantages of remote work are.... reducing the costs of maintaining the office [and] wider geography for finding candidates' (Blumberga and Pylinskya, 2019: 281). Remote working specialists argue that 'talent flows where flexibility reigns' (GitLab, 2021b: 4).

Other noteworthy organisational advantages include increased team performance and the ability to leverage from a much wider talent pool, achieving significantly higher retention levels amongst remote teams (Trueman and Rozwell, 2019). From a productivity perspective, remote work, particularly when conducted across multiple time zones, makes it possible for teams to hand off work to each other over 24 hours, leveraging a broader range of input and improving turnaround times and efficiencies (Beño, 2021).

Employee Advantages

For individual employees, important advantages of remote work include:

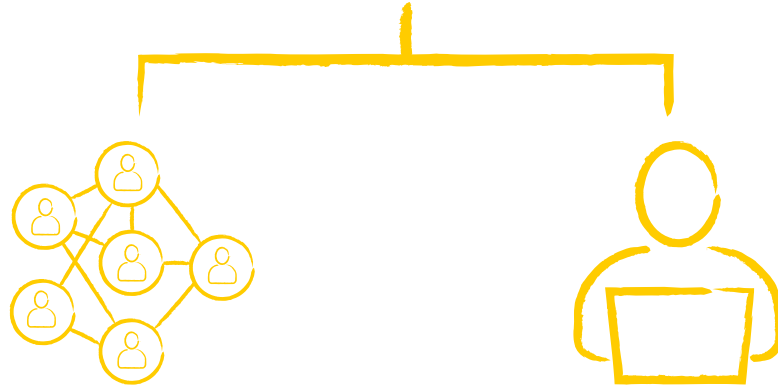
Obtaining the desired balance between work and personal life, reducing time and material costs for the road, reducing emotional stress, the appearance of additional free time, the ability to consider work in another region without having to move (Blumberga and Pylinskya, 2019: 281).

Equally appreciated employee advantages of remote work include increased productivity and morale, improved work-life balance, increased job satisfaction, reduced burnout, and enhanced worker autonomy (Ferreira et al., 2021). The burnout question is an interesting one and more research is required. There is evidence to show that increased burnout, amongst other factors, can also be a disadvantage of remote work.

Disadvantages of remote work



Remote work is certainly not without its disadvantages. The loss of context as a result of a lack of proximity presents itself in various guises at organisational and individual employee levels.



Organisational Disadvantages

When the majority or all the employees work remotely, several issues may come afore related to security, communication, socialisation, knowledge sharing, and performance evaluation (Choudury, 2020). Microsoft (2021) identified the top three challenges of remote working as a lack of cohesion, missing company culture, and increased silos. GitLab (2021a) confirmed that a lack of visibility between team members across the organisation as well as differences in processes and ways of working from one team to another significantly contributed to the development of organisational silos. Rich qualitative exchanges involving energising interactions that provide a sense of purpose, job feedback, and problem-solving are best done in a face-to-face context (Ferreira et al., 2021).

Employee Disadvantages

Greenberg (2020) noted that not everyone can make it as a remote worker. From individual employees' perspectives, very specific disadvantages are associated with remote work. Some of these disadvantages include: increased isolation and stress (Toscano and Zappalà, 2020); digital overload and burnout due to long working hours (Alexander, De Smet, Langstaff and Ravid, 2021), an inability to switch off (Microsoft, 2021); ineffective communication, interference in work-home life, stalling, and solitude (Wang et al., 2021); blurred lines between work and home (Galanti, Guidetti, Mazzei, Zappalà, and Toscano, 2021), often with a home situation that is not prepared for the 'collision of two worlds' (Zykova and Maussymbek, 2021); concern about a lack of clarity and job certainty, and remote-relevant issues; and fragmentation of work, confusion about what is required, and even lack of work-life balance (Sandoval- Reyes et al., 2021).

Team members often feel separated and disconnected from others. According to an IT colleague, 'as humans we are wired to connect in analogue, but virtual requires a digital connection, which is never as rich as those continuous values provided in face-to-face communication' (Lew Thorne, personal communication).

Designing for remote work

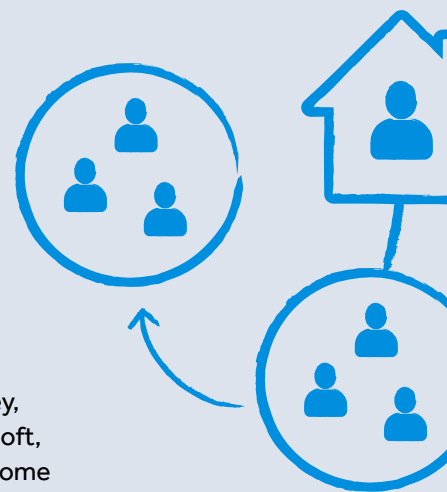
To optimise the opportunities it could offer, remote work needs to be designed in terms of various collaboration layers (Kurtzman, 2020).

- Collaborative remote work starts with a security/ governance/compliance layer that assumes 'zero trust' and where data protection, security, and integrity are paramount. This first compliance layer is designed on the assumption that 'organizations should not automatically trust anything inside or outside its perimeters and instead must verify anything and everything trying to connect to its systems before granting access" (Pratt, 2018).
- The following communications layer involves protocols on messaging, conferencing, team collaboration applications, and agreement on communication that specifies synchronous/ asynchronous protocols.
- A content layer incorporates protocols on office suites and file sharing so that information repositories can be created and stored.
- A productivity layer includes work management integration, systems of record integration, communities and social media, machine learning, and even artificial intelligence to provide 'a single pane of glass for workers to do whatever they have to, wherever they have to' (Kurtzman, 2020).
- A trust and openness layer is important to ensure that people feel safe enough to share their best ideas.
- A mentor and model layer accentuates the relevance of peer mentors at every level of the organisation.
- A cross-silo membership layer will facilitate boundary spanning.

Implications of a hybrid-remote model

For many companies, adopting a hybrid-remote model seems to be one of the most attractive options in a post-pandemic work environment. In the 2021 Work Trend Survey, 66% of companies surveyed indicated that they are redesigning for hybrid work (Microsoft, 2021). A hybrid-remote workplace provides a range of options. The first option is that some employees will work in the office, while others will work remotely. The second option is that all the employees will spend some part of their working week in the office and part of the week remotely. The third option is a combination of the two previous options. In most cases, hybrid-remote is regarded a 'two-tier working environment'. The challenge with managing this two-tier system is getting the individuals who are colocated to keep the remote team members in the loop.

According to Fayard et al. (2021: 5), the office of the future will need to be designed to 'foster human connection with the help of technology'. As much as company managers are calling for employees to come back to the office, even on a part-time or hybrid basis, it is said that remote employees are threatened with a return to the office as a way of managing underperformance. Conversely, there may be perceptions that those working effectively but who are not co-located, are 'out of sight, out of mind'. The unintended consequence may be that remote workers are less likely to be promoted, despite their increased productivity (Bloom et al., 2015; Kessler, 2021).



Improving remote work productivity



Whatever the design of future workplaces, they will need to be geared to optimise remote work productivity and towards developing 'virtual proximity'. To create that sense of proximity, a collaborative remote work culture and an understanding of how to leverage the remote talent pool are vital. Once remote teams are configured, protocols on remote communication, meetings and collaborative tools, and software need to be prioritised. Remote work productivity starts with understanding how remote talent is identified and onboarded.

The war for remote talent

Because remote work means that individuals can WFA, employers have wider access to the pool of talent and can hire from anywhere. Once hired, remote talent onboarding requires a clear working process that establishes the relationship between the various steps in the workflow. In the remote work context, self-discipline is a critical enabler. Many remote workers struggle because remote work relies on self-motivation, persistence, and individual goal setting. Consequently, individuals who do well in a co-located context may not necessarily perform equally well in the remote context.

Companies entering into the remote working talent pool will also need to decide if they are happy to recruit digital nomads (Everson et al., 2021). An even greater opportunity is how remote hiring can be used strategically to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities.

Developing a collaborative remote work culture

The first step in developing a collaborative work culture is creating virtual trust – the level of trust that can be developed in the virtual world. Swift trust assumes positive intent from the beginning and lays the foundation for interpersonal trust that is built on predictability, consistency, and the sharing and rotating of power (Ferrazi, 2015). Swift trust was first defined as 'A unique form of collective perception and relating that is capable of managing issues of vulnerability, uncertainty, risks, and expectations', where 'familiarity, shared experience, reciprocal disclosure, threats and deterrence, fulfilled promises, and demonstrations of non-exploitation of vulnerability' are not typically available (Meyerson et al., 1996: 167).

As a unique form of trust when working in the remote environment, swift trust gives remote team members the benefit of the doubt from the beginning of the relationship and builds relationships with a mindset that says 'give me reason not to trust you', rather than a default position that is often the inverse of that approach (Crisp and Jarvenpaa, 2013).

Another important element of a remote work culture is the need to prioritise digital literacy. Remote workers need to become adept at extracting explicit and implicit ideas (comprehension), meaningfully connecting relevant digital media (interdependence), sharing timely and relevant data with relevant networks (social factors), and storing and organising data in accessible ways (curation) (Heick, 2013). Digital literacy creates the foundation for digital fluency, which is the ability to create and reformulate information as well as use digital technologies properly (Wang et al., 2013). Remote workers who demonstrate digital fluency can communicate in a remote language that generates understanding, certainty, and clarity.

Remote work culture is committed to supporting remote workers in the automation of repetitive tasks. This might involve compartmentalising email inboxes or using tracking dashboards in the collection and presentation of data and information (Jeffery, 2019).

Johnson and Suskewicz (2020:3) propose that remote work requires consideration around the technologies to make the system workable, the resources (policies, practices and processes) the system needs to function, as well as the rules, norms and metrics required to support a remote work culture.

One option for leadership in remote teams is to aim towards a ROWE. This is probably the biggest shift required in a remote working context and is often the real reason why leaders push for hybrid-remote rather than all-remote work. An all-remote ROWE context is where the focus is on outputs, rather than the number of hours worked. Even if the remote environment is not a total ROWE, leaders need to communicate clear expectations and deadlines, and then trust contributors to do what they do best. This will often mean resisting the temptation to micromanage every step of the project plan, reverting to virtual trust. Even within a ROWE culture, there needs to be clarity about expected remote worker availability.

Two of the key principles that leaders of remote teams need to guard against are overcommunication and radical transparency. In return, remote workers should focus on delivering results, as long as they have the relevant resources to do their jobs (Hakes, 2020).

Remote communication

One of the biggest challenges that most remote teams experience is a 'duplication of ideas'. While team communication remains a challenge, it is particularly true in a remote context. Often, remote workers experience communication from a distance as inefficient, timeconsuming, and challenging, even for something as apparently innocuous as a request for visibility on a project or a status update.

The notion of 'bandwidth' in remote communication and collaboration is important. As a metaphor, bandwidth refers to how much attention is required at that moment in time. High-bandwidth engagements require more planning and, therefore, more bandwidth. Low-bandwidth engagements are more straightforward and not as context-rich (Brough, 2020).

Remote work communication needs to be considered in terms of real time (synchronous), as well as for asynchronous options. Real-time communication is typically synchronous and is most effective for one-on-one and remote coffee chats when both parties occupy the same virtual space, engaging with each other at that moment. Many companies are mandating that calls are now video- and voice-enabled to ensure that non-verbal communication supports the collaboration process. Asynchronous communication means that neither sender nor receiver need to be present or to respond immediately, in which case there is a record of what was discussed, allowing one to go back and check an instant message or the recording of a meeting that could not be attended. In a remote work context, this type of communication is useful for the generation of ideas and to conduct day-to-day work, most decisions, and conversations. When the issue at hand is straightforward, it is not necessary to get everyone on the same call at the same time.

Remote meetings

One immediately obvious and dramatic shift during the pandemic was the increase in the number of remote meetings. As a rule, effective remote work requires very clear meeting guidelines, including meeting attendance, meeting pre-planning, participation, and accountability in terms of decisions and action items. The time taken to plan, schedule, and conduct remote meetings needs to be optimised. According to DeBara (2021), questions that could serve as useful guidelines are:

- Is the meeting even necessary?' Leaders need to clarify whether a meeting is primarily task-related or if a need or opportunity exists for social cohesion. The 'virtual water



cooler' – a communal online platform that supports informal interaction – can often help to reinforce the social cohesion outside of formal meetings.

- 'Is everything on this agenda necessary?' Remote meetings need to be more concise. The idea of 'virtual stand-ups' or 'virtual speed meetings' are growing in popularity.
- 'Does everyone need to attend?' In a ROWE, it is very important to optimise time.
- 'Are those who need to attend the remote meeting, expected to attend all, or part of the meeting?'
- 'What meeting platform will be used?' The tools best suited for a one-on-one meeting are not necessarily equally effective for meetings with multiple attendees across multiple time zones.

A revolutionary approach adopted by GitLab is that meeting attendance is optional, enabling asynchronous contributions. The thinking is that if the collaborative tools and software are in place, then compulsory meeting attendance becomes unnecessary. All meetings are recorded and stored in the cloud. Meeting agendas are sent out well in advance and meeting minutes are created collaboratively using an online word processor. As one member of GitLab explained:

Agendas must be sent out beforehand. If there's no agenda, there's no meeting. Meetings must start and end on time. We also make sure that every meeting has a Google Doc where we all take notes at the same time. Team members collaborate on note-taking, while other team members speak. This allows multitasking and collaborating on almost everything. That written copy, the transcript of the notes, is really important for team members who are not available to be on the call, as they might be in a time zone where they are sleeping and then they can review what was said (Jean du Plessis, personal communication).

Meetings need to shift from leader monologue to team dialogue. This means that teams leaders should not be afraid to democratise presenter rights and give team members mouse, keyboard, and video camera rights. Principles of "anyone remote-all remote", accurate chat status (so colleagues know whether you are available), quick chat protocols (to enable rapid fire questions), being comfortable to, "idle in a video conference room" while working silently together, and even creating specific, video-based social events, are all practical changes that support remote working (Limoncelli, 2020).

Remote collaboration tools and software

Remote collaboration tools and software A key element of remote work success is the remote playbook. This document sets out not just the mission, vision, and values of the remote team, but also the communication protocols, including user guidelines, frequency of use, and preferred media.

In a flexi-synchronous environment, meetings incorporate collaborative whiteboards and include asynchronous emails, wireframes (a schematic or blueprint), or mock-ups (models or prototypes) where different team members provide input. The adoption of collaborative tools has accelerated by five years and, consequently, 56% of collaborative tools started as 'unauthorised' (Kurtzman, 2020).

Possible solutions that are worthwhile exploring include:

- MIRO: virtual whiteboard, interactive activities, gamification of goals, template library, brain writing.
- Atlassian: document collaboration, visual project collaboration/business team collaboration, Jira, Trello.
- Slack (leveraging open application programming interfaces and flexible technologies): maximising agility and minimising risk.

The most effective remote working collaborative tools are designed to measure and track outputs, rather than simply activity.

Conclusion

This paper examined the concept of remote work as well as its driving forces, advantages, and disadvantages from the point of view of employers and employees. Reference was made to designing the workplace and employment models with remote work in mind as the way for the future. In particular, the hybrid remote model was explored as one option for many. Practical steps to improve remote working productivity, specifically culture, communication, meetings, and collaboration tools, were discussed to indicate how good leadership could motivate workers to excel and feel worthy.

The challenge for remote work will be to see how the advances in connectivity allow for meaningful interpersonal connection. If that can be achieved and if remote work adopts a partnership approach, we will avoid reinforcing a situation in the remote work context where, 'he who is absent is wrong' (Cooke, 2021: 12). If we are to really make remote work, work, then intentional engagement, self-efficacy and autonomy are the order of the day (Manko and Rosinski, 2020).



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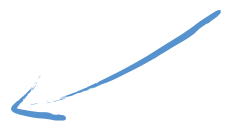
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Making remote work, Work



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A step-by-step approach to personal leadership development

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February 2023



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AFRICA

Traditional leadership development models and executive education courses have applied the same exclusive, expert-based thinking that underpins programmes like the powerhouse of the MBA to personal and transformational programmes designed to grow effective leadership and business acumen. Now described as 'episodic, exclusive, and expensive' (Moldoveanu and Narayandas, 2019) and increasingly out of sync with the needs of organisations operating in a complex and changeable world, today's leaders require holistic leadership development that understands the systemic nature of leadership while putting personal transformation at the core of the journey.



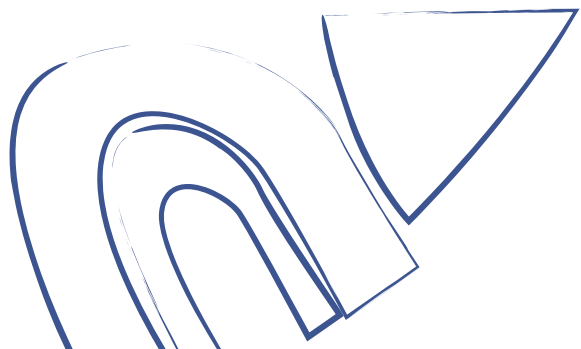
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Acknowledgements

A significant acknowledgement goes out to all the leaders who have chosen to journey with me over the past three decades. I am, and this paper is, because of you and the trust you have bestowed on me. Working with our 'stuff' and truly unlearning and relearning requires significant courage and vulnerability. I am continually humbled and honoured to have the privilege of touching – and being touched by – so many lives. Namaste.

Thank you to Da Vinci, our PhD journey felt like I was being fortified through fire. It was intense and rewarding on so many levels and gave me newfound appreciation for the

value of my work. It laid the foundation for all things to come. Thank you to Henley Business School Africa for its longstanding association and support in bringing this paper to life. Prof. Danie Petzer, who initiated this journey; Ms Cara Bouwer, who was an instrumental thinking partner; and Prof. Alet Erasmus for reviewing this white paper. Thank you.

May this paper touch and empower many more lives and may we all continue to take Key Steps to be the difference that makes the difference.

Abstract

Leadership development holds value for both the organisation and the individual. By facilitating self-awareness, personal growth, and accountability, companies ensure their own long-term success through nurturing attuned leaders who are capable of helping the business and its employees to achieve their goals and strategy. However, many organisations regard learning as a narrow, functional intervention, rather than a multifaceted journey that must focus as much on individual leaders' internal beliefs and thought patterns, as it does on their practical skill sets.

Renowned management theorist Chris Argyris (2008: 7) wrote that, 'The nuts and bolts of management – whether of high-powered consultants or service representatives, senior managers or factory technicians – increasingly consists

of guiding and integrating the autonomous but interconnected work of highly skilled people'. Since the 2020 global pandemic, this core function of leadership has become even more complex as matters of personal well-being and self-actualisation have taken centre stage. This shift is now demanding more from leaders than the management of operational practices. Today, holistic leaders understand that self-awareness and self-development are critical components of their role and that new approaches to leadership development are essential for unlocking the skills and capabilities required by modern-day organisations. The KE³YS framework offers a relevant step-by-step approach to leadership development that recognises personal transformation lies at the heart of becoming an effective leader.



Introduction

A 2015 research report by Gallup (Adkins, 2015) showed that 'about one in 10 people possess high talent to manage. Though many people have some of the necessary traits, few have the unique combination of talent needed to help a team achieve the kind of excellence that significantly improves a company's performance'.

Therefore, few of us are born with the requisite traits and characteristics required of a good manager or leader.

In reality, effective leaders become great by interrogating how they lead; developing strong interpersonal relationships; being a role model for positive behaviour; using praise and other reinforcement mechanisms; operating from a place of self-awareness; and demonstrating confidence in their abilities (McKinsey & Company, 2021). Not only can these abilities be learnt, but they can also be developed within potential leaders and refined among those already in the C-suite by using customised leadership development coaching interventions, such as action learning.

Action learning theory dates back to the work of Argyris and Donald Schön in the 1970s and endeavours to solve real-world challenges faced by either the organisation or the individual, rather than relying on academic answers and models designed to explain the changes impacting the modern world (Leonard and Lang, 2010). Subsequently, Argyris proposed the concept of *double-loop learning*, which looks beyond following operating norms to solve problems (i.e., single-loop learning). Instead, the learner is challenged to question the assumptions, values, and beliefs underpinning possible action strategies (Martins et al., 2017).

The result is a leader with greater levels of self-awareness and self-confidence, capable of exercising the leadership skills required today. Related capabilities include increasingly honed interpersonal skills, more confident decision-making, greater accountability and adaptability, and an ability to understand and interact with colleagues from diverse backgrounds and generations.

Leadership development becomes a holistic and sustainable journey in which transformation is truly enabled, when individuals start challenging their default and long-standing beliefs and perceptions. As much as leaders fine-tune their professional skills and strategic approach to work, they also actively focus on honing and staying true to their personal values, while keeping their mindsets sharp and in sync with the changing world around them.

Holistic leaders invest in themselves and their inner world as enthusiastically as they do in their external world. Holistic leaders do not only lead from 9 to 5, they 'take a whole-personal approach to leadership' (Neale, 2020), which permeates all spheres of their lives.



The changing face of leadership

Times of challenge, change, and uncertainty ask more of our leaders and, in some cases, require that they reframe their approach. The COVID-19 pandemic is a case in point – people were propelled into remote work and had to cope with intense online meeting schedules. The hierarchy of management was challenged and interactions became more intentional. Moreover, *a greater appreciation for wellness and the individual experience emerged* (Mukherjee and Krish, 2021).

Where leaders and the companies they represent failed to transition rapidly and honestly to this new human-focused reality, organisations were struck by the effects of the so-called great resignation (Ellerbeck, 2022). *A radical shift in the needs and wants emerged within the global workplace*, causing dissatisfied, exploited, and unsatisfied workers and managers alike to down tools in their numbers *in search of personal fulfilment and work-life balance* (Ellerbeck, 2022; Mukherjee and Krish, 2021).

Inescapably, the situation called for a different approach to leadership, which is as comfortable in the role of talent development, empathy, and the creation of psychologically safe working environments (Global Leadership Network, 2022) as it is in rolling out new innovations, strategies, and technologies.

To support organisational cultures capable of encouraging growth, learning, productivity, and innovation, *leaders must operate from a place of confidence and consciousness* (Wallace, 2020). To sustain leaders on their personal journeys, while also guiding them to build psychologically robust teams, mentor and coach, and create listening cultures (Wallace, 2020), *leaders need to look inwards and identify their own limiting beliefs.*

By reframing subconscious blockages that adversely influence their behaviour and responses, leaders are better able to 'set the stage' (Van Lieshout, 2021) for their own continued development and, in turn, that of their teams and organisations.

The destructive impact of limiting beliefs

In 2019, a Gartner survey highlighted the emergence of a worrying crisis: a lack of confidence among leaders. At a time when organisations 'require distinct leadership traits to restore and revive stressed and flailing supply chains, product lines, even entire industries' (Brownlee, 2020), just over half of leaders surveyed expressed a lack of confidence in their abilities and were unsure whether they were well-equipped to effectively lead their companies into the future (Gartner, 2019).

In many cases, even those who possessed the required skills to do their jobs effectively, and were capable and successful, were hamstrung by debilitating and limiting beliefs, which knocked their confidence and made them feel like imposters (Gartner, 2019).

Five types of imposter syndrome are distinguished (see Figure 1), an affliction that was first named and explored in a 1978 paper by Dr Pauline Clance and Dr Suzanne Imes. This emotional state is associated with influencing beliefs that hinder personal development, such as nagging self-doubt, anxiety, fear of being 'found out', a need for validation from those in authority, and a tendency to attribute personal success to luck (Owens, 2021).



Figure 1: The five types of imposter syndrome
Source: Adapted from Young (2011)

Whether you have already invested in self-development, coaching or therapy and realised that limiting beliefs are around every corner, or have just started the journey of identifying these potholes, the KE³YS framework is an effective tool for identification, understanding, and achieving deep and lasting change.

The KE³YS framework

The KE³YS framework (refer to Figure 2) is one of the most effective ways of embedding the tenets of sustainable leadership development. The model is powerful yet simple and easy to remember, making it ideal for coaching practitioners and facilitators as well as for individuals embarking on a development journey. The *step-by-step approach* is deliberate, with each phase in the process building on the insights gained previously. This does not, however, equate to a linear process. The framework works best when a *cyclical approach* is assumed. During the two *mid-step reflection points*, individuals are challenged as to their readiness to move forward in the process and, when necessary, directed to an early step to focus again on more deeply or *fully internalising* and addressing the early steps in the framework.

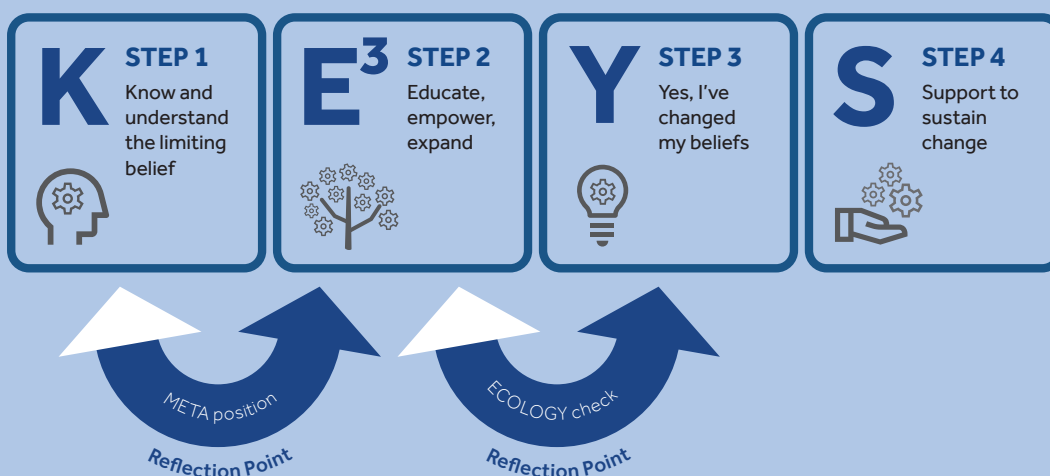


Figure 2: The KE³YS framework
Source: Adapted from King Gabrielides (2018: p186)

The various stages of the KE³YS framework are best explained using an example grounded in reality. Therefore, the case study below is dissected across each of the framework's steps and stages.

Recently, the author was working with a newly appointed financial director of a large global bank. During a coaching session, the individual was able to identify a limiting belief. It started with the following comment: 'I feel that if I show that I'm overwhelmed or voice that a week has been hectic, then my managers will think they've chosen the wrong person when appointing me in this role.' The client was concerned that any indication that she needed to build slack into her day, or take a breather, would be interpreted as an inability to cope.

When broken down and interrogated, the limiting belief that emerged showed that any attempt to hold true to her boundaries might be misinterpreted as weakness. This belief pervaded all her leadership actions, even something as small as ensuring that she kept meetings strictly to 25-minutes and ensured she had a five-minute breather before the start of the next meeting. Exiting early was a red flag for the client, as she thought it had the potential to become an area for criticism, even though the super seniors in the bank all logged off at the 25-minute mark.

'They never let one call bleed into another,' our executive realised over the course of the session. 'And I never think for a minute that they're not committed or capable.'

Once this thought pattern was laid out and dissected, the executive noticed that the limiting belief permeated more than just the workplace, it had tendrils throughout her life. Once she had caught it, named it, and understood the triggers, she was able to turn her attention to appreciating how this limiting belief was negatively impacting her.



A deep dive into the KE³YS framework



Step 1: 'K' – Know and understand the limiting belief

Catching the limiting belief and taking time to know it and understand it is the foundation of the KE³YS framework. Without it, moving into the educating, empowering, and expanding aspects of the process cannot begin in earnest. There are ever-present clues that help point us in the direction of our limiting beliefs, such as intense emotional responses like being hurt or angered by a comment or a joke. Once you have identified the reaction, it is important to dig deeper into the underlying assumptions and hidden phrases, such as 'I can't...!', 'I'm too much of...!', 'I'm not...!', and 'I must be perfect to be successful'. These assumptions can limit personal development and career aspirations.

If we follow the emotion in the case study example, the following underlying beliefs become evident:

1. Needing a breather is a sign of weakness or that I am not coping or up for the job.
2. If someone else believes I am not coping, then it is true.
3. If someone believes I can do this job, then I can (this assumes that whatever someone believes about us is accurate).
4. What others think of me can hurt me emotionally (within this false assumption lies the power to inflict emotional pain, even though we cannot know what is in another's mind).
5. We can know another's mind and read how they view us.

Once these core limiting beliefs have been uncovered, the first step to displacing them is to identify the 'mistaken certainty' in the cluster of beliefs that make up the larger, dominant belief. Once unearthed, it is critical not to turn these beliefs into the 'boogeymen' by labelling them as 'negative' or 'wrong', but rather to honour their positive intent.

This can only be achieved by moving past the surface thoughts and actively searching for hidden assumptions. For example, in the case of the financial director, she wanted to succeed at her job. Here, a skilled coach can guide the individual through the process of reframing this belief by drawing the core of the belief into the light. This is not always a quick or easy process and can require revisiting the process to unearth additional layers. It is important that a thorough assessment of the limiting beliefs is achieved, before moving on to the Reflection point: meta position and then step 2.

As I wrote in my PhD thesis: 'Identifying a core belief is like solving a mystery of the illusions of the mind. This task can be a daunting and challenging but gets easier with practise and the guidance of a skilled facilitator, coach or psychologist.'
(King Gabrielides, 2018: 182)

Reflection Point: META Position

Vietnamese monk and author Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022) understood the interconnectedness of systems and the essence of the human experience. In his poem *Interbeing*, Nhat Hanh wrote, "'To be' is to inter-be - we cannot just be by ourselves alone. We have to inter-be with every other thing' (Nhat Hanh, 2009). Nhat Hanh's writings offer a window into ways of seeing the interconnectedness of the whole and the importance of understanding our place in the world. Self-development is no different. Truly sustainable and holistic leadership development must be considered in the context of the META position.

In the field of Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), the META position refers to "a dissociated position not involved with the content of the event or the person" (NLP World, 2021). *It involves stepping out of yourself and trying to view things from another's perspective.* This process can be initiated by a skilled facilitator simply by asking the client to raise any questions that might occur to a stranger looking into the room or to consider any aspect of the belief identified in the 'K' step that an external party might want to explore in more depth. Just this gentle nudge often unlocks more insights that might even motivate the client to step back into step 1 and peel of more layers for examination before moving forward in the process.



'E³' – Educate, empower, expand


In step 2, the client and facilitator go in search of evidence to completely disprove or cast doubt on the limiting belief identified in step 1. The facilitator helps to challenge the limiting belief by educating it, empowering it, or expanding the client's perspective, while honouring the reason why the belief emerged in the first place, and carefully honouring and managing the client's innate resistance to change that might emerge. Educating is a reflective and often backward-looking technique. Empowerment is a more forward-looking response, while expanding embraces additional viewpoints, knowledge, and insights.

When the author first envisaged this framework, step 2 focused on just two Es: educate and empower. Over time, presenting the KE³YS framework as part of various group leadership programmes and incorporating input from executive coaching clients and practitioners alike, layers of depth have been added to the framework. The addition of the third E – expand – to step 2 is a case in point.

The three Es work together to gather and collate the 'evidence' that our subconscious mind needs to consciously shift perspective and reinterpret events.

Throughout history, there are countless examples of people who did not buy into the notion that invisible barriers exist that cannot be scaled. One such example is Roger Bannister smashing the physical and psychological four-minute barrier in the mile on 6 May 1954 (Taylor, 2018). Another is the American high jumper Richard Fosbury's break with tradition to invent the innovative backward jumping style, which today bears his name, the Fosbury Flop (Goldenberg et al., 2010).

These achievements show that the belief that people can do something is empowering and can support eventual success. Conversely, if individuals believe they cannot break through the barrier, then chances are they will not. In fact, they might not even try.



Investing time and effort to shift limiting beliefs – often with the aid of a professional coach or psychologist – can have profound implications.

- 1. Educating** is the portion of the case study where the client needed to consider the times when she has left a meeting at the 25-minute mark and still felt on top of her role and a capable, committed contributor. It might be as simple as recalling instances where other seniors exited meetings at the 25-minute mark and she did not think any less of them. Unearthing these examples and logging them into evidence is useful in supporting the empowering efforts.
- 2. Empowering** is the element that could involve coaching clients to model the behaviour of someone they know who displays the sort of leadership they regard as being capable. The coach might employ neuro-linguistic programming techniques, such as reframing, anchoring, state management, and/or changing negative self-talk (Schneider, 2014), to help clients reinforce self-confidence and gradually build up evidence that their limiting belief is in fact mistaken or no longer valid.
- 3. Expanding** is a useful third technique that can be used to complement the work already done with the first two Es, or if educating and empowering alone were not sufficient to bring about the displacement of the limiting belief. Expanding is about asking clients to broaden their views of their challenges by, for example, reading academic articles or books on the issue under scrutiny. This might include biographies and insights from others who have overcome these limiting beliefs. In the case study of the financial director, she found it useful to study the behaviour of other successful executives. She discovered that they did not see downtime as a luxury, but rather a

necessity. This realisation assisted her to reframe 'taking a break' as critical to productivity rather than being a weakness.

Sometimes, one small shift in perspective can have a powerful domino effect that sets in motion a significant internal reprogramming. It can also inspire a longer process that requires frequent pauses, personal reflection moments, and incremental steps.

The human mind is eminently changeable and flip-flops between ideas and beliefs during a single day. A comment, criticism, or mistaken assumption about another's views might reactivate an old limiting belief. Therefore, unpacking the sub-levels of the core belief is crucial. The more vulnerable and committed clients are to the process, the more likely it is that they can unravel an entire chain of assumptions that merge to form a limiting belief.

Changing a core belief can be remarkably easy once you know what you are dealing with. It is the effort required to unlock the awareness that takes time, followed by the methodical process of helping the subconscious let go of the old assumptions and barriers, and replace the old viewpoint with a new and sustainable belief that supports long-term success. Without the evidence to support this mental shift, it is unhelpful to proceed to the second reflection point and, from there, to step 3.

It may be necessary to go through the cycle several times and apply the model in an iterative way, rather than regarding KE³YS as a linear process. The process may take time and constant revision before the limiting belief has been sufficiently displaced.

Reflection Point: ECOLOGY Check

Before moving to step 3 and embracing the displacement of the old limiting belief and replacing it with a new, more empowering belief, it is necessary for clients to again step out of themselves and undertake a reality check on whether or not this shift will be beneficial. This requires asking questions, such as:

- If I commit to this shift, what could the impact be on my life and career?
- What consequences do I foresee?
- What might happen if I choose not to adopt a new belief system?
- Will I receive pushback? If so, from where and from whom?

The ecology check should not just be focused on the area the clients believe to be the focus of their self-development. Changing a deeply held view is likely to have ripple effects across individuals' professional lives, personal lives, family, finances, well-being, and motivation. Therefore, any potential change must be thoroughly scrutinised to ensure the right fit as part of the individuals' value system, needs, and desires. Consequently, the ecology check:

is about seeing clients in the context of their various life systems and ensures that the change is in line with their value system and that it is what they want. In essence, it is about checking that the change and course of action that follows is a wise one, and beneficial for the client and the system to which they belong.

(King Gabrielides, 2018: 186)

Clients might even decide not to make a change, given the potential impact on their personal ecosystems. For others, this process can help to prepare clients for potentially negative feedback or difficulties, which enables them to stay the course. The ecology check is a vital sub-step that facilitates a logical progression to the next stage.



'Y' – Yes, I've changed my belief(s)

The next step is to actively change the identified limiting belief and replace it with something more positive and enabling. If sustainable change is the goal, then this cannot be achieved without shifting core beliefs.

Seeking a shortcut when it comes to step 3 can undo all the progress made previously, so particular attention needs to be paid by facilitators and coaches to cement a significant shift in perspective. Failure to do so can derail the process.

One of the quickest ways to change beliefs is by supporting clients to adopt a different viewpoint. From a popular psychology perspective, *affirmations are often touted as an effective way to shift limiting beliefs, although experience shows that affirmations alone do not cement sustainable change* (King Gabrielides, 2018: 186). Beliefs have a way of cropping up during times of stress, so it is necessary to address all the components that make up a single belief by guiding a client to small epiphanies over time, as well as helping them to engrain an expanded worldview that puts the change into perspective.

When the client is within the paradigm of a false belief, it appears so completely true that they continue to believe in it, such as the person who believes the Earth is flat. All contrary perspectives and even certain evidence are discounted until there is a shift in perspective. This is one of the problems with affirmations. From the point of view of existing beliefs,

affirmations look like a lie and the clients will feel like liars or frauds trying to adopt new beliefs that go against their current paradigm (King Gabrielides, 2018). The support afforded by a trained professional in step 3 of the KE³YS framework should be continued into step 4, which should be regarded as an ongoing process required to sustain positive new beliefs, while ensuring that the client remains ever mindful of not falling back into the trap of limiting thinking.



The KE³YS journey does not end with the 'Y' when the individual commits to changing a limiting belief.

Any process of self-discovery and improvement is developed over time based on experience, practice, and reflection. Knowing something and being able to tweak entrenched behaviours and mental patterns, and then to embed those changes, require continuous support.

If recent years have taught us anything, it is that just when we believe we have made progress tackling our limiting beliefs, a new challenge or trigger might emerge that requires us to re-examine what we thought we knew. The long hours and lack of work-life balance that many experienced during the COVID-19 lockdowns are a case in point. Fuelled by fear, lack of job security, and global turmoil, many fell back into limiting beliefs that they had to work excessively hard to succeed and cranked up the hours. In the long term, this proved to be unsustainable, despite positive reactions to the initial spike in productivity businesses recorded in 2020. According to the International Labour Organization, output per hour worked in 2020 grew by 4.9%, 'more than double the long-term average annual rate of 2.4 per cent registered between 2005 and 2019. This is the fastest global growth in hourly productivity observed since data have been available. A similar trend is found across all major country income groups' (Kapsos, 2021). However, by early 2022, employee productivity had deteriorated to 3.8% below the pre-COVID-19 benchmark (International Labour Organization, 2022), shifting conversation to ways in which to create more human-centric solutions and work environments.

Therefore, while support is a crucial aspect of the KE³YS framework, it is effectively a process within a process; a journey that is alive, fluid, and ongoing. It can be equated to weeding the garden of your mind (Jones, 2012) through continuously pruning, planting, and tidying, while carefully putting support stakes in place that allow positive change to get the rain and sunlight needed to thrive.

This can be achieved through:

- 1. Internal support** and intrinsic motivation, where the transformation is solely driven by personal commitment.
- 2. External support**, such as professional and social support systems (Kwasnicka et al, 2016), as well as a committed facilitator or coach who could significantly accelerate transformation.
- 3. Organisational support**, where organisations offer ongoing support and give space for individuals to self-reflect through mentorship initiatives and group and individual coaching. Moreover, it includes peer-to-peer learning, where colleagues and fellow leaders can support one another's learning journey (Steinberg and Watkins, 2021) – an important approach that companies are embracing more in the wake of COVID-19 (Willard, 2022).

1. **Self-reflection**, which we often don't commit to paper. More-often, we allow a swirl of ideas and thoughts to wander unaccompanied through our minds. For the individual, learnt skills like journaling can prove highly supportive as part of the support process – particularly for those in leadership positions (Adler, 2016). Even in a profession as delineated as the military, it is becoming increasingly accepted that self-reflection is an important element when it comes to developing effective leaders (Johnson, 2020). Beyond that, there is a growing body of research examining the correlation between leaders who are going through an emotional intelligence leadership journey who journal and those who do not (Adler, 2016; Densten and Gray, 2001; Inam, 2017; King Gabrielides, 2018). Individuals accelerate their personal development if they journal, which makes sense because 'self-awareness is the gateway to emotional intelligence' (Hubbard, 2021) and the more we journal, the more we increase our awareness and bring it into our consciousness.

While the likes of journaling are growing in popularity and application, the process of embedding new behaviours and attitudes takes a range of continuous interventions from visualisation and being mindful of internal auditory dialogue. In fact, all the senses should be focused on and aligned to the task of entrenching a new belief if reversion back to old ways and habits is to be avoided.

In his best-selling book, *Atomic Habits: An Easy and Proven Way to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones*, James Clear (2018: 44) notes:

The more you repeat a behaviour, the more you reinforce the identity associated with that behaviour. In fact, the word identity was originally derived from the Latin words essentitas, which means being, and identidem, which means repeatedly. Your identity is literally your 'repeated beingness'.

Therefore, the goal is to support, repeat, and reinforce the new belief so that it transforms the very identity and psyche of the individual.

Practical application insights

The KE³YS framework can be successfully used as an effective part of any emotional intelligence or leadership development programme, as well as serving as a stand-alone tool. Given the personal insights it unearths, it is however advisable for the framework to be applied by a facilitator who has a strong coaching and clinical background. We must also remember that a leadership development tool is only as good as the effort made by the individual to challenge their own assumptions. The facilitator's role is "to create and hold the space for the learner to embark on a journey of personal authenticity that is personally meaningful" (King Gabrielides, 2018).

For the facilitator, the trick is how best to help identify and understand the limiting belief. This highlights the importance of the 'K' step in creating the foundation for the framework as a whole.

For the individual, the KE³YS framework should form an automatic part of a bi-annual self-audit of goals, development areas, habits and beliefs. Looking back to the early days of Covid-19, it is clear that many individuals who felt they had already shifted limiting beliefs were dragged backwards by the fear and uncertainty unlocked by the pandemic. This shows how necessary and valuable it is to continually evaluate our belief systems in order to identify what is serving us and what is not, and to continually take steps to transform our lives.

Take stock of your beliefs

The author recommends users of the KE³YS framework undergo a biannual self-audit to see if new beliefs have been entrenched and remain so, particularly in the face of a crisis or dramatic shift in personal or professional circumstances. Taking the time to reflect acts as a warning light against reverting to old habits and enables individuals to assess the effectiveness of the new beliefs and programmes on their personal and professional development journey.

Conclusion

True leadership development can only be achieved when all aspects of the individual leader are enhanced. This requires focusing on the interplay between mind, body, and spirit, 'as well as their various life dimensions, such as financial, health, education, recreation, relationships and so on' (King Gabrielides, 2018: 189). Recognising that individuals must develop within a system, a truly holistic and multifaceted approach is required to entrench sustainable and supportive beliefs and attitudes.

Applying the KE³YS framework provides the space and structure individuals need to be vulnerable and open about their limiting beliefs. Moreover, the framework's systemic outlook encourages and develops an 'expanded perspective and worldview' that supports the embedding of new beliefs that will underpin future development and growth. This process 'can be enabled through action learning, reflective journaling, structured feedback and follow-up support' (King Gabrielides, 2018: 189), which must be seen as part of an ongoing process, rather than a once-off, quick-fix intervention.

At a time when more is being asked of leaders, personal development in core human areas, such as developing strong interpersonal relationships, role modelling, supporting, and developing others and operating mindfully and with confidence (McKinsey & Company, 2021), is becoming increasingly important for leaders and organisations alike. Addressing this personal and organisational need requires a holistic approach to leadership development that puts personal transformation at the core of the journey, while never losing sight of the systemic nature of leadership.



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A step-by-step approach to personal leadership development



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Using the Project Artistry framework to optimise executive education

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May 2023



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If business schools hope to continue delivering impactful executive education in a fast-changing and unpredictable world, they must embrace the world of design thinking and creative problem-solving embodied in the project artistry framework. The human centricity and creativity that these design-based techniques aim to unlock have been looked at with some scepticism by organisations and their leaders in the past. However, they are increasingly being viewed through a new lens and regarded as the key to unlocking business competitiveness, innovation, and long-term sustainability.



Disclaimer:

Handwritten initials 'NB' in blue ink.

Aligned with our mission, 'we build the people who build the businesses that build Africa', we facilitate open, multi-perspective conversations and the generation of thought leadership pieces, such as this white paper. However, the views expressed in this white paper are held by the author and not necessarily held by Henley Business School Africa.



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Acknowledgements

A special thanks to Henley Business School Africa's Research team for finding value in this contribution, Ms Cara Bower for her sense-making and Prof. Alet Erasmus for the review of this white paper. Their dedication and persistence supported me throughout this effort to document what is essentially the culmination of 23 years of work, research, engagement, and service to a range of organisations, industries, and institutions, both locally and globally. Glory to God who imparts all wisdom. Thanks to my husband and kids, who ignite the spark of creativity in me always and whose belief in me is absolute.

Abstract

The concept of design thinking is rooted in the 1950s, where it first emerged out of Stanford University as an impactful process that enables participants to engage in creativity logically. Design thinking began to grow in popularity in the turbulent and technologically transformational 1980s. In isolation, design thinking cannot push the boundaries of imagination, but coupled with creative problem-solving methodologies, it can better navigate the range of complex unknowns underlining the nature of business in today's unpredictable world.

Introduction

Definitions of creativity all speak to generating new ideas, methods, and original thinking that transcend the usual (Collins, 2010) – drawing on the power of the human imagination to shake up old patterns and associations. There are other interpretations of creativity. In 2014, Jeffrey Tjendra, founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of Canada-based Business Innovation by Design, described creativity as 'the ability to make sense of new logic', explaining that: **'Design thinking is created because big corporation [sic] lack the ability to be creative and on [sic] extreme cases, aren't able to create new projects and services that meet unmet needs of their customers.'**

Referring to an outdated education system that fosters 'dominant logic and disregard[s] creativity', Tjendra (2014) argued that the 'ambiguous, messy and unpredictable' nature of design-focused creative processes is often too overwhelming for businesses to comprehend and even control. However, it is both possible and preferable to integrate creative problem-solving and design thinking paradigms across the business operations spectrum, including technical departments, such as information technology (IT) or software development (Makhoalibe, 2011). The project artistry framework, specifically, offers a new take on design thinking, enabling businesses across the spectrum of industries to develop and support those who are leading future-fit organisations.

The project artistry framework draws from the body of work that spans design thinking, creative problem-solving, and systems thinking. It is a way of navigating projects that sit in the quadrant of the 'unknown unknowns', where organisations cannot rely solely on logic. A clear balance between logic and imagination is required, coupled with a rigorous process to extract fresh thinking to navigate a world of unknowns.

Personal reflection: a journey from IT to artistry

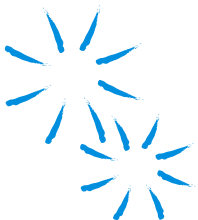
Coming from an IT background, with a degree in computer science and statistics, I came to the realisation that I too could tap into my innate creativity and be deliberate about applying creativity to work, projects and leadership. Being boxed into a software development mould for so long, I started playing with the project artistry framework to lead teams tasked with solving complex problems, empowering them to harness creativity and imagination in their thinking. I realised that bringing a diversity of views into the room at the beginning of technical projects held greater potential for innovation than blocking participants off in silos – all the better if these voices included the customers whose problems the team tried to understand and solve.

By 2011, I had found resonance in design thinking, creative problem-solving, systems thinking, and taking the time to think, resulting in the emergence of the project artistry framework. Being a relatively new area of study, it was a hard sell at first, but I leveraged my then-position as IT manager at the University of Cape Town to build a design thinking team that delivered IT solutions using the project artistry approach. Thereafter, we tackled all our projects in line with this methodology, its process, and its pillars, which created a foundation that fostered collaboration. Clutching our Post-it notes, we set about clustering themes and making meaning together, which proved highly successful.

Keen to document the effectiveness of this approach, I presented my first paper on the topic at the INTED conference in Spain in 2012, during which I began to categorise how creativity played itself out in projects located in a space of complete unknowing. I pursued my PhD in business management around this same concept. However, I soon realised that the body of knowledge at the time – in the mid-2000s – was not yet ready to be challenged on this level. For example, when presenting at a project management conference in the United States (US) in 2014, about 90% of the feedback echoed that 'design thinking was just a fad'. Only one individual believed in the work, recommending an open innovation approach.

Responding to calls to simplify the mindset, practices, and thinking styles of project artistry, I converted my PhD thesis into a book format. *The Alchemy of Design Thinking* (2019) was published in 2016, but attracted a less-than-inspired reception. Over time, fortunately, the project management body of knowledge started opening up to the idea of design thinking.

Today, amidst unparalleled global change and uncertainty, companies from all sectors and across all divisions are scrambling for human-centred priority skills, such as critical thinking, co-creation, and problem-solving, all of which are exemplified by the project artistry approach.



The power of design thinking

Contrary to popular belief, design thinking is not a novel phenomenon. It emerged in the design field as a means of theorising how creatives work, in an attempt to apply these insights to training in that field. In the early 2000s, design thinking was adopted by businesses to help navigate so-called 'wicked problems' – those concerns comprising multiple and interconnected factors that make them hard to understand and solve (IDEO, 2021). Global design and innovation company IDEO is often associated with the application of design thinking. Its CEO, Tim Brown (2008), has written extensively on the subject, delivering insightful and entertaining presentations, referring to design thinking as an effective and fresh approach to instil innovation across industries.

Design thinking, as we know it today, is a step-by-step creative process designed to spark flexible and innovative thinking (Auernhammer and Roth, 2021). The concept of design thinking originated at Stanford University in the US in 1957.

Design thinking is grounded in 'psychological theories of creativity, visual thinking, and human values' (Auernhammer and Roth, 2021: 637). By 2005, design thinking had become an 'accepted term in the innovation management discourse as an approach to creativity and innovation based on design practices', that includes 'need-finding, brainstorming, and prototyping with multidisciplinary teams' (Auernhammer and Roth, 2021: 624).

Recognising the importance of harnessing innate human creativity to solve complex and multifaceted problems in business is crucial. Unfortunately, because some perceive the process as too abstract, it is difficult to develop the concept and determine its impact on leaders and businesses. Nevertheless, the demand for interventions to develop creativity in business and leadership has ballooned in recent years, driven by the business imperative to harness internal innovation to fuel growth. The author has observed and explored this area with rigour across various

industries and contexts in recent years. To quote Brown (2009: 7):

As the center of economic activity in the developing world shifts inexorably from industrial manufacturing to knowledge creation and service delivery, innovation has become nothing less than a survival strategy. It is, moreover, no longer limited to the introduction of new physical products but includes new sorts of processes, services, interactions, entertainment forms, and ways of communicating and collaborating.
(Brown, 2009: 7)

As a creative method to nurture innovation (Magistretti et al., 2022), the acceptance of design thinking has grown in the world of business. Yet, less than 30% of company board members polled by Harvard Business School in 2018, ranked innovation among the top three challenges for their organisations to achieve strategic objectives (Cheng and Groysberg, 2018). Despite this widely held view that 'Laying the foundation for innovation requires a forward-looking mindset throughout the firm and the board' (Cheng and Groysberg, 2018), many companies are still not getting it right when encouraging creativity and innovation within their organisations.

Possible reasons (MIT Enterprise Forum CEE, n.d.) why companies flounder when having to harness the power of innovation to ensure sustainability and future fit include poor innovation culture and an impatient leadership team/board that demands fast returns amid reluctance to shake things up within the company. Equally challenging are a dearth of issues concerning ownership of the innovation process and support of the end-to-end process. While design thinking is an ideal alternative to address these challenges and is increasingly popular and accepted for extracting value, admittedly no model is perfect. In a world increasingly buffeted by change and uncertainty, a flaw in the current design is addressed by project artistry.

Solving rampant uncertainty

Several acronyms are used to describe environments of uncertainty and anxiety that organisations operate in and embrace the fundamental unpredictability of the world today. VUCA – which stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity – is probably the most well-known, while others include RUPT, used in the US (as a quick reference to a rapid, unpredictable, paradoxical, and tangled situation), TUNA (turbulent, uncertain, novel, and ambiguous), or BANI (brittle, anxious, non-linear, and incomprehensible) (Glaeser, 2023).

While all industries and organisations are impacted by an inherent complexity in some way, 'project management as a field has to overcome significant barriers to change and develop the capacity for more subjective, interactive, and interpretive innovations that appear to be more effective in these settings' (Makhoalibe, 2017: viii). Having interrogated the impact of applying design principles on project management teams' efforts to achieve project objectives, adopting a fresh design approach certainly added a new dimension to their endeavours. It facilitated an understanding of changing conditions, enabling a clearer vision that enlightened and transformed those who were engaged in the projects, while cultivating creative confidence and fostering collaboration (Makhoalibe, 2017; Makhoalibe and Sewchurran, 2012).

In the past, a business or leadership team could muddle through solutions and innovations using available insights (Justo, 2019), partly because some problems sat in the quadrant indicated in Figure 1, as the preserve of the 'unknown unknowns'. Yet, increasingly, organisations around the world now operate in this realm that requires more than just design thinking to solve related challenges.



Figure 1: The matrix of complex decision-making
Source: Adapted from Aucoin (2007); Obeng (1994); Turner and Cochrane (1993)

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (CNN, 2016) explained:

There are Known Knowns: there are things we know that we know. There are Known unknowns; that is to say, there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we do not know we don't know.

Project artistry as part of the designer's toolkit

Project artistry presents a way to navigate projects that sit in the realm of the 'unknown unknowns' ('don't know what' and 'don't know how' in Figure 1) where a clear balance between logic and creativity is needed.

It is no longer possible to rely on logic or knowledge alone to navigate through a challenge. Rather, imagination must be harnessed alongside a rigorous process to extract the fresh thinking required to conquer a world of unknowns.

Design thinking is an impactful process that enables participants to apply creativity logically, although it cannot push the boundaries of imagination when used on its own. Conjured with the creative problem-solving methodologies of the personal and professional transformation

Creative Education Foundation (Isaksen and Treffinger, 2004), frameworks that fit in the quadrant of the 'unknown unknowns' can now be created to facilitate the design of exploration projects.

While design thinking presents the principles and the methodology, creative problem-solving is particularly strong when delving into those principles to guide the methodology. The combination of these two approaches – which were born at almost the same time in the 1950s – finds a powerful expression as part of a project artistry intervention, particularly when strengthened with some aspects of systems thinking (Pourdehnad et al., 2011) and when adding time to think. This combination creates a way of introducing artistry – or skill – into the world of project management.

Systems thinking meets design thinking

Systems thinking is an approach that considers all variables that make up an organisation and how they interact. This enables managers and designers to envisage how a change to one component might have ripple effects down the line.

Pourdehnad et al. (2011) explored the interplay between design thinking and systems thinking, although no formal connection exists between these two separate concepts. The authors believed these two schools of thought have the potential to work together effectively to better understand the interrelated parts of a complex and multifaceted system and then to design solutions based on all the available data and interrelationships (Pourdehnad et al., 2011).

Project artistry framework

The project artistry framework encompasses four pertinent steps and four pillars, which are both discussed in the sections that follow.

Four pertinent steps

- The first step of the project artistry framework entails *clarifying* the problem at hand through *contextualisation* by digging into the issue or problem at hand. The empathy and listening skills favoured by a design thinking approach are characterised by language, such as 'It would be great if...' (IWBG1), to frame questions and responses.
- Participants then move to *ideation*, sharing unpolished ideas during a mind-mapping exercise.
- The subsequent *prototyping* involves trimming down the ideas on the table and fleshing them all out into an actionable concept. Richness in creative problem-solving is accomplished by carefully clarifying the problem or opportunity to be explored.
- The final step is *conceptualisation*, during which rough edges are smoothed off ideas to produce something that can be tested and further refined in line with the developmental phase of creative problem-solving.

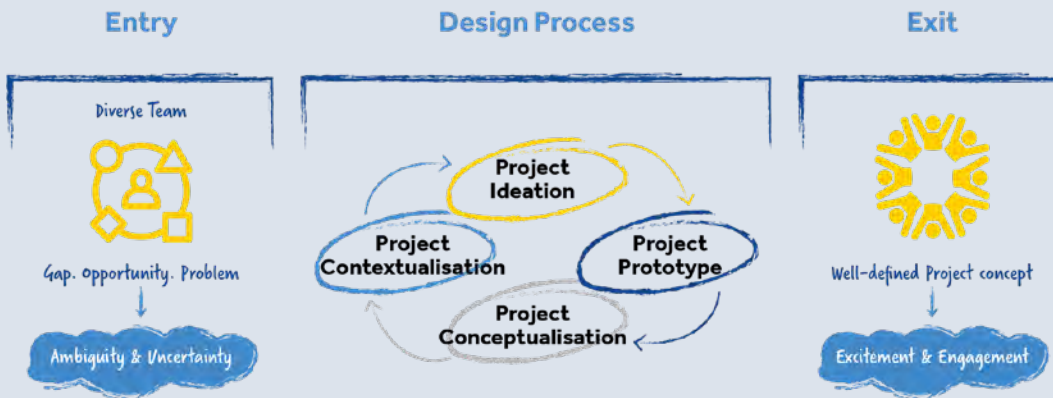
Project artistry is meant to add additional depth and learning in the realm of transformation and change, leading participants through the stages of the design process. The journey should be personally resonant and a transformational learning experience that is exited with a 'light-bulb moment'.



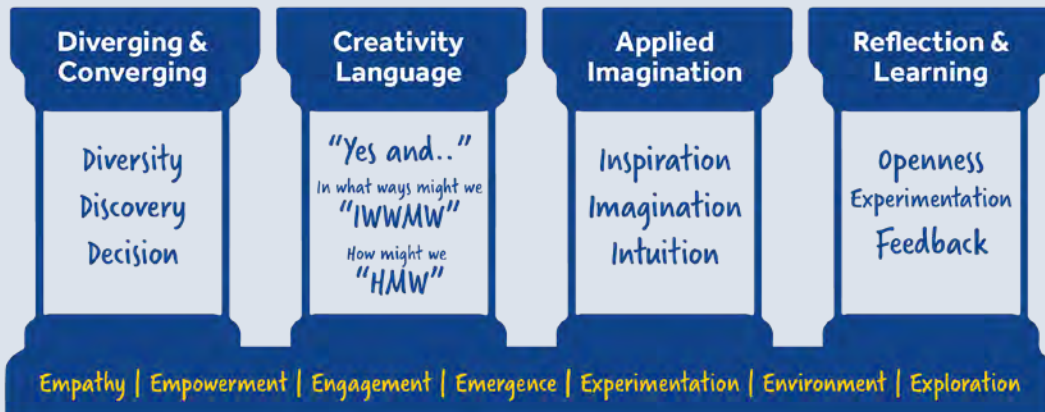
Four design pillars

Four supportive design pillars (as illustrated in Figure 2) form the foundational blocks that underpin the project artistry process, namely *diverging and converging*, *creative language*, *applied imagination*, and *reflection*. In turn, these blocks are supported by ingraining empathy into the intervention, actively empowering people, and creating a safe space without an imbalance of power, where people feel free to engage and express themselves.

PROJECT ARTISTRY PRINCIPLES EMERGING FROM DT & CPS PRINCIPLES



DESIGN PILLARS



FOUNDATIONS OF PROJECT ARTISTRY

Figure 2: Project artistry: merging design thinking and creative problem-solving

Source: Adapted from Makhoalibe (2017)

Each pillar makes a unique contribution to the project artistry framework:

- Pillar 1: Diverging and converging** – entails 'brainstorming', originating from the 1950s (Guilford, 1957), that comprises a two-step process of diverging and converging (Byron, 2012). First, divergent thinking delves into all possibilities, then convergent thinking is a process during which a list of ideas is moulded into a tangible answer that can be put into action. These two thinking processes should be communicated clearly and applied correctly to achieve innovative outcomes.
- Pillar 2: Creative language** – refers to a process where language is intentionally converted to supportive and inspiring words to encourage creativity. As language is a very powerful tool in terms of unlocking a group's brain power, organisations are cautioned to refrain from using language that may kill the creative spirit, and rather replace it with so-called leap stimulators that will enable creativity (Thompson, 2016).



- **Pillar 3: Applied imagination** – concerns the deliberate application of imagination. Rather than playing it safe, the intention is to help people use all the knowledge they have acquired and then push beyond those limits. This may take participants into a personally uncomfortable space, requiring them to listen and embrace what others are saying, no matter how challenging that might be. A psychologically safe environment is critical for the imagination to thrive. Without this pillar, innovation is impossible.
- **Pillar 4: Reflection** – this is a clear recognition that learning cannot be achieved by simply talking at people. Rather, it is achieved through experimentation and is reinforced by taking sufficient time and intent to contemplate an experience and its impact and then being intentional about how to create a shift (Makhoalibe, 2017).

In dealing with the world of 'unknown unknowns' curiosity, it is vital to be able to experiment and explore. The area of uncertainty where project artistry interventions are located is not primed to exploit existing ideas or thinking. They operate as explorations. They are the stuff of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and can only be unlocked with a fresh mindset and an openness to discovering new insights.

The gradual evolution

When project artistry was initially envisaged in 2011, it was a hard sell. This was not only because of the scepticism around design thinking from the world of business, but also because the word 'artistry' proved a distraction for corporates for whom the notion of creativity evoked concerns of wayward thinking, irrationality, and implausibility. Over the past few years, there has been a notable softening of this stance.



Project artistry in executive education

Progressing across disciplines and industries

Having won over many big corporations and multinationals, such as General Electric, Proctor & Gamble, and Sony (Matthews and Wrigley, 2017), as well as leading South African businesses like Standard Bank, First National Bank, and Liberty Life, design thinking principles are increasingly used to build innovative corporate cultures and are finding their way into strategic business thinking centred around problem-solving (Reynolds, 2016). Although project artistry has its roots in project management, it is now applied across industries and professions. So much so, that the author's focus now includes an executive education perspective to enable a wider footprint for sharing a design process and transformational intervention that is valued across the corporate world. Matthews and Wrigley (2017: 51) presented a preliminary mapping of how design thinking was being incorporated into business education programmes in various global institutions, including Stanford University and the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management:

This dynamic field appears to be in constant change as institutions develop internal capabilities bringing schools of design and business together or developing alliances within or across universities to experiment with programmes. Furthermore, many of the existing courses and programmes are adapting and changing to respond to increased demand from the industry.

In addition, IDEO (2013) now offers a design thinking toolkit to support educators in their quest to jointly create equitable change in schools through a design-driven process that is informed by the community and conscious of achieving equity and inclusion. The tool has, for example, been successfully applied by The Teachers Guild non-profit in the US, enabling teachers to innovate and allowing students the freedom to solve problems (The Teachers Guild x School Retool, n.d.).

Pre-VUCA versus VUCA conditions

In a less complicated, pre-VUCA world, business schools knew how to conduct leadership interventions, which modules were required for impact, and how to deliver them. It was not necessary to factor in listening and empathy; everything evolved around general management expertise, financial accounting, and international business. However, today, *in a world highly characterised by unknowns, specific leadership traits are coveted by big business, namely* (Gartner, 2022):

- Tolerance for ambiguity;
- Empathy;
- Authenticity;
- Confident leadership; and
- Harnessing adaptability.

TEACH

Creativity crept into the top skills required. Moreover, the crucial skills required to thrive, are creativity and innovation, which have been positioned as part of the top five 'in-demand' skills since 2013, per the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2020). The WEF (2023) Future of jobs reports creative and analytical thinking as the top skills important for workers. The same report further highlights creative thinking as the top skill that is increasing in importance (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Skills that are increasing in importance
Source: Adapted from World Economic Forum (2023: 39)

Embedding these human-centric and innovation-friendly skills requires a different touch, with the input of experienced executive education facilitators to guide a diverse audience through the process of navigating real-world problems. The project conceptualisation phase of the project artistry framework also needs to be advanced, commencing interventions with *upfront client consultations* and a *co-creation of processes* to extract real value from the process.

In essence, building bespoke executive education offerings should mirror the very process that participants will follow, starting with contextualising the issue, ideating the best possible intervention, prototyping it, and conceptualising the end product.

Executive education should no longer be a tick-box exercise where pre-existing modules are combined. Instead, a co-created personal learning and development process should be created in response to the challenges of the business, involving the right people, to achieve positive outcomes, as the intervention is tweaked for even greater impact.





The Sea of Change

The world of project artistry refers to a so-called sea of change that entails an intersection of three Cs, namely *creativity*, *courage*, and *curiosity*, that are critical for personal transformation and to steer individuals towards what the author refers to as a personal sea of change (see Figure 4).

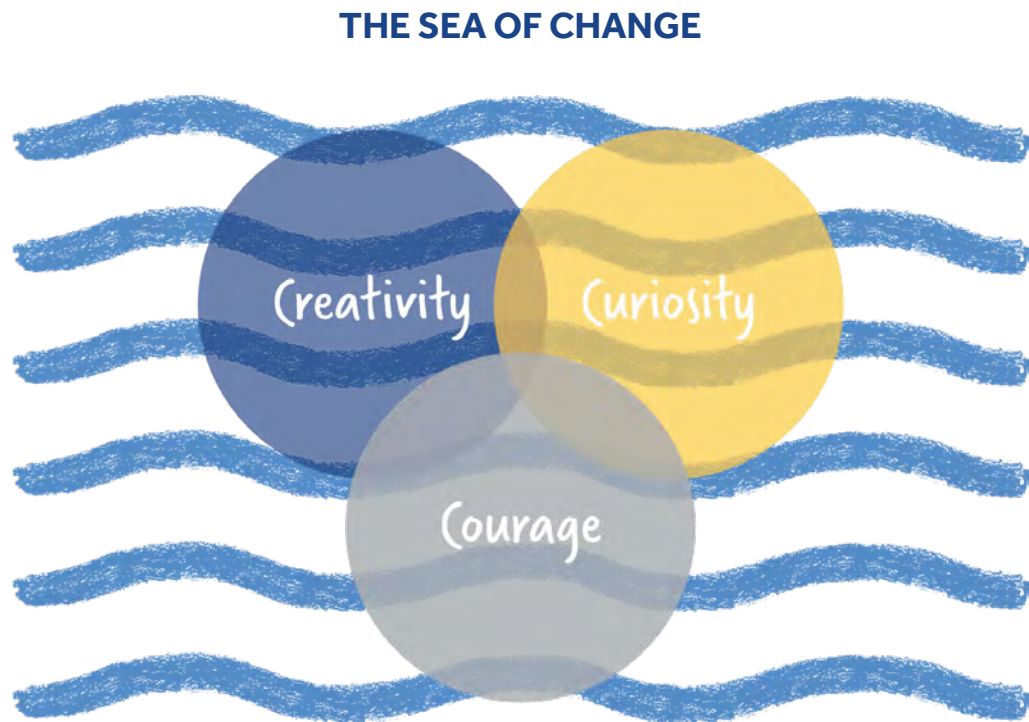


Figure 4: The Sea of Change
Source: Author's Own

To better understand the intersection of the three Cs, it is important to understand the unique nature and respective roles of each of the Cs in achieving personal transformation.

Creativity

The notion of creativity can be confusing. Being closely associated with creative fields, business school scholars often find themselves at a disadvantage when encountering this subject matter. Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) provided some clarity when unveiling their 'four C model of creativity' – a framework that highlights creativity as being part of a continuum. The authors explained that *big-C creativity* encompasses significant changes or contributions in a domain or area of work, while *pro-C creativity* is the sort of creative contribution we might see from individuals who are recognised professionals or experts in their field. No less important, but perhaps not as celebrated are efforts of *little-C creativity*, the sort of day-to-day creative actions that people who are not experts produce. *Mini-C creativity* refers to the personal interpretations and creative thinking we all apply to events, learning, and experiences as we process input through which we begin to construct a personal understanding.

The Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) definition of big-C creativity aligns with Dr Ruth Noller's formula of creativity (see Figure 5). Noller was a mathematician who worked with Dr Sidney J. Parnes and Alex Osborn, who presented the concept of brainstorming as a creative problem-solving method.

NOLLER'S FORMULA

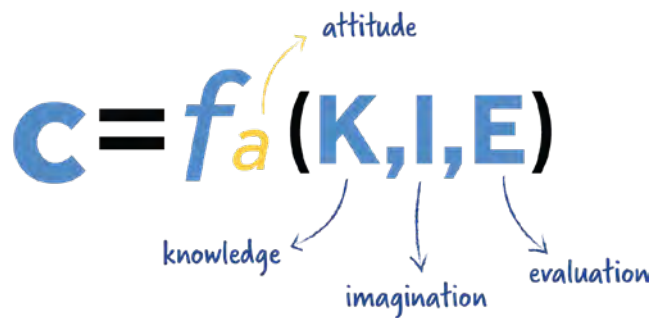


Figure 5: Noller's formula for creativity

Source: Adapted from Creativity Wake-up (2021)

Noller believed that creativity (C) was the function of three things: knowledge (K), imagination (I), and evaluation (E), and that all of these were amplified by attitude – the all-important (a) in the equation (Isaksen and Treffinger, 2004).

Courage

Sternberg (2022) stated that, despite courage possibly being our most important gift, we are neither born with it nor do we learn to be courageous during our years of formal education. For Sternberg, courage is an active choice that one makes deliberately and, as such, one has to be willing to pay the price that comes with that choice by acting on both words and intentions (Sternberg, 2022).

Curiosity

During a 2018 TED Talk, researchers Spencer Harrison and Jon Cohen indicated that curiosity is a personal 'superpower', referring to children's overload of daily questions, often prefaced with a 'why?' Although curiosity, wonder, and inquisitiveness can diminish as we progress through life, it is possible to explore and enquire throughout our lives (Harrison and Cohen, 2018).

Together, creativity, courage, and curiosity are the essential ingredients that can ignite a spark within us to unlock access to a sea of possibilities, provided we have the courage to act. Each action taken on the journey builds on the next, creating small wins that help to build the confidence we need to pre-empt change.

Evidence of success

The sea of change in project artistry was evident when Henley Business School Africa worked with the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) business school in Johannesburg to deliver the award-winning #unTAP strategic leadership programme for Standard Bank's Leadership Centre of Excellence in 2017.

Example: #unTAP

A fast-paced, 10-day pan-African programme, #unTAP won the EFMD accreditation body's 2020 Excellence in Practice Gold Award for Executive Education. The brief from Standard Bank Group's head of Leadership Effectiveness, Shayne Weideman, was to 'co-create and make magic happen', which is what the bank achieved with its two business school partners (Bouwer, 2020). Following a co-creation process with the client, Henley Business School Africa and GIBS created a programme that introduced delegates to 'design thinking principles in a practical and unique way', incorporating unique immersions, focusing on passion projects, adding peer-to-peer and delegate-to-natural-support team linkages, and injecting storytelling and visual thinking into the process (Standard Bank et al, 2020).



The #unTAP design team also decided to bring a creative into the room. For the client, whose goal was to ensure notable disruption, this was quite a departure from the usual programme design, as it wove in a series of disruptive experiences using unusual facilitators. This approach has since been replicated in other programmes, be it by including an edgy comedian or unique industry expert among the facilitators, or by having participants take part in a drumming circle. Even introducing the work of an unusual artist, whose approach could be harnessed during the prototyping phase, shakes up the programme design.

The impact of the #unTAP programme on the 328 high-potential leaders who participated was measured carefully by Standard Bank, concluding that 99% applied what they had learnt at work; 98% applied learnings in their personal lives; and 69% applied the insights in their communities (Standard Bank et al, 2020). One programme participant observed:

The training was nothing compared to what I first expected. The training was over the top, it was a different level of learning and not just about the work environment but focused on 'self'. It was the best training by far.
(Standard Bank et al, 2020:22)

Acceleration

Since the success of #unTAP, Henley Business School Africa and Standard Bank have collaborated on another award-winning programme, called Acceleration. The customised, one-year executive education programme was designed to fulfil the bank's need for a 'strong African pipeline of succession and talented leaders with the skills and capabilities to effectively lead into the future' (EFMD Global, 2022). Acceleration was awarded silver in the talent development category at the 2022 EFMD Excellence in Practice Awards (JeanR, 2022).

South African government initiatives

South African government bodies, such as the Industrial Development Corporation, have also shown interest in the project artistry approach. Leaders attended a session in September 2022 to expand their thinking around building a leadership legacy through design thinking by putting their artistic expression to work.

Banking sector

Programmes were successfully run for the Banking Sector Education and Training Authority to conceptualise disruptive action learning projects in order to help shift organisational cultures, build business acumen for creatives, or create and deliver enterprise and supplier development programmes.

Encouraging feedback

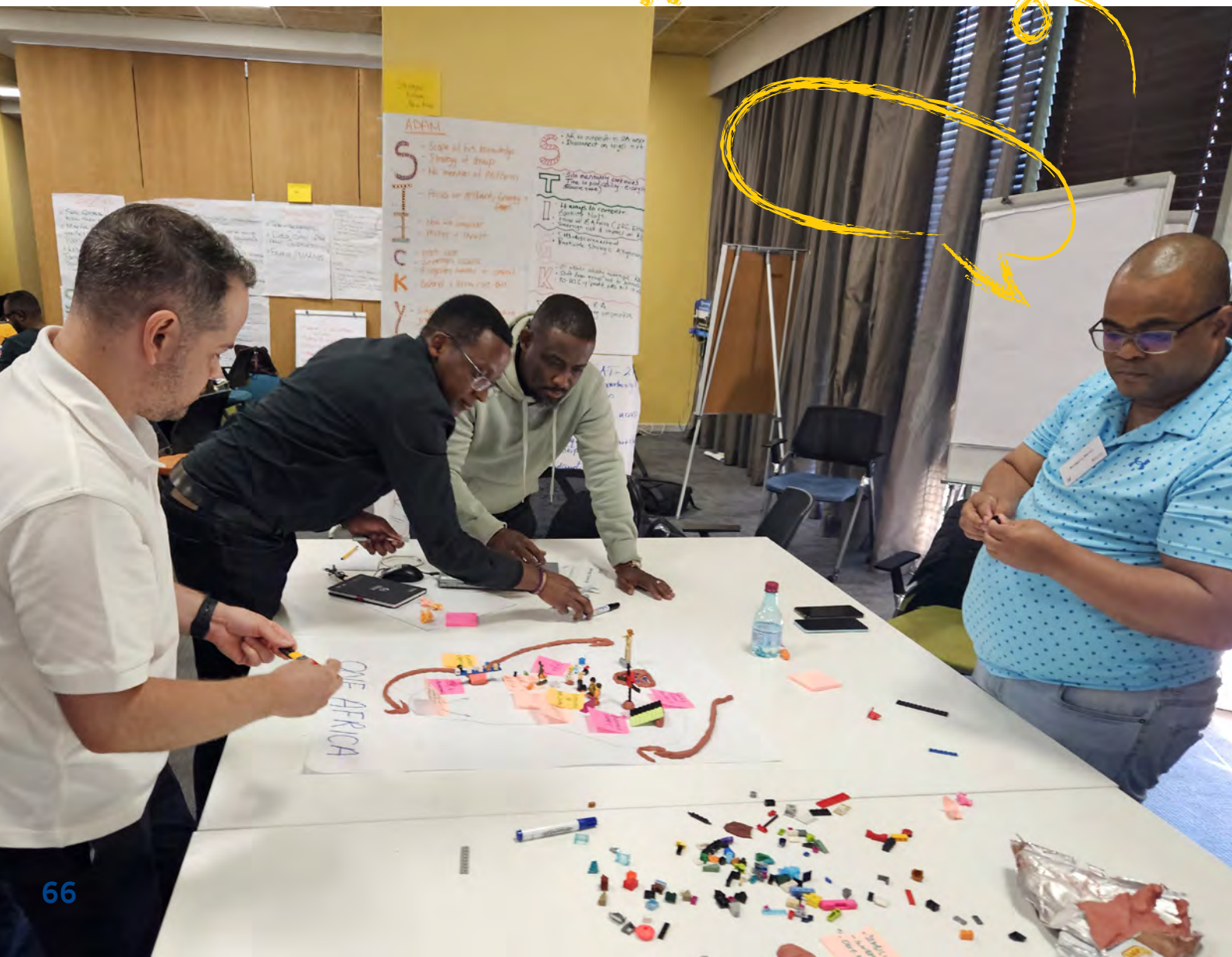
Feedback following these interventions included:

- 'The programme was delivered in a way that I never imagined. It made me feel like a child again where I feel anything is possible through the power of imagination.'
- 'It made me feel vulnerable, scared, uncomfortable ... which is great because those feelings make me want to act and change.'
- 'I thought innovation was difficult.... It is about being open to any idea.... It was about exploring the world.... What a lesson!'
- 'My bubble was certainly popped. The reality of the new world and new ways of working for the future was laid bare. Having fun while we learn and engage.'
- 'Creativity is a way of life. Idea generation is a simple and easy task.'

Opportunity knocks for business schools

While the successful application of project artistry across a range of corporate and executive education programmes highlighted the value of applying a creativity and design thinking approach to leadership development, a pertinent question remains: *'How are business schools and educational institutions around the world incorporating this approach into their organisations, curriculum design, and pedagogy?'*

According to Heiman and Burnett (2007: 11), 'For design thinking to permeate, an organisation requires an environment different from the traditional work or educational environment.' Subsequently, institutions tasked with developing current and future leaders should also embrace thinking that equips leaders with a 'more exploratory skill set' that encompasses reasoning, creativity, openness, and willingness to experiment and innovate. The mix of relevant skills and abilities can be developed using a method that draws on design thinking and other decision-making and problem-solving approaches (Glen et al., 2014).



Conclusion

In 2014, Glen et al. (2014) contributed a review to the debate around incorporating design thinking into business school education. The authors stated:

While business school education equip[s] the students with the functional business knowledge using a pedagogy of lectures and case studies, it is the opportunities provided in practical implementation in the real world challenges where it leaves the students wanting

(Glen et al., 2014: 3)

They advocated for making project-based learning part and parcel of the business school experience. They even suggested incorporating this learning across the coveted Master of Business Administration curriculum into subjects like strategic management, which has 'scope for inclusion of adaptive learning' and entrepreneurship, where design thinking applications can be used for 'business modelling and creating prototypes to tap the advantage of feedback to avoid mistakes in actual ventures' (Glen et al., 2014: 4).

Heiman and Burnett (2007: 11) explained:

Within this organizational context, high performance design and innovation outcomes occur when a multidisciplinary team engages in design thinking process by explicitly working with five dimensions of design thinking action: user centered research, prototyping, iteration, critique, and form-giving.

The tenets of design thinking can provide an important competitive advantage when it comes to business (Damian, 2012). However, it should be remembered that the foundations of both design thinking and creative problem-solving are well-established bodies of knowledge, with decades of research across various fields. The world in which business executives operate today is a combination of VUCA, BANI, RUPT, and TUNA influences (Glaeser, 2023), wrapped up in a wealth of 'unknown unknowns'. It simply cannot be business as usual. By combining the undeniable impact of design thinking with creative problem-solving and systems thinking – which underlines the project artistry ethos – the long-term impact of business educational interventions can be enhanced; supporting sustainable leadership skill sets that companies need to remain relevant.

As such, the challenge to business schools and institutions of executive education is to move swiftly with the times to incorporate frameworks like project artistry that have been shown to work effectively in a diversity of sectors, from IT and banking to government and across the industry. Amid the complex world of business, creativity is highly sought after. If business schools are to play a meaningful role in unlocking this human potential, they too need to challenge themselves to change, innovate, and create. If not, can they hope to remain relevant?



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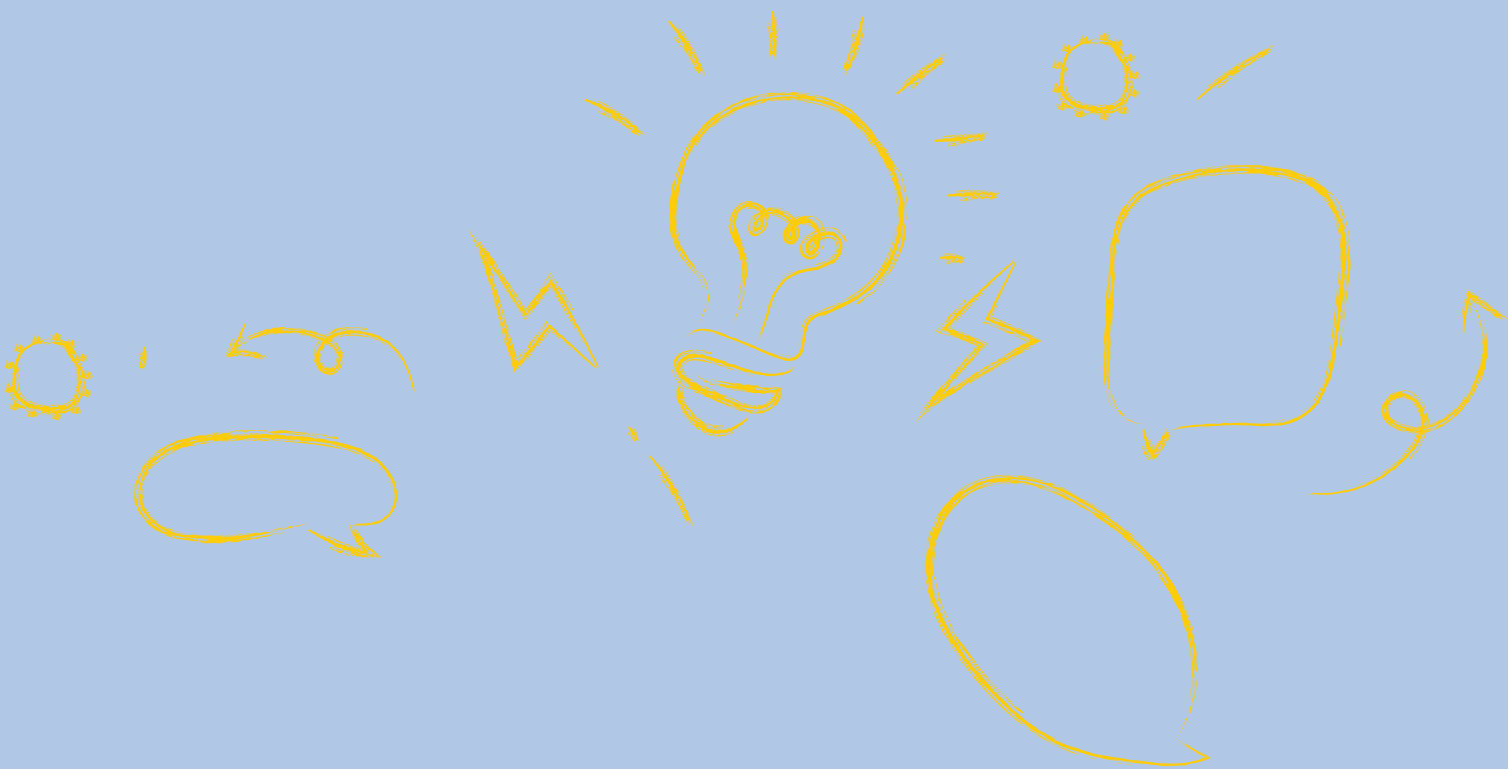
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