



5 Minute Strategic Mindset

Your weekly dose of subtle disquiet



Here's my list of what I'm enjoying, or is inspiring me this week.

A quote that made me think

"Learning occurs between a fear and a need" *Fred Kofman and Peter Senge.*

An idea that struck me

Envato is the "Netflix for designers", a marketplace that brings together buyers and sellers of design assets. Yes, old school stuff like templates, fonts and visuals, but also cutting edge products like Wordpress templates, video sequences and web code. They're one of Australia's fastest growing small companies, based in Melbourne, revenues are north of \$100m, and they profit-share (generously) with employees.

Their company culture is not unique, but it is distinctive, as it's built from one foundation: "Question the status quo, then put a lot of planning in place". Envato's entire setup is based on interrogating everyday expectations about how a business should run, asking questions like "Do [workers] need to be in an office? Do they need to be in at certain times?", and then creating the best fit to get the job done.

Question: "Which everyday expectations are you interrogating in your business?"

A book I'm loving

There are three levels of consultants: experts, thought leaders, and philosophers. The first are most common and go about applying their skills to solve a client's problem. These mostly remain unknown publicly. The thought leaders are known for their body of work. This attracts clients to them and, for this, they are known widely within their sector. The philosophers are rarities, whose insights apply beyond their sphere of expertise, and their impact well beyond their lifetime. It's the latter group about whom Andrea Gabor has written in her wonderful book, "**The Capitalist Philosophers**".

She covers off how Frederick W Taylor brought measurement to management in the early 1900s, how W Edwards Deming's upbringing in a tar paper shack in Ohio winters created an obsession with frugality (and hence, his unshakeable belief in what we know today as 'quality assurance'), and how German emigre Peter Drucker's advising of the largest US post-war corporations (GM and GE) paved the scaling up of enterprises that are the bedrock of today's world (in everything from retail to media to technology). If you doubt that, reflect on this: The top 100 firms in the USA are responsible for 50% of that country's GDP — a share that has increased from 30% in 1994. But, the majority of today's Fortune 100 are different companies to those in 1994!

Question: If you're in business or government, whose thought leadership informs you most? And, which 'philosophers' are you listening to?

An idea that I've been pondering this week

Unspoken customs. Google is renowned for solving problems using big data. '**Project Aristotle**' asked, "Can we codify the secrets to team effectiveness?" They started from a hypothesis that capability (Google is bristling with PhDs after all) was key — and, after a year, Google's people analytics leader, Julia Rozovsky, reported back, "We were dead wrong". The most productive hypothesis, instead, was that group norms play the most powerful part in success. They've identified five norms, or unspoken customs, that are evident in the most successful of 180 Google teams: (i) dependability ("We get things done, on time, and to expectations"); (ii) structure and clarity ("We have well-defined roles and goals"); (iii) meaning ("Our work is significant to each member"); (iv) impact ("Our work positively affects the greater good"); and (v) psychological safety ("We can safely voice our opinions"). My observation is that none of these are 'fluffy' norms (like 'respect' or 'collaboration') but quite concrete and easily measurable.

Question: "How would your immediate team rate on each of these unspoken customs?"

And, please send me your feedback by email to ah@workwell.com.au
Which bullet above is your favourite? What do you want more or less of?
Other suggestions? Let me know!

Have a wonderful weekend.

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