



Happy New Year
from
The Jump Network

***Leadership Strategy, Talent Management,
Organisational Design***

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Somebody suggested we deliver our year-end newsletter by drone, but we couldn't agree commercial terms with Jeff Bezos, and getting air traffic clearance was a nightmare. So we've resorted to old-fashioned email to share a few ideas and thoughts for leading your business in 2014.

Joking aside, the latest ideas from Amazon demonstrate that leadership and creativity are still at the heart of great businesses. Bezos' latest forays into technology and convergence have simultaneously excited consumers, confounded the analysts and scared the Pentagon. And as far as leadership goes, if you're curious about how Jeff and his team come up with their new ideas, pick up *The Everything Store*, a fascinating romp through how the geek-turned-engineer-turned-Wall-Street-wiz has created the biggest e-commerce empire in history. Bezos, along with Larry Ellison of Oracle and the late Steve Jobs of Apple, all share a curious mix of visionary technologist, driven entrepreneur and extreme outsider that typifies our 20th Century Silicon Valley entrepreneurs. Intriguingly, all three are also adopted children.

Across the Atlantic and further South, another world figure reminded us about leadership through his recent passing. Nelson Mandela embodied so many attributes associated with great leadership that he had become the de-facto gold standard for MBA classes, aspiring politicians, and media pundits everywhere. The celebrated South African author and Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer provided perhaps the most insightful summary of his attributes during a characteristically courageous TV interview shortly after his death. Mandela's friend and contemporary, who had witnessed his trial, boldly challenged other African and world leaders to act on rather than simply appropriate his messages. "No political leader since Mandela," she said, "has shown the stature, vision or integrity equal to what he had."

Gordimer's characterisation of Mandela has to be one of the best and most succinct recent definitions of leadership: Stature – having personal commitment and focus. Vision – being future focused and thinking creatively. And Integrity – showing honesty, self-awareness and constancy with a clear set of personal values. Not easy to aspire to and even more difficult to put into practice, but a simple moral compass and a great test for all of us to apply to ourselves as we reflect on our leadership aspirations for 2014.

For another take on leadership, witness the recent Phoenix-like resurrection of Bob Diamond from the ashes of Barclays Capital. Kicking off a new venture aimed at the growing financial consumer class in sub-Saharan Africa, Diamond remains as polarising as Dick Fuld of Lehman Brothers or Lloyd Blankfein of Goldman Sachs. Reviled by some and admired by others, these men typify another style of leadership that nevertheless creates an impact in

their own unique way. But when Christine Lagarde said things would have been different had they been called Lehman Sisters, she may have been onto something.

But whatever leadership style you admire - from Silicon Valley to Wall Street or Robben Island – each of us has to make choices about our own journey and then take steps to realise our aspirations. So to help you think more about what kind of leader you want to be 2014, here are three suggestions.

1. Innovate

Remaining agile and adaptable to the shifting landscape of life and business remains a top priority for most leaders we talk to. The consultants have coined a number of nifty terms around this theme - Learning Agility, so-called Ambidextrous Organisations, Innovation Labs and good old-fashioned Skunkworks. Whatever you call it, keeping some part of your enterprise creative in 2014 is a good idea. For a great read on the subject, see the recently published “Creative Confidence: Unleashing the Creative Potential Within Us All” by brothers David and Tom Kelly, founders of the legendary IDEO design consultancy that pioneered gadgets such as the Apple mouse.

Innovation is not just about making new things, but also about adopting new thinking into wider notions of creativity and diversity. This leads to some interesting ideas, with a neat example coming from the recent Harvard Business Review article which defines innovation as the result of “Diversity Squared”, where $D^2 = (\text{Inherent Diversity}) \times (\text{Acquired Diversity})$. So a deliberately developed sense of curiosity, which looks for differences and possibilities across people, ideas, and environments, can be a powerful source for the new. Indeed, a senior executive recently summarised his guidance to a group of newly promoted country managers as simply: “Stay curious”.

What are your own innovation strategies for 2014?

2. Integrate

For many of us, interconnectedness has become more of a disabler than an enabler, as we struggle against the tide of always-on messages, alerts, requests and updates. Though exponentially accelerated by technology, this problem is in fact not new. Herbert Simon, the Nobel Laureate Economist, said with prescience back in 1971: “Information consumes attention; hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.”

But managed well, being connected and networked can vastly improve our productivity and free up our energy for other things. There is increasing evidence that purposeful and thoughtful connections inside and outside the workplace make for more effective leaders. Rob Cross at the University of Virginia has been pioneering organisational network analysis for years and continues to show how leaders with intentional connections who operate effective “Nodes” in a network get things done faster and with more sustainable results. Closer to home at the London Business School, Lynda Gratton’s future of work FoW-labs have been connecting groups in organisations to accelerate idea sharing ever since her original Hotspots movement began back in 2007. Other popular programmes run by consultants and business schools include executive visits to companies in adjacent industries for “Ideas Exchanges” or mixing business and the arts to uncover new insights and connections.

Setting up your own Nodes, Labs and Exchanges has never been easier with enterprise social networks such as Yammer or any number of Apps and social platforms available within or across organisations.

How will you integrate your own network and connect your organisation more in 2014?

3. Instigate

The Roman philosopher Seneca was fond of quoting the Oracle at Delphi: "Know Thyself". Self-awareness has come a long way with social science, psychometrics and coaching replacing the old Oracles. But knowing yourself and finding a clear personal path that reflects your values and plays to your strengths will surely make you a more effective leader. A strong sense of purpose and clarity about who we are helps us make the changes we need and promote the ideas we believe in.

These practices are rapidly becoming more mainstream too: "Mindfulness" is now a standard topic for many MBAs from Harvard to IMD, where professors talk of "calming the mind and increasing focus". Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and Storytelling have gained renewed currency as tools for strategic change in major organisations. And in a recent Harvard Business Review article, Ram Charan identified three key traits required for focus and better decision making: "Perceptual Acuity, Qualitative Judgment, and Credibility". He also says: "Don't be a wimp, make the tough calls." Wise words which also require some strong personal focus.

For a different take on purposeful leadership, Dr. Mee Yang Judge writes eloquently about "Self as Instrument", building on earlier ideas by Edgar Schien at MIT on leadership and change. Take a look at Mee Yang's blog for more on how to create sustainable change in organisations, the role of the leader as agent, and other thought-provoking ideas.

What is your sense of personal agency and what will you instigate in 2014?

Hopefully these questions will be useful as you emerge from your Christmas festivities and ponder that daunting list of New Year's resolutions.

Finally, we end our newsletter once again with the Annual Washington Post neologism contest, in which readers are asked to supply alternative meanings for common words, changing just one or two letters. Here is our top three list of silly words created by smart people:

For the brainy and analytical -

Densa: A club whose secret password is "It's me."

For the mystical and curious -

Doltergeist: A spirit that decides to haunt someplace stupid, such as your septic tank.

And for the eco-conscious and globally aware -

Bozone: The substance surrounding stupid people that stops bright ideas getting through. This bozone layer, unfortunately, shows little sign of breaking down in the near future.

Happy New Year!

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2013 Selected Client List

ABNAMRO
BBC
Bausch & Lomb
Dyson
France Telecom / Orange
Jardine Lloyd Thomson
M&G Investments
Millicom / Tigo
Novartis
Orange
Oxford Instruments
Rolls Royce

2013 Partnerships & Affiliations

Corporate Research Forum – www.crforum.co.uk
Nexus Training – www.nexus-ww.com
NTL Institute – www.ntl.org
Quality & Equality – www.quality-equality.com

Creative Enterprises

World Health Organisation Medical Documentary – www.who.int/tdr
Educational Ventures in Vietnam, Honduras & Ethiopia – www.childrensinitiative.org
World Photography Workshops & Events – www.explorenation.net
Music, Art & Dance Photography – www.andycraggs.com

Selected References

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David & Tom Kelly, published September 2013 by William Collins

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M.Y. Cheung-Judge and L. Holbeche, published April 2011 by Kogan Page

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