Nordic Business Forum *2015*

Executive Summary

by NORDIC Business Report

Who got the best review of the NBForum2015 speakers?
See on page 4

Arianna Huffington
The Brave New World of the "New Media" 7

Guy Kawasaki
The Art of Disruption 9

Simon Sinek
Leaders Eat Last 11

Table of Contents

- Intro
- Speaker Ratings

JOHN C. MAXWELL
Good Leaders Ask Great Questions

JOHN C. MAXWELL
Great Leaders Never Walk Alone

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON
The Brave New World of the "New Media"

NILOFER MERCHANT
Success Formula for Leading in the Social Era

GUY KAWASAKI
The Art of Disruption

GARRY KASPAROV
A Seasonal Shift in History

SIMON SINEK
Leaders Eat Last

METTE LYKKE
Disruption, Passion and Risk

KEITH CUNNINGHAM
The Drivers of Performance

GARRY KASPAROV
Taking Risks Pays Off

- Sponsors
- See you in 2016!

Introduction

Nordic Business Forum 2015 – IMPACT
October 1–2, 2015 Exhibition & Convention Center, Helsinki, Finland

Nordic Business Forum 2015 gathered over 5,500 business executives and owners from over 25 nationalities for two days of business festivities in Helsinki. The world's top business minds rocked the stage within the themes of strategy, disruption and influence. Combining the full audience in Helsinki and several thousand people following the event's live stream around the world, this was the biggest audience any single Nordic Business Forum event has ever reached.

This Executive Summary takes you through the presentations and offers you the keypoints from each speaker*. In addition to the summaries, we wanted to provide you with a closer look at the communicational overview of the presentations. These analyses were produced by an expert panel, put together by the communications agency Voimisto. In addition to skillfully delivered monologue, the panel's assessment criteria consisted of categories such as targeting & interaction with the audience, argumentation & content related skills, consistency & structure. Panel members: Joona Koskela, Kaisa Laitinen, Henri Pitkänen, Heidi Rantala, Olli Vainio.

The visual summaries from the presentations were drawn by Linda Saukko-Rauta.

** Excluding a summary of the discussion with Ben Bernanke and Björn Wahlroos due to speakers' publication policies.*

Speaker Ratings

The speakers of Nordic Business Forum 2015 were graded by the event attendees on a scale 1–6 (1=weak, 6=excellent). The rating is based on 1,850 answers.

5.20
JOHN C. MAXWELL

4.03
ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

4.36
NILOFER MERCHANT

5.63
GUY KAWASAKI

5.65
SIMON SINEK

4.40
METTE LYKKE

4.63
KEITH CUNNINGHAM

4.09
GARRY KASPAROV

4.71
BEN BERNANKE

4.64
BJÖRN WAHLROOS

JOHN C. MAXWELL

Good Leaders Ask Great Questions

JUKKA NIEMELÄ

False assumptions can lead to leadership disasters, but luckily wrong assumptions can be tackled if one is willing to ask the right questions.

- Best way to lead people is with questions
- Don't lead by assumption
- It's about the leader finding the followers
- How can I make my team better?
- Everything rises and falls on leadership
- Be intentional!
- Have a growth plan
- Invest in the right people
- Questions followers should ask leaders

I am privileged to sit on one of the front rows listening to **Mr. John C. Maxwell** giving the 1,100 VIP guests an awesome kick-start presentation for the Nordic Business Forum 2015 seminar. A man who has written over 70 books and sold a stunning 25 million copies and more, sits comfortably and tells a few funny stories before commencing his address.

Best way to lead people is with questions

Having been sitting in the Nordic Business Forum audience for several years, I tend to wonder whether there really is anything more to cover. When this year's main moderator, Swedish public speaker and trainer **Antoni Lacinai** asked Maxwell why he chose this topic from among all the possible options he briefly explained how most people understand leading people, and continued that, "I think the greatest way to lead people is through questions." Most certainly this is a fresh and interesting angle!

Don't lead by assumption

"I want to tell you two stories that open up everything about why you and I as leaders should ask questions," he starts. With enthusiasm, Maxwell jumps up from his chair and starts drawing as he tells the first story. In this narrative, the basketball coach has invited Maxwell to the locker room during the halftime break to see how she handles the team. "Now here's where it gets interesting," he says and explains that the coaches leave the players and go to an adjoining room. The players have a blank marker board showing only three topics: What did we do right? What did we do wrong? What do we need to change? One of the players wrote 2–3 things under each topic in about five minutes. After this the coach walks into the locker room, looks at the answers and gives a couple of comments – this in about three minutes. When Maxwell later asked the coach what was behind the exercise, he got an interesting answer.

During the first two years the coach was not successful. She told Maxwell that she was leading by assumption. The coach had thought that she and her players were on the same page, which ultimately wasn't true. Maxwell concludes the lesson, saying, "Before you and I can lead people, we have to find them."

It's about the leader finding the followers

Maxwell creates a stunned silence by saying that leading people is not about the followers finding the leader, but the leader finding the followers. I have to say, Maxwell is a master of rhetoric. Although he is speaking about the things many leaders already know, he throws in statements that force you to stop and think. To be a great leader, you have to find the people first. You have to know where they are to take them where they are going. That was what the basketball coach's halftime exercise was all about. Finding out what her players were thinking. Maxwell reminds that, "You have to lead the people from the perspective of the people who are following you."

TOP

How can I make my team better?

Maxwell starts to tell another story, this time about the greatest art of asking questions. There's another basketball coach, who has achieved records that will never be broken. The coach kept on asking himself one single question every day. Every single day. Maxwell teases and amuses the audience by not telling the question right away – but soon reveals the secret. "How can I make my team better?," he says the coach asked every day. Now, this might sound like a hard question, but the coach found the answer. He had to become better every day. Of course! These are the kinds of ideas that seem obvious, but you might not think about nor realize them until someone like Maxwell throws them at you. Being a business and people leader, you have to become better every day.

Everything rises and falls on leadership

Most certainly Maxwell knows what he is talking about. With his five companies, outstanding book sale record and a career spanning 40-plus years, we are looking at a man who knows leadership. With enthusiasm he explains that everything rises and falls on leadership, no matter if it is a country, a culture, education, business, religion or anything else in that matter. History has proven him right.

Be intentional!

Maxwell says a good leader is always investing in himself to be able to help others grow. He says that as a leader you cannot give what you don't have. Furthermore, the best way to grow a company is to grow the leaders of the company. After a couple of minutes Maxwell drops the silencer again: be intentional. I noticed the majority of the audience nodded towards their notebook, for a reason. He continues about being intentional and tells that nobody has ever built a company on good intentions. Nobody ever did anything significant on good intentions. In fact, there's a whole world of difference between people with good intentions and those who live intentionally. The key is when good intentions turn into good actions. If you don't live intentionally, you will never maximize your potential. That is somewhat scary, at least for me.

Have a growth plan

At the age of 68, Maxwell still has a personal growth plan. In fact, he pulls a card out of his pocket and says he wrote that very card over 40 years ago. He presents the 10 points from the card while the audience is eagerly taking notes and learning every possible bit from him. Every point starts with "a growth environment is a place where…." At this point I wonder how many people in the world have such a concrete plan and keep it in their pocket unchanged for over 40 years.

Invest in the right people

If you remember **Jim Collins'** presentation from Nordic Business Forum 2014, you remember that a leader needs to have the right people on the bus. Maxwell takes it a step further and urges us to ask if we are investing in the right people. He says that followers expect their leaders to give them energy, time and thinking. The challenge is that a leader cannot equally invest in everybody. So, how would you know if the person to invest is the right one? Maxwell's principle is that you should do for one something that you wish you could do for many. He pulls out and explains in detail the series of questions that help him decide who is the right person to invest in. Questions cover the person's influence, capacity, attitude, chemistry, passion, character, values, teamwork and creativity factors. Maxwell reminds us that good leaders are interested in people. Some even love them.

Questions followers should ask leaders

Towards the end Maxwell pulls more aces from his sleeve. During the last very minutes he presents three questions followers should ask their leaders regardless of the country or the culture; 1) Do you like me? 2) Can you help me? 3) Do you trust me? People follow leaders who can help them grow. Maxwell concludes his presentation by reminding every leader to turn the questions around and ask: Do I love people? Can I help them? Am I trustworthy? That should either give three yes's or generate a personal growth plan. What about you?

TOP

JOHN C. MAXWELL

Great Leaders Never Walk Alone

DENISE WALL

Maxwell served as the voice of experience using stories to explain his laws of leadership.

- Leadership sustains a company in difficult times
- Leading by example and the multiplier effect
- What good leadership is not
- Communicational overview

Why does leadership matter? Because it ultimately defines the level of success that any company or organization will achieve. Leadership guru John C. Maxwell argues that what he calls a fundamental law is true of public, private or religious organizations in any country or culture. Max well offered a five-step roadmap to great leadership as he opened the sixth annual Nordic Business Forum in Helsinki.

"He that thinketh he leadeth when no one is following, is merely taking a walk."

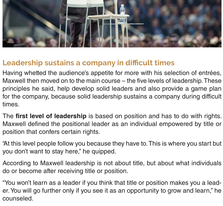
In an engaging address peppered with many anecdotes and witticisms, leadership wizard John C. Maxwell introduced participants at Nordic Business Forum 2015 to what he described as the five levels of leadership.

The proud grandfather and prolific bestselling author of more than 70 books by his own reckoning, Maxwell referenced one of his top movers, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* and shared two commandments, which he described as the foundation laws of leadership.

The first is the law of the lid. According to Maxwell, the lid determines how well an individual will succeed as a leader. The concept essentially means that the level of leadership determines the heights to which leaders can build their business. Business success will go no further than the level of leadership, Maxwell explained. As an individual's leadership lid rises however, it becomes possible to take the company upwards at the same time.

"All rises and falls with leadership, whether it be in business, government, or religion – it's universal. History backs that up," the blue-chip coach declared.

Maxwell's second fundamental law of leadership is the law of process. Leaders develop daily, not in a day, he said, in one of the many arguments he used during his address. It takes time and effort to become a good leader – there are no quick fixes and is not the business of a single lecture or book.



Leadership sustains a company in difficult times

Having whetted the audience's appetite for more with his selection of entrées, Maxwell then moved on to the main course – the five levels of leadership. These principles he said, help develop solid leaders and also provide a game plan for the company, because **solid leadership sustains a company during difficult times.**

The **first level of leadership** is based on position and has to do with rights. Maxwell defined the positional leader as an individual empowered by title or position that confers certain rights.

"At this level people follow you because they have to. This is where you start but you don't want to stay here," he quipped.

According to Maxwell leadership is not about title, but about what individuals do or become after receiving title or position.

"You won't learn as a leader if you think that title or position makes you a leader. You will go further only if you see it as an opportunity to grow and learn," he counselled.

Maxwell noted that level 1 leaders get little effort or energy from their teams. Instead people are usually only interested in the minimum effort required to get by. Positional leaders don't get the best out of their people, he warned.

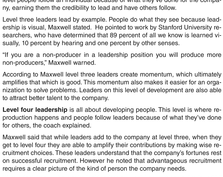
The **second level of leadership** is permission-based and is all about relationships.

"People follow you because they want to," the global leadership trainer added.

Level two leaders can infuse their people with energy and usually have three key strengths.

1. They **listen**. This provides leaders with cues and can create a virtuous cycle in which they listen, learn and lead continuously. It is also important to ask good questions and connect with people.
2. They **observe**. They watch their people to get information from their behavior. This is why culture is greater than vision because culture determines what you are, and what you are determines where you go.
3. They **serve** well. Servant leaders are the opposite of level one, positional leaders. A servant leader asks questions, whereas a positional leader gives instructions.

^ TOP



Leading by example and the multiplier effect

Level three leadership is based on production and is all about results. On this level people follow an individual because of what they've done for the company, by earning them the credibility to lead and have others follow.

Level three leaders lead by example. People do what they see because leadership is visual, Maxwell stated. He pointed to work by Stanford University researchers, who have determined that 89 percent of all we know is learned visually, 10 percent by hearing and one percent by other senses.

"If you are a non-producer in a leadership position you will produce more non-producers," Maxwell warned.

According to Maxwell level three leaders create momentum, which ultimately amplifies that which is good. This momentum also makes it easier for an organization to solve problems. Leaders on this level of development are also able to attract better talent to the company.

Level four leadership is all about developing people. This level is where reproduction happens and people follow leaders because of what they've done for others, the coach explained.

Maxwell said that while leaders add to the company at level three, when they get to level four they are able to amplify their contributions by making wise recruitment choices. These leaders understand that the company's fortunes rest on successful recruitment. However he noted that advantageous recruitment requires a clear picture of the kind of person the company needs.

"If you don't know what you're looking for you won't know when you've found it."

Level four leaders are also able to position people where their strengths will be most valuable and are able to equip their people well. Maxwell explained that equipping recruits entailed five principles.

1. You must **do it well yourself** because like begets like.
2. I do it and you do it with me – this requires leaders to make themselves available to others.
3. You do it and I'm with you – this is where you've got the ball and I follow and coach you.
4. You go and do it yourself – this is where the addition kicks in as another person learns key skills.
5. You do it and someone else is with you. You need a plan for replicating this process so that it has no end. This is about multiplication.

Maxwell described level five as the pinnacle of leadership, where the key word is respect. People respect these leaders because of who they are and what they represent. He said that pinnacle leaders serve the organization in a number of ways.

They help lift the lid of the organization by facilitating growth for others and creating a pipeline of new leaders. These new leaders are essential to maintain the growth and success of the organization.

They also create a legacy in the organization by ensuring continuity from one leader to another.

What good leadership is not

In addition to *enlightening the audience about the characteristics of good leadership and how to achieve it*, Maxwell also provided useful signposts to mark points at which leaders have strayed from the path.

1. Leadership is not a quick process. What Maxwell calls "microwave leadership programs" only produce so-called "pop-tart leaders"
2. Leadership is not a program. It's a continuous process that starts with culture and requires intentional action
3. Leadership is not about title or position. If you have to tell people you're a leader you're not one.
4. Leadership doesn't involve being "lonely at the top".If you're at the top of a mountain alone, you're not a leader, you're a hiker, Maxwell remarked.
5. Leadership is not about telling people what to do, but about showing them and leading by example. Don't aim to be a travel agent leader who sends people to places they've never been. Aim to be a tour guide leader who takes people to places they're already visited themselves.
6. Leadership is not about being insecure. Insecure leaders don't hire people who are better than they are. A good leader wants to add to the value of the company by hiring the best.

Maxwell's fundamental message is that leadership is an ongoing and iterative process in which people listen, observe, learn, produce and serve as they grow. The rewards are abundant on the personal and company-wide level, because great leaders are able to multiply the effects of their positive impact and ultimately take the company towards new levels of growth.

Communicational overview

John was our friend. After John C. Maxwell's presentation we left the room with the memory of an intimate leadership session with Maxwell and the person to our left. Digging a little deeper we found out what made our time with Maxwell so compelling, convincing and influential. As the main subject of his well constructed and targeted (if a little long) keynote, the topic of influence really had an impact.

Right from his first moments on stage, John Maxwell told us stories and gave us an extensive amount of personal information, building trust with his audience and motivating us to listen closely. Expressions like "this is just for you..." and "I'm going to tell you..." built contact with the audience and made the content of the keynote feel truly personal. Maxwell's use of humor could almost be described as stand-up, whilst his descriptive and demonstrational, albeit occasionally rambling, storytelling kept us constantly curious and wanting more. Maxwell's emotional stories created a warm and cozy atmosphere where we could all relax and immerse ourselves in the wisdom and authority of our leadership expert.

Stories stories stories... The keynote was in fact constructed using stories to support the key points, interspersed with credible facts. Sometimes the stories took us a bit further away from the actual subject but most of the time those took us even deeper into the levels of leadership and the importance of creating your game plan to reach the next level. The eloquent combination of examples and core facts came together as a coherent and consistent composition. Constant referral to both the previous and forthcoming sections, alongside the competent use of both verbal and nonverbal transitions, kept the audience on the same page with the speaker throughout the entire keynote. The balance between the keynote sections and the different levels of influence, for example, could have been more even as some of the levels received a more thorough treatment than others.

Using only one slide in the whole hour and a half, one could say that the imagery created by Maxwell's skillful oratory was the only visual aid required. As he stated himself, all we had to do was to "visualize" the contents right in front of our eyes. The compelling stories and the descriptive and talented use of both verbal and especially nonverbal cues created a lasting memory of a low level leader slapping against the leadership lid. The diverse and dynamic use of his voice, ranging from a whisper to a shout, supported the content in a persuasive way as did the effective use of repetition and pauses to emphasize the main points.

Highlights:

- superb use of voice
- overall storytelling ability

Questions:

- Did the stories sometimes take the listeners too far from the actual topic?
- Could the keynote sections have been timed more evenly?

Nordic Business Forum 2015
John C. MAXWELL
THE FIVE LEVELS OF INFLUENCE
Law of the Lid
Law of the Process
HOW TO BECOME a better leader
POSITION
PERMISSION
PRODUCTION
PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT
PINNACLE
RIGHTS
RELATIONSHIPS
RESULTS
RESPECT
ZERO
Nobody leads
Law of Lead
Law of Influence
Law of Navigation
Law of Addition
Law of Multiplication
Law of Leadership
Law of Intuition
Law of Priorities
Law of Timing
Law of Sacrifice

ARIANNA HUFFINGTON

The Brave New World of the Thriver's Mindset

JENNIFER SCHUCKALLA

Forget the old saying: "If it bleeds, it leads. It leads to smart business.

- Engagement for life
- It's a lifestyle thing
- The positive dominance
- Leadership is a responsibility
- Lead the change
- Sleep. Don't sari
- Journalism of the people, for the people, and by the people
- Huffington Post Japan
- Communicational overview

We are the nuts of Hierarchy crossing the Nordic Business Forum audience to hear Arianna Huffington talk about her journey from a burnout to a thriver. Huffington released into what felt like a cozy chat with the audience by coming voice with the gentle, rolling tones of her soft Greek accent that the audience could easily relate to. Huffington's journey was a journey of finding "the bare of [her] existence," as she described it, her ascent was an embodiment of her authenticity.

Engagement for life

Huffington begins with a complitment and a challenge. She says she is here talk to group of entrepreneurs, a group she is really excited to engage in because "entrepreneurship is the ultimate form of engagement." Engagement is important thing – not only for media but for businesses too, or engagement. She is here to show how the media has changed and made it possible for the to happen."We don't just consume news, we pass it on, we add to it, we share it, we like it, we comment on it, we become part of the story." Engagement is also engage with the content, but it's also about cases that the Huffington Post was founded, developing a way to make freedom and openness as asset, as Huffington says, "Freedom of the press belongs to those who own one." Freedom is also from the kind of web, whether so-called "free" or not, that tracks everything they were online about.

Engagement and engaged values are still highly valued, such as investigative reporting, fairness and accuracy, freedom of the press and freedom of speech, open dialogue and multiple perspectives. Anyone can contribute, from President to homeless teenager.

It's a lifestyle thing

The audience shifts slightly in their seats, responding to Huffington's change in tempo. Subconsciously we recognize we're moving onto a topic of real concern, a topic that is hard to talk about, a topic we don't want to talk about, a topic that is subjects of the non-done. She is fully aware of the reaction she is getting from both across the globe and for her listen audience. "I know it's a big leap here to talk about the fact that we are burning out and that we are sleeping less and achievement is in the morning," Lee shows being as a reaction. It was perceived as doubtful life is a central tenet of the Huffington Post. Do we define success just by money and power? Or do we define success by our ability to live our lives with – sooner or later you fall off. The thriver's mindset is a mindset that recognizes that we have defined it, institutes not only everything but also wisdom and wonder, and that we are ready to lead with our hearts and our intuition.

She recognizes and acknowledges the inevitability of the phenomenon of sleep deprivation and multiple perspectives. Anyone can contribute, from President to homeless teenager.

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She recognizes and acknowledges the inevitability of the phenomenon of sleep deprivation and multiple perspectives. Anyone can contribute, from President to homeless teenager.

The positive dominance

Many who follow Arianna Huffington's work will be forgiven for thinking the world is a horrible place. Huffington and the guys at Huffington Post are so connected to the negative aspects of our lives, the negative aspects of our world, that it's easy something about it. The Wharton Working seminar of the Huffington Post is, as Huffington puts it, their "attempt to be imaginary journalism." As she points out, "Most of the news we read is about what's wrong with the world, but what's right? All the Huffington Post has ever trying to put a spotlight on the constructive things people are doing to solve problems around the world. They may be ideas that are small, but they are ideas that are transformative, and they are ideas that could be realistically introduced. They have been compared to another blog which section called, "Good News," but Huffington says she expressed you can go there and feel optimistic about the world and human nature again." A real campaign to put positivity back on an equal footing.

Responsibility/Leadership

As Huffington has already stated, responsible journalism is an important value and a cornerstone of the Huffington Post. Responsible journalism is a value that Huffington has taken into the "entertainment" sphere. She says, in an interview that "media are giving him way too much attention because he is very entertaining." Huffington is also a fan of Donald Trump's entertainment value. "Neither we commonly discussed numbers or we are not discussed enough," she said. "But, I"ve just a candidate here in Finland, and... believed the earth is round." Huffington is also a fan of Donald Trump's entertainment value. Huffington, Bill (President) Obama is a fan of Donald Trump's entertainment value. Obama is equally illegitimate."

Huffington's sense of responsibility that Huffington holders all the Huffington Post goes even further. As more than "just the old observers," the Huffington Post contributors are "the people who are the ones who are actually on the ground, actually true of their political coverage, which is entitled, "Beyond Left and Right." There is a need to share all the obstacles and old preconceptions about how the world works. Huffington Post wanted to be a place where people can find a fact-based discussion.

Lead the change

"For me one of the most important aspects of leadership is how do you avoid the contagion being felt by the Thriver?"

Being prepared and engaged in change is a vital driver of the Huffington Post's success. For Huffington, it's not possible to "future proof your business. However, "I think it's, I think it's, I think it's, I think it's important to be prepared and to be a work in progress." Being in a great example of an industry that didn't seize the opportunity for change, leaving a vacuum to be filled by the Huffington Post, Huffington recognizes that "the traditional media, the media that didn't, they "neither we commonly discussed numbers or we are not discussed enough." The changes she tries to incorporate into the workplace are an extension of this mindset. She tries to "bring in people who are not like us, who are different." She provides examples of her organization making strides in this area, such as the insurance company ICANN. Introducing stress-reduction measures into the workplace, such as "nap rooms" and "meditation rooms." Huffington's 60 minutes a week improvement in productivity. Huffington's commitment to the nature of such an approach. Huffington also points out that the "minute these things begin to be measured, it is going to be an accelerated shift."

Sleep. Don't sari

Sleep deprivation and Huffington include areas such as, "what creates stress, questions of productivity, creativity and how are these affected, and what are the cases of customers." Such topics have been covered by the Huffington Post for years, and Huffington's commitment to sleep deprivation is well known. In the pages of business magazines, the Harvard Business Review, the Wall Street Journal, the Economist [etc] When it comes to sleep deprivation Huffington is well known for her stance. Her stance on sleep deprivation is well known and has been well-publicized. The stance on sleeping is connected to the stress-free way. 8 to 9 of you are entrepreneurs and you know that the most important thing is how you make decisions and how you make them. Huffington says, "I think sleep is the most important thing." She has been quoted that another decision section called, "Good News," [and] anyone who are depressed you can go there and feel optimistic about the world and human nature again." A real campaign to put positivity back on an equal footing.

Journalism of the people, for the people, and by the people

Being in the driving seat of the New Media is the essence of Huffington Post and the ascent of the Huffington Post. The democratization of the media has not only led to the democratization of the world, but it has also led to the democratization of the world to contribute to the way humanity is perceived. The collective contribution might has already highlighted, authentically is no longer a choice. Gone are the days of the monopoly of the media. Gone are the days of the monopoly of the media points in or towards the opportunity for people to engage in the dialogue. She cites the comments section as a connection of what matters the new media. Huffington Post contributors are "the people who are the ones who are actually on the ground, actually true of their political coverage." Huffington Post, she believes, they are challenging people to take ownership for their comments and contributions, and that is a very, very important part of the conversation.

Huffington shares her opinion that the world is facing many challenges. Some fly is terrorism is climate change. Huffington holds an unswerving belief, however, that "the world is not as bad as it looks." The collective contribution of the multinational barriers, there are barriers in terms even in the language we use, "we are not talking about the economy, we are talking about the economy of women." – Alexis so-whatever, she's so driven, which John is so ambitious. It's positive, right?

Ah, ... It's positive for me...

Ah – but for me as a woman it's not positive at all. I think there is something – I think there is something – I think there is something – I think there is something wrong women the ends, the second was going women scissors to the side of the top of every professions, and that's with incongruous. But I think in order to contribute to the conversation, I think it's important to be – I think it's important to be right, the world, you know what, you just want to let it be that the world is the way that it is currently designed, because frankly it was designed by men and for men, and it's not working for women, and it's not working for the planet, and it's not something that's good for women and it's not good for men.

Ah: Somebody asked me one time about the female leadership barrier, and I said I think the number one Darwin's work I just finished, I'm – I'm – I'm – I'm – the insecurity of not allowing women to really grow and develop their place in the world.

Ah: [What] excites you right now in the current media landscape?

Ah: Well what excites me is the fact that everything is changing so fast. [We] are at the beginning of a new media landscape and what I feel about it is the opportunity to re-engage journalism That's the thing that excites me most. I'm very, very, very,

NILOFER MERCHANT

Success Formula for Leading in the Social Era

JUKKA NIEMELÄ

Will leadership in social era require us to unlearn principles we hold as true?

- Leaders need to know two things
- Get ready for change
- Success is about getting others excited
- Connected people are aligned with purpose
- What should big companies do?
- Bonus: pull ideas from your employees
- Communicational overview

Nilofer Merchant, sometimes called the Jane Bond of innovation. Winner of many awards, she is the grande dame behind almost 100 product launches that have rung up an amazing 18 billion US dollars in revenue. A woman to whom **Steve Jobs'** very first word was the f-word. Not "How do you pronounce your name?" or any other common form of chit-chat. Once you hear a person has worked for Jobs, you expect an interesting session.

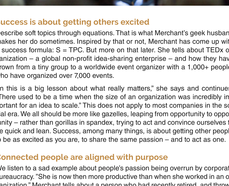
Leaders need to know two things

Back in 1997, Merchant was leading the most profitable product team at Apple. She engineered impressive growth from two million dollars to 180 million dollars in 18 months while other product lines were declining. In a meeting with Jobs and other managers Merchant presented a business plan, hoping to impress Jobs. What happened instead might bother her now. Incensed because of the feedback she received, Merchant ran out of the room and applied for a job with another company. One year later she bumped into her former colleague at Apple who told her that they were following her plan and doing great. At that time she learned something very important: leaders need to know to things. First, they need to run towards the future. Second, they have to manage day-to-day routines. Managing a business is a complex thing. You have to figure out how to invent and hold true.

Get ready for change

Merchant wants the audience to learn one lesson from her experience with Jobs and her presentation. It is not about whether or not the change is going to happen, it is about getting ready for it. It is about unlearning the things we hold as true, it is about running towards the future and not worrying about preserving today.

Merchant then switches her attention to social interaction. She asks the audience to act social for a moment, walks around and talks to some of the guests. The point in this pattern break is to show that being social in the digital era is more than social media. "It is something humans do deeply well," she concludes.



Success is about getting others excited

Describe soft topics through equations. That is what Merchant's geek husband makes her do sometimes. Inspired by that or not, Merchant has come up with a success formula: S = TPC. But more on that later. She tells about TEDx organization – a global non-profit idea-sharing enterprise – and how they have grown from a tiny group to a worldwide event organizer with a 1,000+ people, who have organized over 7,000 events.

"In this is a big lesson about what really matters," she says and continues, "There used to be a time when the size of an organization was incredibly important for an idea to scale." This does not apply to most companies in the social era. We all should be more like gazelles, leaping from opportunity to opportunity – rather than gorillas in spandex, trying to act and convince ourselves to be quick and lean. Success, among many things, is about getting other people to be as excited as you are, to share the same passion – and to act as one.

Connected people are aligned with purpose

We listen to a sad example about people's passion being overrun by corporate bureaucracy. "She is now then more productive than when she worked in an organization." Merchant tells about a person who had recently retired, and throws out a rhetorical question. How many companies actually decrease productivity although they do everything to increase it?

"The thing I keep noticing over and over again is how much connected people can now do that large organizations once could," she says. They are not doing it for money, not because someone has told them to, they do it because they are deeply aligned with purpose. Right, the purpose. I get a flashback of former Nordic Business Forum speaker **Daniel Pink** and the self-determination theory he publicized, which states that motivation centers around autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Merchant says that purpose brings out the best people. Makes sense, *right?*

She now gets back to the success formula: T = Talent; is it inherent or based on credentials? P = Purpose; are you working for meaning or money? C = Culture; is the working culture relational or based on routines? In a nutshell: success is where talent and purpose are multiplied and taken to the highest power by the culture. She uses charts to show that if the culture is zero, it does not matter how much talent there is and how strong the purpose, the success always equals only 1.

What should big companies do?

After finishing her excellent presentation, the moderator, **Antoni Lacinai** asks Merchant what big companies should do. After all, the world is moving towards smaller units, independent people who unite and separate faster than a big company can produce a press release. Is the time for big companies over? Let's hear what Merchant says.

"Don't try to tell yourself that you can just sort of make yourself leaner and act faster," she starts. Rather than that, big companies should focus on what allows them to act faster, fail faster and learn. As an example, we hear a brief account of one of our recent failure-to-success stories, the popular Finnish mobile game, Angry Birds.

"Try a bunch of things and evaluate them at the end of the year," Merchant continues. That way you learn what is working. For many, the problem is that they want to be successful straightaway. So, rather than thinking is something right or wrong, big companies should think about what they just learned. Merchant compares this to learning to walk. Before being able to run, you have to learn how to walk. You will land on your butt many times and build muscle to get up faster – and stay up and ahead.

Bonus: pull ideas from your employees

Merchant relates the example of a company that decided to use part of its profits in a new way. Rather than increasing budgets by 5%, they created a money pool. So, the company wanted its employees to pitch their ideas about how the money should be used. The idea of pitching was well received by the employees; about 180 ideas were presented. Many of the ideas were such that, quoting **Brian Tracy**, "Wow! I never thought of that!" For example, the company cafeteria served only comfort food, because they thought people like comfort food. But when one of the employees came up with an idea of selling more greens and taking care of the employees' health, many others supported the idea. Overall, the ideas created changes. Not because of the money, but because people were committed to it.

→ TOP

Communicational overview

Nilofer was co-creating future with the audience. Transforming topics that some might consider soft into technical equations, Nilofer Merchant explained to us how to lead people successfully in the social era. Merchant's appearance on stage was convincing, and her contact with the audience quite charming. However, one could argue that the audience Merchant used to prove her points might have been almost too simple for the demanding audience of the Nordic Business Forum.

The combination of Merchant's stylish outfit and the self-confident stroll around the stage made a strong impression at the beginning of her speech. Unfortunately it seemed like some of the audience didn't grasp her first joke, so the flow into the introduction of her speech may have lost some of the impact. As many other speakers, Merchant also used a lot of time outlining her topic with storytelling. We loved how Merchant connected the listeners to her topic by getting the audience to engage one another following her example. Merchant listened to the audience, taking suggestions and feedback and answering their questions precisely. Her body language and spatial utilization made the atmosphere in the Exhibition Center warm and relaxed. One could say that Merchant's interaction with the audience was really pleasant.

All of Merchant's content was chosen wisely, effectively delivering her one main message. Speaking about the transition into the social era, a highly current and relevant topic considering the changing leadership demands, the content of Merchant's talk was perfectly targeted. Merchant's content seemed more than suitable for the context and she managed to squeeze in the right amount of topics in the time reserved. Merchant also delivered many demonstrative examples to support her message and made it easy for the audience to follow.

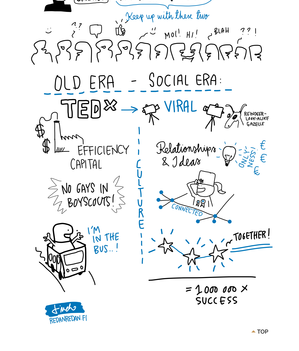
One of Nilofer Merchant's biggest strengths is clearly the versatile use of her voice. Merchant's pleasant rhythm of speech, her enjoyable tone, as well as the variation in the volume and cleverly timed pauses, supported the experience of the audience and made it really comfortable to listen to her speak. The whole keynote was skillfully structured around the equation presented in the beginning, and she guided us through the sections, constantly referring back to the success formula and visually summarizing it all in the end. Merchant's overall communication skills were astounding and we would consider her performance as one of the best during the event. With a clear core message, well condensed main points and a well constructed content (balanced perfectly in relation to time), Nilofer left a highly positive impression and really made an impact.

Highlights:

- intimate contact and interaction with the audience
- versatile use of voice and nonverbal expression

Questions:

- Could the beginning of the keynote have been a bit more effective?



→ TOP

GUY KAWASAKI

The Art of Disruption

JUKKA NIEMELÄ

The former Apple evangelist under promised, over delivered, and ended the first conference day with a wide smile on his face.

- Apple stories as appetizers
- Top 10 format for disruptors
- Communicational overview

"Nobody tweets as much as **Guy Kawasaki**", says moderator **Antoni Lacinai** as he introduces Kawasaki. "Create like a God, command like a king, work like a slave" – the adage aptly describes Kawasaki's character – supplemented by his own motto: "Don't worry, be Crappy." Sounds like the first day of Nordic Business Forum 2015 is about to end with a great presentation by this genial gentleman. And it surely did!

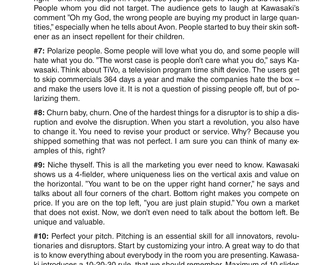
Apple stories as appetizers

Many of the speakers have encountered **Steve Jobs** one way or the other. One day Jobs came to talk to Kawasaki and asked about a company called 'Knowhere.' After Kawasaki made a fairly long and thorough analysis of how medicre the company and its products were, how bad it was doing and so on, Jobs introduced the gentleman next to him: "Guy, I want you to meet CEO of Knowhere!" Kawasaki continues with a couple more stories, for example about a Macintosh guy holding a light bulb – and the universe revolving around him, as he changes it.

Top 10 format for disruptors

Kawasaki must be one of my all-time favorite speakers. "If you suck, and go long, it's like being stupid and arrogant at the same time," he says. He introduces his top 10 format for innovation – saying that if somebody thinks he sucks, this way he knows how much longer he sucks. Ok, he does not, but amuses the audience constantly.

#1: Great disruption occurs in a company when people like to make meaning rather than money. He warns, without a doubt that the people who work for you for the money, will not stick with you through the down periods. He advises the audience to rather hire people to make meaning for your company. As examples, he uses Google, whose meaning is information, and eBay, whose meaning is e-commerce.



#2: Create a mantra. Why do you or your products exist? He talks about mission statements and uses an American fast food chain Wendy's as an example. Their mission statement has 'leadership', 'innovation' and 'partnerships.' Although Kawasaki has eaten in Wendy's probably more than dozens of times, he has not participated in those three mission statement items in question. He says that their mission statement should only be 'Healthy fast food.' I agree.

#3: Jump to the next curve. Disruption does not occur on the curve you occupy. It does not occur by doing better the things you have done, in the same way you always have. Kawasaki tells a story about the ice harvesting business. First, big chunks of ice were pulled out of a frozen lake. After 30 years ice was made in a factory and delivered to customers with a truck. Another 30 years go by and we got refrigerators. None of the companies jumped to the next curve. Guess what happened to them?

#4: Roll the dice. Take a chance. Do something others don't. Like a sandal with a built-in bottle opener or a smart ignition key or a Ford Mustang Shelby GT sports car to prevent your kids from driving it too fast. Except that these have already been invented. Go for something new.

#5: Don't worry, be crappy. "It does not have to be perfect. In Silicon Valley, we ship and we test. If you are in biotech, don't listen to this," he says and continues his story about Apple 2 computer being a piece of crap. "But it was a revolutionary piece of crap," he says with enthusiasm and concludes, "Don't ship crap, ship revolution to your customers."

#6: Let 100 flowers blossom. Kawasaki explains with a great example that you might have developed a great product, had great marketing, done everything right – until reality steps in. People use your product the way you did not plan. People whom you did not target. The audience gets to laugh at Kawasaki's comment "Oh my God, the wrong people are buying my product in large quantities," especially when he tells about Avon. People started to buy their skin softener as an insect repellent for their children.

#7: Polarize people. Some people will love what you do, and some people will hate what you do. "The worst case is people don't care what you do," says Kawasaki. Think about TiVo, a television program time shift device. The users get to skip commercials 364 days a year and make the companies hate the box – and make the users love it. It is not a question of pissing people off, but of polarizing them.

#8: Churn baby, churn. One of the hardest things for a disruptor is to ship a disruption and evolve the disruption. When you start a revolution, you also have to change it. You need to revise your product or service. Why? Because you shipped something that was not perfect. I am sure you can think of many examples of this, right?

#9: Niche thyself. This is all the marketing you ever need to know. Kawasaki shows us a 4-fielder, where uniqueness lies on the vertical axis and value on the horizontal. "You want to be on the upper right hand corner," he says and talks about all four corners of the chart. Bottom right makes you compete on price. If you are on the top left, "you are just plain stupid." You own a market that does not exist. Now, we don't even need to talk about the bottom left. Be unique and valuable.

#10: Perfect your pitch. Pitching is an essential skill for all innovators, revolutionaries and disruptors. Start by acknowledging your intro. A great way to do that is to know everything about everybody in the room you are presenting. Kawasaki introduces a 10-20-30 rule, that we should remember. Maximum of 10 slides in 20 minutes, using 30 point font. From my experience, that must be hard for Finnish engineers.

Extra #11: Don't let the dangerous bozos grind you down. In many cases, being rich and famous equals lucky. Kawasaki shows us examples of conventional wisdoms, for example that there is no market for more than 5 computers in the world or that there is no reason why anybody would want to have a computer in their home. If Jobs had listened to those statements, he might not have started Apple. Conclusion: don't listen. Try, and you will know.

Kawasaki ends his awesome presentation with a story in which he chooses family over the two billion dollars he would have gotten from Yahoo if he had accepted the job they offered him. That choice "explains one billion, it's the other billion that pisses me off."

TOP

Communicational overview

Guy gave us memories and a moment of mantras. Guy Kawasaki's subject – the art of disruption – was particularly thought provoking. Our afternoon with the former Apple evangelist not only got us thinking hard but also left us with a warm feeling of connection. Kawasaki's presence on stage was strong and the whole keynote was very well balanced. Particularly Kawasaki's sense of humor and effortless structural control engaged the audience with what was happening both on stage as well as on the screens.

Mr. Kawasaki skillfully developed his connection with the audience through storytelling and illustrative examples. He demonstrated his ability to adapt to any given situation, referring to earlier presentations in addition to using photographs and examples related to Finland. Humor was used generously as a device to evoke and maintain the listener's motivation and even riskier jokes were met with laughter and applause by the like-minded audience. However, there was potential, that wasn't used, to activate the audience through small tasks or by increasing interaction between the audience and the speaker.

The presentation content was sensible in length and had clear sections. The content seemed mainly relevant, well planned and chosen to suit this particular audience. The illustrative examples supported the main message and made it easy for the audience to grasp the essential points from the talk. Kawasaki used multiple well-known, albeit mostly American, products and brands to clarify his mantras. In this he was more or less successful, but his reasoning was fairly one-sided and relied mainly on his own background for support. In the end Kawasaki's arguments were very well constructed, fully credible and backed with his expertise and personal experience.

The tech-expert started with a personal story, whilst also preparing the audience for what to expect. From there on the speech was structured precisely and smartly so there wasn't any opportunity to lose interest or get confused. Kawasaki's strong transitions, both verbal and nonverbal, helped to guide the audience through his main mantras. All content sections felt justified and the main theses were clear. In the end, time wasn't fully on Kawasaki's side but he handled the situation well. Considering the calm and well-structured ending, it was good he didn't rush. Going overtime however, made us wonder if something was, or could have been, left out.

Kawasaki's expression supported the main topics really well and the versatility in his intonation as well as the pauses he used helped the audience keep up. Kawasaki's facial expressions and smart choice of vocabulary gave the impression of humility and approachability. Presentation graphics were also used well to support the oral message. For this reason, it's no wonder if these mantras are heard long after his presentation. Although it's possible to say that the audience could have had a bigger role during the presentation, Kawasaki's time on stage was aimed at all of us and his performance truly had an impact.

Highlights:

- Diversity of the content
- Good verbal and nonverbal transitions

Questions:

- Could Kawasaki have avoided going overtime?

TOP

GARRY KASPAROV

A Seasonal Shift in History

ANDREW SCHOLFIELD

Kasparov's gutsy presentation about the state of the world left the audience overwhelmed.

- He Who Must Not Be Named
- When loyalty becomes a dangerous word
- Don't make friends with a bully
- From the best of friends to the best of enemies
- Appeasement is a dirty word
- A backward world
- The cold, hard truth

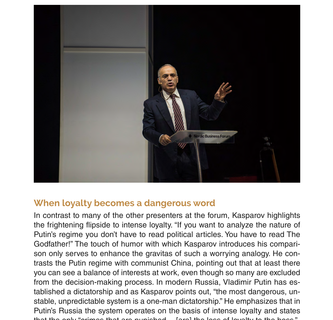
We knew we weren't in for a gentle morning when Garry Kasparov's opening disclaimer was: "I have to apologize that the story you are about to hear won't be a cheery one." His presentation on the leader of Russia was both stark and refreshing, as we were reminded of the seductive nature of power and the dangers of being complacent about the past.

He Who Must Not Be Named

Aware of the anxious atmosphere created by his introduction, Kasparov quickly punctuated the tension in the room by drawing the biggest laugh of the day. Regarding previous events he had been asked to speak at, he quipped that the "organizers would ask me… not to mention Russia and Vladimir Putin. It's like Voldemort, you know. Which makes me feel like Harry Potter." The VIP audience showed their appreciation with a long round of applause. He goes on to emphasize that democracy in Russia is a façade and far from what western nations would expect: "I wouldn't call it exactly politics, because in Russia we were not trying to win elections, we were trying to have elections!" Laughter again, but this time more nervous as the audience engages with the seriousness of the situation in Finland's most powerful neighbor.

Kasparov is quick to extinguish any thoughts that his mastery of the chess world might have been of any help in his political career, frankly stating that, "in chess we have fixed rules and unpredictable results, whereas in Russian politics it's exactly the opposite!" The audience are left under no illusions about the severity of the situation in Russian politics. Kasparov has been arrested many times for protesting the government and no longer feels safe returning there. He recognizes that although things are getting worse and not better, he has tried to show others the way to oppose Putin's regime. Reminding us of the father of civil disobedience, he puts on screen the following quote from Mahatma Ghandi:

"A good person will resist an evil system with his whole soul. Disobedience of the laws of an evil state is therefore a duty."



When loyalty becomes a dangerous word

In contrast to many of the other presenters at the forum, Kasparov highlights the frightening flipside to intense loyalty. "If you want to analyze the nature of Putin's regime you don't have to read political articles. You have to read The Godfather!" The touch of humor with which Kasparov introduces his comparison only serves to enhance the gravitas of such a worrying analogy. He contrasts the Putin regime with communist China, pointing out that at least there you can see a balance of interests at work, even though so many are excluded from the decision-making process. In modern Russia, Vladimir Putin has established a dictatorship and as Kasparov points out, "the most dangerous, unstable, unpredictable system is a one-man dictatorship." He emphasizes that in Putin's Russia the system operates on the basis of intense loyalty and states that the only "crimes that are punished… [are] the loss of loyalty to the boss."

Don't make friends with a bully

Kasparov addresses one of the key arguments that is often put to him by both internal and foreign commentators – that of regime stability. He reflects that Putin has taken full advantage of the efforts of western nations to welcome Putin and Russia into the 'club' of democratic leaders. Kasparov puts on screen pictures of Vladimir Putin alongside the western leaders at one of the many G8 summits. With more exasperation in his voice he points out, "Vladimir Putin is one of the world democratic leaders – he is a member of this family. He's there!"

He clearly demonstrates how the acceptance of Putin's government as democratic, and the inaction of other world leaders to exert any kind of pressure on him, has led to the suffocation of the opposition in Russia. He goes back to the pictures on the screen to emphasize just how powerful these images are for enhancing the credibility of Putin's leadership. "It's very difficult for someone who wasn't born or raised in a communist or totalitarian country to understand the relevance of such a picture."

Kasparov states that, particularly in his consolidation of power, the propaganda machine of Putin's government used such images to influence not just voters in the countryside, but also the middle class who might have questioned his legitimacy. Now that things are getting worse, onlookers both domestically and abroad are burying their heads in the sand, choosing to ignore "certain facts that do not fit this picture."

From the best of friends to the best of enemies

As Kasparov points out, not for the first time and probably not for the last we have forgotten the lessons of history. The wave of expectation after the end of the Soviet Union led us to prematurely declare 'The End of History' (a reference by Kasparov to the work of Francis Fukuyama). Like so many dictators before him, whilst Putin needed friends in order to establish power and legitimacy, in order to maintain his authority he has now started to look for enemies. "He needed friends in the beginning. Today the same propaganda machine that promoted these images, needs enemies, because at one point a dictator runs out of arguments *why he's staying in power for so long.*"

Putin can no longer argue that prosperity is what Russian citizens can expect in return for rights and democracy everything in Russia is now in decline, so, "the only argument is the story that Russia is the besieged fortress of good surrounded by enemies." Kasparov reminds us that protecting Mother Russia from enemies is ingrained in the national psyche. Kasparov points out that with Georgia, the Crimea, Ukraine and Estonia, there is no shortage of fields for confrontation. Kasparov derides the argument that Vladimir Putin is too strong to confront, stating how Harry Truman and the west stood up to the much more formidable foe of Joseph Stalin in 1948. In the same vein, he also considers western economic concerns as pitiful, referring to the fact that whilst a third of oil and gas comes from Russia, this equals 80% of their total exports in this industry. "Putin's Russia depends on western customers three times more than they depend on Putin."

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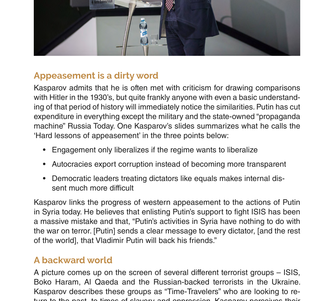

Appeasement is a dirty word

Kasparov admits that he is often met with criticism for drawing comparisons with Hitler in the 1930's, but quite frankly anyone with even a basic understanding of that period of history will immediately notice the similarities. Putin has cut expenditure in everything except the military and the state-owned "propaganda machine" Russia Today. One Kasparov's slides summarizes what he calls the 'Hard lessons of appeasement' in the three points below:

- Engagement only liberalizes if the regime wants to liberalize
- Autocracies export corruption instead of becoming more transparent
- Democratic leaders treating dictators like equals makes internal dissent much more difficult

Kasparov links the progress of western appeasement to the actions of Putin in Syria today. He believes that enlisting Putin's support to fight ISIS has been a massive mistake and that, "Putin's activities in Syria have nothing to do with the war on terror. [Putin] sends a clear message to every dictator, [and the rest of the world], that Vladimir Putin will back his friends."

A backward world

A picture comes up on the screen of several different terrorist groups – ISIS, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda and the Russian-backed terrorists in the Ukraine. Kasparov describes these groups as "Time-Travelers" who are looking to return to the past, to times of slavery and oppression. Kasparov perceives their barbaric acts as their only means of competing with the modern, global society. "They cannot compete with innovations, they cannot compete on ideas, they cannot compete on improving living standards, but they know they can compete in wars, in terror, in intimidation, because they don't care if people die!"

Putin's regime also falls into the same category, "they live in the 19th Century, [and] believe that holding big territories is important for their greatness." The problem the world faces is that, "if everything travels – if money travels, labor travels, information travels – so does terrorism." For the terrorists, and likewise for Putin's regime, "one million dead is not just statistics but proof of their strength, which they will project for those who follow them."

Russia is now firmly engaged in the Middle East and is escalating the conflict in order to remove the opponents of Bashar al-Assad, show its support for Iran and the Shia dominant government of Iraq. A deepening crises in the Middle East might well lead to a potential rise in oil prices, which would suit the Russian economy. If the whole region were to erupt into war, the fall out would no doubt affect Europe and increase the flow of refugees, putting strain on Europe – yet another benefit for Russia and the Putin regime.

The cold, hard truth

Kasparov summarizes his talk by saying that we mustn't ignore the past. History, in his opinion, "is not linear, it goes in seasons. Now we are entering this cold season whether we like it or not." The title of his new book, 'Winter Is Coming', is not just an homage to the popular novels and TV show, Game of Thrones, but also Kasparov's chilling assessment of the world we now face. "I've been saying for a long time that Vladimir Putin's Russia would be a threat not only for us inside Russia, not only for bordering states, but for the rest of the world. Unfortunately that's happening now!"

He challenges us all to act now, and leaves us with the following warning:

"[We must] realize that every day of delay only pushes the price up, because dictators do not disappear on their own, they can only grow stronger and more arrogant, emboldened by our weakness and indecisiveness."

GARRY KASPAROV
New Challenges to the World Order
Nordic Business Forum 2015
CORRUPTION
Transparency
TAKES AGAINST ALL THE Enlightenment education, Liberalism
GOD & CHURCHILL
Putin
UKRAINE
CRIMEA
Putin remembers
Hitler
Stalin
Lenin
Tsars
Tsars
Tsars

SIMON SINEK

Leaders Eat Last

ANDREW SCHOLFIELD

Sinek awed the crowd with his humanistic approach to leadership based on evolutionary biology.

- Finding Captain Swenson
- The human organization
- The addictive flipside of chemically defined behavior
- The leadership chemical
- Who'd be a leader?
- A touch of friendship
- Spend time not money
- Leadership can be learnt but not measured
- Choose to be a leader
- Communicational overview

One of the most eagerly anticipated speakers of the Nordic Business Forum 2015, Simon Sinek arrived on stage to emerging applause and furious reception. However, when the music subsided and the audience sat back in their seats, the casually dressed and mild-mannered speaker wasted little time engaging our humanity within.

Finding Captain Swenson

Sinek's opening was a heart-rending true story that literally had grown men shedding tears. The account was of the heroism of Captain Swenson, a US marine in Afghanistan, who whilst under heavy fire from the enemy put himself in danger to save the lives of his fellow marines. However, it was the instinctive and, as Sinek described it, loving kiss laid on the forehead of a wounded soldier that was so poignant.

For our speaker the incident is profound. He asks himself the question: "Where do people like that come from because I would like to work with people like that? I would like to be surrounded by people who are willing to sacrifice themselves for me. He wonders how amazing characters like this can be way and contrasts this level of sacrifice with the competitive world of business. However, when he began to investigate more deeply, he started to "realize it's not the people, it's the environment."

The human organization

It is no accident that Sinek's story comes from the military realm. He has been drawn to the US Marine Corps because of the fascinating team dynamic it embodies. It represents the extreme theatre in which he could research human, ant elements – trust and cooperation. As it turns out the human body functions exactly the same way as an organization." Using his ethnography training to good effect, Sinek draws parallels between basic human behavior and its certainty to modern business culture. He states that nothing much has changed 60,000 years of Homo sapient existence, we need to feel safe and secure for trust and cooperation to occur. "When we feel safe amongst our own we will naturally combine our efforts, naturally combine our talents to face the dangers and seize the opportunities. If we do not feel safe amongst our own, the natural human reaction is to protect ourselves from each other."

To illustrate his point Sinek uses the example of an airline gate-agent who aggressively instructs a passenger away from boarding the plane too early. When asked why she needed to speak to him in such a way, the gate-agent replied, her reply was, "Sir, if I don't follow the rules, I could get in trouble or lose my job!" Sinek points out the cause and effect of such a culture of fear, saying that "when you give people a circle of safety, they will naturally take care of each other, the customer and the company. When you force them to fear, they will naturally take care of themselves."

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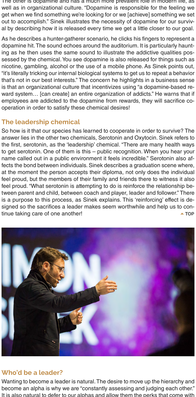

The addictive flipside of chemically defined behavior

Elements of biochemistry are crucial to understand and support Sinek's analysis. "Inside our body is a system of chemicals, a system of rewards and incentives designed to get us to behave in ways that are in our best interest." He attests to the strong correlation in how organizations use the same chemicals responsible for survival survival and the human species, to motivate employees and society. The chemical release of the four hormones of Endorphins, Dopamine, Serotonin and Oxytocin, commonly referred to as the 'happy chemicals', are the mechanisms driving our behavior. Endorphins and dopamine are regarded as the "selfish chemicals" because of the isolated satisfaction they provide to the individual. Endorphins exist in order to mask pain and increase our stamina that we might be able to flee from danger or track animals over large distances in order to survive. In modern society, its use is largely redundant.

The other three chemicals have a much more positive effect in modern life, as well as in organizational culture. "Dopamine is responsible for the feeling we get when we find something we're looking for or we (achieve) something we set out to accomplish." Sinek illustrates the nature of dopamine for our survival by describing how it is released every time we get a little closer to our goal.

As he describes a number-crunching scenario, he clicks his fingers to represent a dopamine hit. The sound echoes around the auditorium. It is particularly haunting as he then uses the same sound to illustrate the addictive qualities possessed by the chemical. You see dopamine is also released for things such as nicotine, gambling, alcohol or the use of a mobile phone. As Sinek points out, "It's literally tricking our internal biological systems to get us to repeat a behavior that's not in our best interest." The concern he highlights in a business sense is that an organizational culture that incentivizes using "a dopamine-based reward system, … leads to an entire organizational culture of addiction." Warns that if employees are addicted to the dopamine from rewards, they will sacrifice cooperation in order to satisfy these chemical desires!

The leadership chemical

So how is it that our species has learned to cooperate in order to survive? The answer lies in the other two chemicals responsible for the feeling of love, friendship and trust. Serotonin relates to the 'leadership' chemical. "There are many health ways to get serotonin. One of them is this – public recognition. When you hear your name called out in a public environment it feels incredible." Serotonin also affects the bond between siblings. Sinek describes a graduation scene where, at the moment the person accepts their diploma, not only does the individual feel proud, but the moment of their family and friends feel very witness it also feel proud. "What serotonin is attempting to do is reinforce the relationship between people and child, between coach and player, leader and follower."

There is a purpose to this process, as Sinek explains. This 'reinforcing' effect is designed so the sacrifices a leader makes seem worthwhile and help us to cultivate true taking care of one another!

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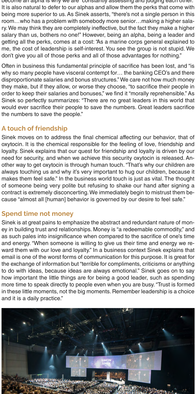


Who'd be a leader?

Wanting to become a leader is natural. The desire to move up the hierarchy and become an alpha is why we are "constantly assessing and judging each other". It is also natural to defer to our alphas and allow them the perks that come with being more superior to us. As Sinek asserts, "there's not a single person in this room… who has a problem with somebody more senior…making a higher salary. We may think they are undeserving, we may think they are lucky, we may think they are overpaid, we may think they are ineffective, but the fact they make a higher salary than us, bothers no one!" However, being an alpha, being a leader and getting all the perks, comes at a cost. "In a marine corps general explained to me, the cost of leadership is self-interest. You see the group is not stupid. We don't give you all of those perks and all of those advantages for nothing."

Often in business this fundamental principle of sacrifice has been lost, and "is why so many people have incurred contempt for … the banking industry and their disproportionate salaries and bonus structures." We care not how much money they make, but if they allow, or worse they choose, "to sacrifice the people in order to keep their salaries and bonuses," we find it "morally reprehensible." As Sinek so perfectly illustrates: "There are no great leaders in the world that would ever sacrifice their people to save the numbers. Great leaders sacrifice the numbers to save the people."

A touch of friendship

Sinek moves on to address the final chemical affecting our behavior, that of oxytocin. It is the chemical responsible for the feeling of love, friendship and trust and loyalty. Sinek explains that our quest for friendship and loyalty is driven by our need for security, and when we achieve this security oxytocin is released. Another way to get oxytocin is through human touch. "That's why our children are always touching us and why it's very important to hug our children, because it makes them feel safe." In the business world touch is just as vital. The thought of someone being very polite but refusing to shake our hand after signing a contract is extremely disconcerting. We immediately begin to mistrust them because "human(s) behavior is governed by our desire to feel safe."

Spend time not money

Sinek is at great pains to emphasize the abstract and redundant nature of money in building trust and relationships. Money is "a redeemable commodity" and as such yields into insignificance when compared to the sacrifice of one's time and energy. "When someone is willing to give us their time and energy we reward them with our love and loyalty." In a business context Sinek explains that "we can do a lot of some forms of communication for this purpose. It is great for the exchange of information but "terrible for compliments, criticisms or anything to do with sensitive issues ideas are always anecdotal." Sinek goes on to say that "spending little things, such as being a good leader, such as spending more time to speak directly to people even when you are busy." Trust is formed in these little moments, not the big moments. Remember leadership is a choice and it is a daily practice."

→ TOP

Leadership can be learnt but not measured

Our speaker doesn't sugar coat the difficulties of being a good leader. It takes time, effort and perseverance because the effects of good leadership can "not be measured on a daily basis. He likens the practice of good leadership to exercise. You won't notice effects in the early days, weeks and months. "Like parenting, like exercise, leadership is an act of faith, it requires that this is the right thing to do and I'm going to keep on doing it. He also points out that you might not be the first person to notice the results. Much like exercise, you won't see the small changes, but others will. We are amazed at the sacrifices great leaders make, but as Sinek explains, it is the small sacrifices that these leaders make every day that make big leadership decisions easy.

Choose to be a leader

Not for the first time in the forum, the reference to our smartphones is used to illustrate the crux of a speaker's presentation. Sinek cannot express more deeply how important it is to keep our smart phones out of sight and use directly communicate with others. "What that does is send a subconscious message that says to the people in front of us that we are more than anything else!" Sinek reminds us that anybody can be a leader. Position gives you authority but that doesn't make you a leader, your actions do. Leadership is about small sacrifices and choosing to care. It's about the little human elements that we too easily forget. As Sinek concludes, "leadership is a choice and every single one of us can make the choice to be the leader we wish we had."

→ TOP

Communicational overview

Simon Says – "Be the leader you wish you had! It's apparent that Simon Sinek is a very confident speaker and his whole speech was very well constructed. Sinek's stage presence was really natural and calm and it was relatively easy for the audience to get on the same page with the casually dressed yet credible speaker. The four important hormones affecting our behaviour as a leader gave the presentation a well thought out structure. However, taking Sinek's performances in other events into consideration, the keynote Sinek delivered on the Nordic Business Forum stage didn't have too many customized elements.

Relying on the power of stories, a tactic employed also by many of the other Nordic Business Forum speakers, Sinek moved quite quickly to his point through the visualization of an emotional story. Since the very beginning of the speech, Sinek paid close attention to the listeners and maintained eye contact with both sides of the audience, actively using the whole stage. Sinek used a variety of methods and enlightening examples to clarify the main points and his relaxed appearance and intensive diction ensured that Sinek really worked the room and managed to build and maintain audience motivation. Sinek examples made sense but we were left hoping he would have used some examples more familiar to the Nordic Business Forum audience, and the overall interaction between Sinek and the audience could have been more diverse.

Simon Sinek structured his content around the four motivational chemicals in our bodies, using them to demonstrate and argue the secrets of leadership. Sinek progressed through the keynote, hormone by hormone, and highlighted transitions between different sections both verbally and nonverbally. The keynote was broad and constructed precisely making it easy to follow. In addition, the speech's main arguments were clearly shown on a flip board which Sinek used to illustrate the content and structure of the speech.

The versatility of Sinek's tone, the well thought out pauses and the repetitions highlighting the important points, made his pattern of speech comfortable on the ear. Sinek showed his passion for the topic and kept people interested with his style of speech, ranging from laid back to excited. His demonstrational and illustrative expression and down-to-earth appearance were some of the reasons why Sinek won the audience to his side, despite targeting of the keynote being relatively loose. Whether the speech was routine or not, it certainly convinced the audience. Simon Sinek certainly gave us one of the most thought provoking speeches on leadership and influence.

Highlights:

- clear and easy to follow keynote structure
- intensive stage presence

Questions:

Could the examples have been more targeted to the Nordic Business Forum audience?

→ TOP

METTE LYKKE

Disruption, Passion and Risk

DENISE WALL

The Danish founder of Endomondo sports tracking app encouraged entrepreneurs to be persistent and to always trust random gypsy women when making career decisions.

- Following your wildest dreams
- Setbacks are a given, pushing through the pain is what counts
- Disruption and passion walk hand in hand
- Changing mindsets and encouraging risk-taking

What happens when you take three business consultants and a gypsy? This isn't the start of a joke, according to **Mette Lykke**, one of the powerhouses behind the globally popular fitness tracking app Endomondo, and Vice President of the US-based athletic apparel manufacturer Under Armour. Lykke revealed that an unexpected encounter with a gypsy showed her that following her dreams could take her to places she'd never believed possible and that passion for what she does is the real measure of her success.

Lykke has the distinction of being the youngest and number four ranked of Nordic Business Report's Top 20 Women in Business in Northern Europe. She sat down for an entertaining Q&A session on the "disruption" theme during Nordic Business Forum 2015 with Nordic Business Forum board member and Åbo Akademi University professor, the ebullient **Alf Rehn**.

The young Danish entrepreneur began by relating the story of how she came to take on the challenge of entrepreneurship. She recalled that she and two other colleagues at the prestigious consulting firm McKinsey wanted "to use technology to make fitness fun."

Following your wildest dreams

The trio had been moonlighting to get the enterprise off the ground, when Lykke received a lucrative job offer from a client. She was faced with a potentially life-changing decision: accept the security of a steady and safe position, or to give it all up for the uncertainty and risk of entrepreneurship.

Lykke recalled the evening in New York when she would either tell her colleagues that she would go "all-in" with the business venture, or choose the well-trodden path of a stable career as a business consultant. This was where the gypsy came into the story. According to Lykke, as she stood on a street corner, a gypsy woman gave her a card, on which was printed the following words:

"Whatever your wildest dreams may be, they only scratch the surface of what is possible."

It was that chance encounter in 2007 that prompted Lykke to stick with her colleagues to pursue their wildest dreams. The trio went on to launch the first version of their now-lauded community-based fitness monitoring application, Endomondo. The first version, Lykke said, was launched in 2008 and it took a further 2 years before the app was able to gather one million users. As of October 2015, the company had seen its app downloaded more than 25 million times – a testimony to the trio's tenacity in the face of uncertainty.

Setbacks are a given, pushing through the pain is what counts

"All beginnings are hard," Lykke observed, noting that November 2015 marked eight years since she and her colleagues decided to take a chance on building a company on the basis of their belief in a particular concept.

"All start-ups have downturns and need to push through," Lykke said, adding, "The reality is that in spite of success, there's always a crisis happening backstage. The real accomplishment is to stick with it."

The young entrepreneur noted that when morale declines because of inevitable setbacks, it is important for business leaders to "snap out of it," and more importantly, to take the entire team along, because a good team is essential to the venture's success. She noted that the obstacles Endomondo experienced in its early years provided valuable lessons for the company.

"The first years have been about gathering data. The next stage is about what to do with it," Lykke commented.

Disruption and passion walk hand in hand

Pressed on the subject of disruption and what it means for her, Lykke described the concept as "a type of innovation that changes an industry." She saw Endomondo as a force disrupting the health and fitness industry.

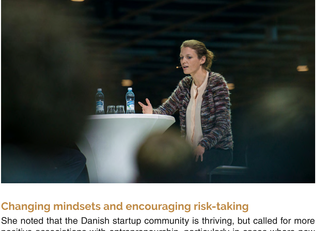
"The end point is to empower people to be active and to care for their health and to combine that with having fun and other social aspects," she added.

According to Lykke, the path to disruption for the Endomondo team began with observing trends and needs and asking how to solve the problem of matching them. However she pointed out that more is needed than a purely empirical approach.

"The secret ingredient is to have a passion. Otherwise you spot trends and become a consultant," she quipped, harking back to her previous profession. "You need to want to change something and have an impact. And as cheesy as it may sound, we wanted to make the world better," she added.

As co-founder and chief executive of Endomondo, Mette Lykke helped engineer the company's acquisition by the US athletic apparel manufacturer Under Armour for USD 85 million and now serves as the company's Vice President. From her vantage point shuttling between the USA and Europe, Lykke said she has observed major differences between the two territories.

"There is a mindset gap between the USA and the Nordics. We need to encourage more risk-taking among young people," Lykke declared. TOP



Changing mindsets and encouraging risk-taking

She noted that the Danish startup community is thriving, but called for more positive associations with entrepreneurship, particularly in cases where new business ventures fail.

"Instead of just applauding the ones who have made it. Everyone deserves recognition for trying," she remarked.

Having had her finger on the pulse of the startup scene in her native Denmark, Lykke said that government might not be using business incentives in the right way. Instead she said, more emphasis should be placed on lowering the threshold to going into business.

The young businesswoman said it is also important to encourage children to consider entrepreneurship from an early age. She further pointed out that in any case, the global economy is moving in a direction in which many of today's youngsters will be self-employed.

Asked what could be done at the political level to support budding entrepreneurs, Lykke pointed out that startups often encounter major hurdles raising capital. She said that legislation could be used to encourage more investment in new businesses, using tools such as tax breaks for investors. She also called for policymakers to consider granting tax exemptions on equity owned by start-up employees.

As she wrapped up her conversation with Alf Rehn, Mette Lykke outlined her cardinal rules for taking on a business project:

- It must make sense
- You must enjoy the people you work with
- You must aim for growth

In her parting words for would-be entrepreneurs, Lykke advised the younger set to take the plunge early.

"The sooner you start a business the better," she advised, pointing out that before the burden of a mortgage, a family and other life milestones, the financial risks of failure are likely to be far smaller. The rewards of course, may only scratch the surface of what's possible.

KEITH J. CUNNINGHAM

The Drivers of Performance

ANDREW SCHOFIELD

Cunningham's presentation offered clarity about the main responsibilities of a CEO.

- A Texan
- Profession of business
- The four responsibilities of a CEO
- The two reasons to spend money
- Where's your 'is' line?
- Schedule time to think!
- Questions to find your strategy
- Why are they not buying from me?
- Tell me how it is, coach!
- Communicational overview

As **Keith J. Cunningham** was welcomed to the stage, you couldn't help but notice the deference with which he took the greeting. Humbly he accepted, your might imagine he could pole-vault applause, I might not be that good." As his speech progressed, the advice he gave and the ideas he shared were worth the acknowledgment he received – and then some!

A Texan

Although stating how nervous he was, it's safe to say he didn't show it, and his gravelly Texas accent was playful and confident. Like many good speakers he began with a joke to warm us up (and perhaps settle his nerves). It was a situation in which an audience participant of a talk he once gave in his home state of Texas, fell asleep during the presentation. His performance was so non-arousing and his *one anxiety at potentially being so dull* had the Nordic Business Forum audience in raptures. The person was even asleep before, as he described the way the man came up to him at the end of his talk to say, "you and I are in the same business!" Schooled, Cunningham responded, "you gotta be kidding me, what do you do?" To which the man's reply was, "I'm an anaesthesiologist too!"

The game of business

From jokes we swiftly moved onto games, especially 'the game of business.' Cunningham made no attempt to hide his amazement at the way people run their businesses. For Cunningham, business is an intellectual sport, however he finds that far too many are playing the game blindfolded. "That's how most of us try to run our businesses, were playing *'whack a mole' with our businesses.*" They are not taking advantage of the intellectual resources they have at their disposal. For Cunningham, "the people who win the game of business are the people who have the ...business skills and tools." Another analogy he gives is that of visiting the doctor. "Imagine you do they investigate and run analysis. "Why do doctors [do this]? It's because they can't tell how you're doing by looking only at the surface." Cunningham expresses the amazement at seeing so many hard-working people go out of business because they aren't playing the game intellectually, because they haven't diagnosed what their real problems are!

The four responsibilities of a CEO

For Cunningham there are four areas of responsibility that a CEO or business owner "cannot delegate'.

These are:

- The organisational chart
- The organisational culture
- The strategy/machine
- The allocation of resources

The organisational chart is all about recruitment and getting the right people to produce the right outcomes. "I'm all in favour of getting the right people on the bus, but… it's much more important to make sure that whoever's on that bus is producing the right outcomes." Before that comes culture and according to Cunningham, "in our day and age, we've gotten the word 'perk' and 'cultural confused.' As Cunningham explains, bringing your dog to work or kicking a gym is not culture, it's a perk!

The culture for Cunningham's employees boils down to these three principles: "1) Let's do the right thing, 2) Let's do the best we can, 3) Let's show other people that we care."

These, according to Cunningham, are his "rules of the game." He believes a good culture would also have accountability. Then there is the strategy or, as Cunningham refers to it, the 'machine.' The strategy is just another word for a plan to get over an obstacle that is preventing you from achieving your goal. Every single problem can be an opportunity if you choose to view it this way. Finally, Cunningham asserts that the allocation of resources is the last thing a CEO cannot delegate. For Cunningham, misallocation of resources is "what *undermines* most people's success."

The two reasons to spend money

Moving deeper into the allocation of resources, Cunningham is very adamant that there are really only two reasons to spend money. One, is "to keep the customers we got…[and] reason number two is to get new [customers]." This boils down to "getting people to notice what we do. …[or] doing something that people will notice." One of the most important points of Cunningham's presentation is: "How big would your business be if you still had every customer that ever tried you?" It is a very important question that in his experience is ignored by businesses. Keeping customers rather than worrying about attracting new ones is simple but often ever-looked.

Once again return to the question of misdiagnosis. Cunningham asks the audience why their company (bigger) is its biggest. He believes they "don't have enough customers, …[or maybe] because customers are not buying enough? Could it be that customers are not returning? Maybe the problem is we don't have enough prospects?" What Cunningham points out is these are not problems but "symptoms."

Where's your 'is' line?

"In our lives and in our businesses all have an 'is' line."

This is Cunningham's favourite teaching tool and represents the line that intersects the graph between the horizontal 'what is', and the vertical 'what ought'. Basically Cunningham feels that too many of us are naïve about what the real state of our business is. "I think that most people don't do a very good job of telling the truth about where they are. I think we tend to sugar-coat it." Cunningham talks about getting "clarity" through "optics" – the tools and questions that really help you to understand and identify your real problems. Cunningham warns that, "if you're solving the problem that isn't, you'll make no progress."

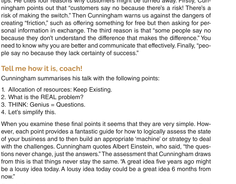
Schedule time to think!

One of Cunningham's favourite stories is when he had a meeting with a prominent businessman by the name of Mike Milken. In the "biggest deal of [his] life" he needed to impress Mr Milken with his presentation in order to secure funding for a takeover. During the meeting Cunningham overheard Mr Milken inform his assistant that the "decision on the takeover of Gulf Oil" will be provided immediately following the next point at which he is "scheduled to think." Aside from being impressed about the takeover of Gulf Oil, Cunningham is even more amazed that someone as busy as Mr Milken actually schedules time to think. He considers this to be a great piece of advice, but explains that the key to effective thinking is to ask "yourself a really good question!"

Cunningham provides us with a number of examples of really good questions to illustrate his point:

- How did this get to be a problem to begin with?
- What could I do to improve my situation?
- If I could _____ really, really well, I could solve this problem
- Where have we tolerated mediocrity, lowered our standards or allowed inconsistent execution to become an acceptable performance criteria?

For Cunningham this last question really got him excited: "Boy… talk about a world-class question." ← TOP



Questions to find your strategy

Taking this approach further, Cunningham showed us how this can help build our business strategy. He cites the case of Southwest Airlines, a company in the US that has made more money in the last year than the rest of the aviation industry has done since the Wright Brothers! "Their statement of the problem is – a plane on the ground makes no money. Well that's obvious! You know what their strategy is to keep their planes in the air – get really, really good at baggage handling."

Once again Cunningham has a helpful set of points to guide our strategic thinking:

1. Who do I want to buy from me?
2. What must happen to cause them to buy?
3. What must happen to keep them buying?
4. What could cause them NOT to buy?

Why are they not buying from me?

Cunningham expands on the purchasing decisions by giving us some helpful tips. He cites four reasons why customers might be turned away. Firstly, Cunningham points out that "customers say no because there's a risk! There's a risk of making the wrong decision. Cunningham warns us against the dangers of creating "friction," such as offering something for free but then asking for personal information in exchange. The third reason is that "some people say no because they don't understand the difference that makes the difference." You need to know why you are better and communicate that effectively. Finally, "people say no because they lack certainty of success."

Tell me how it is, coach!

Cunningham summarises his talk with the following points:

1. Allocation of resources: Keep Existing.
2. What is the REAL problem?
3. THINK Genius + Questions.
4. Let's simplify this.

When you examine these final points it seems that they are very simple. However, each point provides a different guide for how to logically assess the state of your business and to then build an appropriate 'machine' or strategy to deal with the challenges. Cunningham quotes Albert Einstein, who said, "the questions have changed, just the answers." The assessment that Cunningham draws from this is that things never stay the same. "A great idea five years ago might be a lousy idea today. A lousy idea today could be a great idea 6 months from now."

Cunningham finishes his presentation with a quote from a man named Paul 'Bear' Bryant, The renowned American Football coach, with a phenomenal success rate, was often seen reading a small piece of paper he kept in his wallet. After his death some years ago, that paper was discovered. Below you can read what was written on the paper. My recommendation is that you cover and read each line individually. Every word is worth fully appreciating!

This is the beginning of a new day.
God has given me this day to use as I will.
I can waste it or I can use it for good.
What I do today is very important because I am exchanging a day of my life for it.
When tomorrow comes, this day will be gone forever.
Leaving something in its place that I have traded for it.
I want it to be gain, not loss – good, not evil, success, not failure,
In order that I shall not forget the price I paid for it.

← TOP

Communicational overview

Keith told us to schedule time to think. As trivial as it may sound, to begin with this was actually one of the most important and valuable lessons Keith Cunningham taught us. As the man himself underlined, thinking is nonetheless the basis of strategic business development and also the subject of Cunningham's commendable session. Instead of considering this educational moment as a keynote or a presentation it would be more apt to describe it as an interactive lecture.

Right from the beginning, Cunningham worked the room in his uniquely self-deprecating manner using plenty of jokes and self irony. The seasoned performer made big promises about keeping us entertained, to which and he delivered. In his vibrant and distinctively entertaining way, Cunningham presented illuminating stories and numerous applicable examples to set out the powerful questions with which he engaged the topic of business development. He took it as his mission to emphasise that we should not get confused by the symptoms of a problem, but should focus on finding the real reasons behind what is going wrong. His style was to use repetition and he actively paused and encouraged us to write down the most notable points.

Considering the content of the keynote, Cunningham's lecture was both quantitatively and qualitatively one of the most thoughtfully composed and consistent speeches we witnessed during the whole event. The whole lecture was very well timed with all sections and themes receiving a remarkably precisely based treatment. Rationalizing all the key points, providing reasonable and convincing explanations as well as anticipating and addressing plausible counterarguments, Cunningham left a very credible and experienced impression.

Keith Cunningham's precise, intelligible and rich use of vocabulary supported the contents and the structure of the keynote as did the clear, simplistic and well thought out presentational material. The additional use of the flipboard contributed to the down-to-earth, classical lecture-like feel. However, it neglected those who couldn't see the board. Cunningham's distinctive southern dialect, vibrant voice and dynamic use of both verbal and nonverbal expression kept us engaged. With determination, Cunningham guided us through the 55 minute session with laughter, insightful questions, enlightening personal stories and anecdotes. This use of bold and well explained examples and metaphors really got people thinking.

Highlights:

- the use of repetition and encouraging people to take notes
- well condensed core ideas and supporting examples

Questions:

- Could Cunningham have used the stage better and address audience on both sides?

← TOP

GARRY KASPAROV

Taking Risks Pays Off

DENISE WALL

The chess champion urged the crowd to become more self aware by learning from both victories and failures. Risks are often worth taking.

~ Decision-making is personal
~ Circumstances determine strategy
~ Ask the right questions, analyze failures
~ Don't forget the big picture
~ Risk is always worth taking
~ World on the cusp of major opportunity
~ Communicational overview

Back in 1999, understood Finland knew it was taking a terrible risk standing up to the vast power of the Soviet Union to defend its independence. History has since shown that the risk was well worth it. Speaking during Nordic Business Forum 2015, chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov used the example of the Finno-Russian war to illustrate that taking risks often pays off and ensures we don't stand still.

Russian chess guru Garry Kasparov knows a thing or two about strategy. The veteran of the intellectual sport became the youngest chess master at the age of 22 in 1985 and remained at the pinnacle of the game for a further 20 years. During that time Kasparov pondered and committed to more than 89,000 moves on the chessboard.

Decision-making is personal

During his address Kasparov touched on key aspects of strategy, including personality, circumstance, analyzing failure, looking at the big picture, risk taking and grasping opportunity to mold the future.

The strategic thinker told the attendees of the forum that chess is all about decision-making, and further, that decision-making is as unique and personal as an individual's fingerprints or DNA.

"So the key to making good decisions is to understand yourself," Kasparov counseled.

As a result each individual's personal substance dictates his or her personal style and approach to decision making.

Circumstances determine strategy

The master strategist took listeners back to the middle ages to illustrate the strategy of forcing opponents to engage based on a particular set of circumstances.

During these times, battle plans centered on the terrain at hand: cavalry were best suited to even plains, while archers would be deployed over mountainous terrain. However, he noted that despite the best of battle plans, many crucial decisions are still made in the midst of crisis.

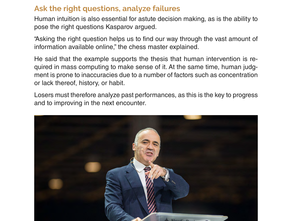
Ask the right questions, analyze failures

Human intuition is also essential for astute decision making, as is the ability to pose the right questions Kasparov argued.

"Asking the right question helps us to find our way through the vast amount of information available online," the chess master explained.

He said that the example supports the thesis that human intervention is required in mass computing to make sense of it. At the same time, human judgment is prone to inaccuracies due to a number of factors such as concentration or lack thereof, history, or habit.

Losers must therefore analyze past performances, as this is the key to progress and to improving in the next encounter.



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Don't forget the big picture

For his next set of observations on strategy, the author and human rights activist invited participants to consider a number of well-known companies, past and present.

He compared the Wright Brothers, who engineered the first winged aircraft, with Boeing, the US multinational aviation company; now-defunct data processing and computer pioneer Wang Labs with Toshiba; early search engine AltaVista with today's Google; and Finnish mobile phone maker Nokia with Apple and its hugely popular iOS-based consumer products.

Kasparov noted that all of the comparisons featured companies that had once been market leaders that lost their grip on the top position, and those that later became leaders in the same markets. He said that companies such as Google and Apple were able to overtake the leaders because of their ability to see the big picture and to take risks.

"Leaders are infected by the gravity of past success," Kasparov cautioned.

He paraphrased and extrapolated the "incompleteness theorem" of the Austrian-American mathematician and philosopher Kurt Gödel to illustrate the inherent pitfalls of being in the position of a leader.

"Every system will contain a problem that cannot be solved from within the system itself."

What that means Kasparov said, is that no matter how far we go horizontally, at some point we will be unable to find solutions from within the existing framework. Escaping the confines of the framework will require a vertical move, which is all about taking risks and leaving behind a comfort zone. ~ TOP

Risk is always worth taking

Kasparov next considered the role of risk taking in strategy. In a business setting, he said, if it is possible to determine time and cost, then an idea is already obsolete.

It is the act of stepping into the unknown – taking a risk – that opens up new opportunities and markets. The grandmaster revisited historical events in Finland, Russia and Estonia to prove his thesis that risk is always worth taking, even at the political level.

Kasparov reminded the audience that faced with Soviet domination or a seemingly futile struggle to hold on to independence in 1939, tiny Finland took on the risk of being crushed by the mighty Red Army and losing out on the gamble. The cost to the Finns was great – roughly 26,000 lives were lost. But the reward was maintaining its independence.

"What were the chances of tiny Finland – 75 years ago – to resist Soviet aggression? No tanks, no aviation… Was it more appropriate to give up and to save lives?" Kasparov asked.

According to Kasparov, other Baltic states such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania did just that. They weighed the risks, decided the odds were insurmountable, and bowed to Soviet Russia. The decision to avoid risk was rewarded with a far greater loss of life than the Finns suffered, in addition to 50 years of Soviet occupation.

"The odds were against you and you didn't care, because you knew there was something more important than calculating the odds," the activist said to the mainly Finnish audience.

The lesson he said, "When we've reached the point where we can see the bigger picture, then we understand that risk is always worth taking because that's what moves us forward."

The Russian chess master pointed out that in today's environment even the smallest mistake can kill a product. Yet even if there is a 50-50 chance of succeeding in going to Mars, humans will take the risk.

"Let's not be afraid to move forward," he asserted. ~ TOP

World on the cusp of major opportunity

In the Q&A session that followed his keynote address, Kasparov said that the global community commands a great deal of resources for bringing about change.

"The tree world has the military, economic, even the political advantage, yet we're still trying to play it safe. The bad guys see this as a weakness," the strategist warned.

He called for a new vision for the future, similar to the sentiment that held sway at the end of World War Two in 1945, noting that the United Nations' current mandate of freezing war is no longer relevant.

"We need an institution to solve problems. We have big opportunities and resources but we need the right institutions to take advantage of these opportunities," Kasparov urged.

He also pointed out that humanity seemed to be stuck in a rut, with long-established technologies such as the combustion engine still in use.

"We can have vertical development if we want, we just need the goals," he noted, recalling a 1962 pledge by deceased US President John F Kennedy to put a man on the moon. That promise was fulfilled just seven years later, Kasparov pointed out.

He noted that all of this was accomplished with far less computing power than the average smartphone user carries in his or her pocket today.

The business speaker and author said that wars have spawned some of mankind's greatest innovations. However more conflict is not what's needed now, he said.

"We're at a point when the decisions we make today will have great future impact. It is similar to chess, where a crucial move can affect many moves to come," Kasparov commented.

The strategic thinker said it is now up to individuals as well as global organizations and governments to consider the next collective move. He closed with a challenge, referencing the wildly popular Angry Birds game produced by Finnish game studio Rovio.

"You have a choice [how] to use the device in your pocket – which has so much computing power – to take a man to the moon and back, or you can keep throwing birds at pigs," the master strategist concluded provocatively. ~ TOP

Communicational overview

Garry made his move towards bigger thinking. Garry Kasparov is well known to a wider audience as being the youngest ever chess World Champion. However, nowadays he is better known as an advocate for human rights. As well as being highly intellectual, Kasparov is also a distinctive personality whose inspiring and passionate themes really caught fire in the hearts of the audience. The quality of the speech content was exceptionally high, but the way of communicating his views, contact with the audience and structure of the presentation could have been more solid.

One of Kasparov's greatest strengths was the targeting of his content, topics and examples to increase their relevance to his specific audience. Although the audience liked what they heard, Kasparov could have engaged the audience more. Instead of staying behind the podium, he could have connected better by noticing and speaking to both sides of the hall. Kasparov's verbal expression was impassioned and emotive, but the fast pace occasionally made the speech slightly difficult to follow. Having to rely so strongly on his notes, the focus of Kasparov's concentration was mainly toward his content rather than maintaining a connection with the audience.

Being an acknowledged political expert, Kasparov covered both history as well as the current global situation. Kasparov also used different chess analogies as one way of supporting and demonstrating his arguments. In addition to explaining many things through examples drawn from the world of chess, he also made his case through the use of statistics and numerical figures. Despite having good examples, powerful insight and using clear transitions during his speech, Kasparov struggled to connect the separate elements and themes to the bigger picture. Reflecting on the topic one might ask whether the listeners got the kind of "bigger thinking" they were expecting to receive.

Kasparov showed the audience his personality and he came across as a truly genuine person. His verbal expression being excellent and the language completely appropriate, he could, however, have used more pauses as the rhythm of his speech was occasionally very fast. All in all, the content of Kasparov's speech spoke directly to the Finnish audience of the Nordic Business Forum, winning them over with his chess grandmaster rhetoric and interesting themes. Kasparov's passionate ending was one of the best parts of the speech as he clearly relaxed, expressing his optimism towards the development and future of mankind. His ending stayed in our minds and made us believe in all the possibilities the future holds.

Highlights:

- highly relevant content and examples
- passion for the subject

Questions:

- Could the different sections of the speech have been more connected?

~ TOP

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