“Intentionally shape your brain for high performance”  
AMY BRANN

“The sweet taste of success”  
MARK GALLAGHER

“Is your organisation building walls or windmills?”  
MARK STEVENSON

SPEAKING BUSINESS
Meet the team

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Foreword and forward
- Building on momentum
I met Maria Franzoni when I was working for American Express in a former life when tasked with sourcing an inspirational speaker for an international conference.

Frank Dick was our chosen speaker and he did us proud! Thank you Frank, (and Maria). Our friendship grew and over the years, I have had the privilege of attending numerous events courtesy of Maria and her clients.

A frustration that I regularly experienced at these events was seeing and hearing the enthusiasm within the audience, as they listened to the speaker sharing their wisdom, research, experiences and brilliance, and then… the gig would close, the speaker would maybe sign some books, have their photo taken and head off to the next event. The delegates would be buzzing with what they had seen and heard and then…. they would head back to work, sit down at their desks, and get on with the day job.

Nothing would change.

All that fizzing energy, motivation, and inspiration built up during the keynote, evaporated in a sea of emails, meetings and calls. There was nothing in place to build on that momentum, no obvious “end in mind” determined and delivered beyond everyone having a good time.

Imagine how brilliant it would be if there was a plan which enabled the skills, tools, techniques and pearls of wisdom from the Speaker to be transferred back and embedded within the workplace.

It always struck me as being such a wasted opportunity. The cost of “forgetting” is too high to be ignored.

So how do we do this?

Firstly, we believe passionately in beginning with the end in mind in all we do (Thank you Mr Covey) and in quality scoping up front to enable us to develop a robust solution for you. We explore with you some great questions to stimulate thought and work with you to determine what specific results you are looking to achieve from any event you run or speaker you work with, and what challenges you are facing that we and the speaker can help you overcome. The information gathered will guide our approach to ensuring the best possible design solution for you.

And this is where it begins to get really mind blowing!

Imagine how amazing and transformational it would be if we were to develop a solution for you where your managers and leaders receive up close and bespoke leadership development beyond the keynote from one of our amazing Speakers. From business gurus, corporate strategists, futurists, world Champions, award winning comedians and script writers, psychologists, and entrepreneurs, to name but a few!

They don’t just deliver keynotes, they can also deliver brilliant masterclasses, workshops, blended learning programmes, give 121 coaching, host development lunches, provide board room advisory and more! Numerous ways to build on the momentum!

Armed with information from the client, and a good understanding of their requirements and the scope of the project, I work with the chosen speaker and the client, to develop the optimum solution that meets all the client criteria. Sometimes, I also form part of the solution, and co-deliver with speakers, or run my own workshops, that complement what the speaker is delivering. Between us, we work to ensure we are adding maximum value for clients and making that all important sustainable difference.

On a personal note, I have the privilege and pleasure of working with all the speakers in this brochure and they never fail to inspire and motivate me and encourage me to be better. I at times feel humbled by their amazing talents and also their generosity to share their stories, research and sheer brilliance.

If I could wave a magic wand, I would wish that every client, manager and leader that we work with had more access to all these brilliant speakers.

Contact me if you want to find out more. We would love to share their brilliance!
Intentionally shape your brain for high performance

Your employees are your most important asset.
They are the source of your best ideas. They can overcome difficult challenges with resilience and they create the high performing success stories which cumulatively lead to organisational greatness.

But employees like this can’t usually be obtained “off the shelf”. They have to be developed, created and nurtured within your organisation and to do this effectively you have to understand how they operate. What makes them tick? What motivates them? This doesn’t mean just asking them about their strengths and weaknesses or sending them on countless training courses. It means getting inside their head. Or more specifically inside their brain. Because it is their brains that are power your organisation.

“Your employees create the high performing success stories that cumulatively lead to organisational greatness”

Understanding how to get the best value out of this unique biological utility (much like you might do for the other more mundane forms of power which keep your offices switched on) means knowing how to optimise it. It means knowing how to prevent unwanted wastage and it means knowing where to strategically invest to add the most value.

This can only be done if you have an understanding about how the human brain works. What makes it emotionally resilient? How does it solve problems, make decisions or come up with creative ideas? Why does it procrastinate or get distracted? What kind of rewards are particularly effective for motivating it to succeed?

Where are its weaknesses and what can you do to compensate for them?

Luckily the brain isn’t a black box anymore, it is a colourful array of insights that can answer these questions, and more. Answers that can be directly applied to improving your organisation’s brain power.

This is because the brain isn’t fixed during adulthood (like scientific researchers once thought) but is highly malleable over time. It can therefore be rewired to work at its most efficient with the appropriate engineering. Preventing wastage and low productivity. Encouraging motivation, resilience and innovative thinking.

“The brain can be rewired to work at its most efficient with the appropriate engineering, preventing wastage and low productivity”

Amy Brann is the founder of Synaptic Potential working with organisations to strengthen their strategy, culture and performance. Amy is the author of three books: ‘Make Your Brain Work’, ‘Neuroscience for Coaches’ & ‘Engaged: The neuroscience behind creating productive people in successful organisations’. She is a visiting lecturer to Manchester Metropolitan University teaching the neuroscience of leadership on the Master of Sports Directorship programme.
SO, WHAT DOES THIS PROCESS OF BRAIN ENGINEERING LOOK LIKE? HERE ARE 5 EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO BOOST THE BRAIN POWER OF YOUR EMPLOYEES:

#1
To get your employees to be more creative or innovative, don’t encourage creativity. Encourage curiosity. By becoming more curious they will feed their brain with snippets of new information which, when integrated and juggled into existing knowledge, can lead to that next big breakthrough idea.

#2
One cause of mental fatigue in your employees is intense and sustained mental focus over time. Taking short breaks from work in the natural environment (e.g. listening to nature sounds, taking a walk in green space) is an excellent way for them to refocus and restore their attentional capacity over the longer-term.

#3
Get your employees to stop ‘putting off’ tasks or decisions by creating a clear reward structure which avoids irrational biases to slip in and use appropriate nudging strategies to prevent procrastination. Long-term rewards are irrationally discounted so make the reward tangible and in the near future, whilst streamlining choices prevents loss-aversion (the irrational fear of rejecting options).

#4
Research has shown that your employees really can ‘be on the same wavelength’ as their co-workers. Encouraging them to make eye contact, pay attention to where the other person is looking, work on the same page at the same time, and be comfortable with the person they are working with during group sessions, will help get their brain waves aligned.

#5
Encouraging prosocial emotions in the workplace such as empathy, kindness and gratitude can strengthen resilience, reduce stress and improve motivation in your employees. They can learn to become a better “mind reader” by picking up on the subtle emotional cues given off by their co-workers, whilst acts of kindness rapidly propagate through teams.
“You don’t even know what you are capable of... yet”

PENNY MALLORY
Most of us spend our lives picking up, and believing, messages of what we can and cannot do. We do it subconsciously. In our life time, we accumulate a bunch of beliefs of what we are and are not capable of. A maths teacher that tells us we are rubbish at maths, and we believe it. The job promotion that our friend says is beyond us, stops us from applying. Our mums, dads, partners, sisters, bosses tell us what they think our limitations are, and we accept what they say. But what if they are all wrong?

“What if the ‘self-limiting’ beliefs that we have held to be true all these years, are actually a pack of lies?”

It’s easy to have rigid structures in our minds for how we operate and behave. However, flexible and open thinking is what you need! You have no idea what might happen if you could open your mind up to new possibilities, new opportunities and new horizons.

Once we all start to understand the link between how we think and how we behave, then we are in a position to start changing our lives beyond recognition. The qualities that set a world champion apart from the rest is their passion, persistence and relentless determination, but also a belief in their own ability. However, I have never met a world champion who isn’t prepared to take risks in order to improve their own performance and results. These top performers push themselves to find the most tiny, marginal advantage over the competition. They have to, otherwise someone else will.

“Get comfortable being uncomfortable”

The best in the world feel comfortable when they are way out of their comfort zone. You don’t find world champions operating in their comfort zone because their best performance lies outside of that. They get comfortable being uncomfortable.

You don’t even know what you are capable of... yet

All these years you have been, without even realising it, operating with so many self-limiting beliefs that you have no idea what you are actually capable of. What a waste it would be if you were to leave this mortal coil without discovering your brilliance!
Commitment is more important than resilience

Jamil Qureshi is one of today’s foremost practitioners of performance psychology and is an expert in high performing teams and cultural change.

Jamil has worked with a rich diversity of the most talented business and sports teams. In business he has delivered management and leadership programmes at board level for Coca Cola, Hewlett Packard, Emirates Airlines, SAP and Cisco. In sport he has helped six people get to number one in the world. In 2006, he was appointed as the first-ever official psychologist to work with the European Ryder Cup team. They made history in winning by a record-equalling margin. He has also worked successfully with three English Premiership football clubs, and the 2009 Ashes winning cricketers.

Jamil is one of the few external psychologists ever to have been allowed access to study astronauts on the 2008 NASA Space Programme.

I am a fraud. There I said it…

I am asked often to speak about resilience, and I do. However, the word doesn’t sit happily with me in the work place. Having had the pleasure of working with some of the best sports people on the planet, I believe it’s more about commitment than resilience.

Darren Hardy sums this up quite nicely when he says:

“Commitment is doing the thing you said you were going to do long after the mood you said it in has left you.”

Now the difference between success and being on the edge of it is an individual’s attitude towards the importance of that commitment.

Successful athletes, entrepreneurs, and leaders understand that to achieve their goals they have to sacrifice and invest their talent and emotion into long-term gains. They learn to lose before they learn to win.

Resilience to me is about endeavour. Trudging through things no matter how difficult they are. Bouncing back even though fate has dealt you a cruel blow – and by definition, to be resilient you have to expect and experience another. We must be resilient, merely states it’s going to be tough and hard work to see this through.
I like the optimism and ownership offered by the word commitment. We must be committed rather than we must be resilient implies something different. **How repeating small, sometimes seemingly insignificant actions, no matter what the environment, can determine our success. How we can get to where we want by understanding the necessity of consistent positive action.**

Imagine you wanted to lose weight. Would you diet for one day, train for 10 hours and then expect to see results? I don’t need to teach you to suck eggs, especially if your cholesterol is already high! You know the recipe for getting in shape. It only has two ingredients. Eat well. Exercise to burn more than you consume. Simple. **The problem lies in the execution. The part where most of us fail.**

As an aside, I have sat in front of four very good sports people, who have asked for psychological tips and gimmicks to help achieve goals. Each have come back a week later and said they tried it and it doesn’t work – do I have anything else? It's the equivalent of training in the gym for half an hour, going back home, looking in the mirror and saying “The gym’s rubbish – it doesn’t work”. None, achieved number 1 in the world status – although two were capable.

The body, mind, and achievement of goals which are meaningful and worthwhile – takes commitment.

It doesn't take a lot. However, it does cost us something. We need to be prepared to encounter failure, blockers, and a variety of inhibitors and continue regardless. **We need to understand that the price of success is always paid in full and in advance.** Failure can be part payment towards success, if we have the commitment for that to be true.

**We need to understand the premise that short-term sacrifice and loss can lend itself to long-term success, but it's commitment which provides that perspective.**

Now, there is a saying ‘cobblers children have the worst worn shoes’. So therefore, I will continue with my fraudulent behaviour – Now I’ve spent time writing this, I can’t be bothered to go to the gym, so will watch some sport instead.
“Increasingly, there are only two kinds of companies: brave and dead.”

MARK STEVENSON
Is your organisation building walls or windmills?

‘Reluctant Futurist’ Mark Stevenson is one of the most respected thinkers on the interplay of technology, business and society. He is the author of the international best-seller ‘An Optimist’s Tour of the Future’ and the award-winning ‘We Do Things Differently: The Outsiders Rebooting our World’

Mark’s many advisory roles include Sir Richard Branson’s Virgin Earth Challenge, the GSMA, Atlas of the Future and The National Theatre of Scotland. He is founder of the cultural change agency, We Do Things Differently, helping organisations to see their role in creating a better future.

“Stevenson wears no blindfold. His tools are curiosity, open-mindedness, clarity and reason.”

Chris Anderson, TED.

People call me a futurist. I don’t like it.

One reason is because futurology is associated with prediction and human beings are terrible at making predictions - from the confident prediction that steam trains would never catch on ‘because women’s bodies are not designed to go at 50 miles an hour’ to the president of the Digital Equipment Corporation saying ‘there is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home’ to the latest ridiculously optimistic financial predictions from fossil fuel companies we are forever victim to our own prejudices, extrapolating from our own narrow reality, and predicting things we find emotionally (and financially) comfortable. Another reason is because the higher order effects of any change in technology or how we organise ourselves are impossible to predict long term. When the Internet arrived, it didn’t take a rocket scientist to predict the rise of e-mail (1st order effect).

But no-one predicted social media, or how it would become the latest in a long line of fake news propagators, or how that might affect the democratic process in its own special way.

Another bug-bear I have with prediction is that it assumes that the world operates independently and spontaneously of our actions: we cannot affect change, only live with it when it arrives. Not only is this not true most of the time, it’s enormously debilitating – as well as an excuse for apathy and avoiding responsibility. For this kind of ‘tell me the future’ work there are many consultants who will take your money.

Instead, I prefer to work with clients who are interested in predicting the future by inventing it. My job is to help them become ‘future literate’ - by which I mean understanding the questions the future is asking them (whether that’s about coming disruptions from automation, or the frightening reality of climate change) and then assist them in architecting their businesses and careers to answer those questions in the cause of making the world more sustainable, equitable, humane or just. The good news is that for those organisations brave enough to look up and see the big picture and then do something about it the future is financially rosy. As the US National Bureau of Economic Research puts it, organisations that take the sustainability of the planet and species seriously “significantly outperform their counterparts over the long-term, both in terms of stock market as well as accounting performance.” Why? First, because these organisations are outward looking, rather than stuck in their own ‘silos of assumptions’, which means they manage risk better. And second, they attract the best (and most loyal) talent.

In the face of rapid change most organisations approaching me claim they want my help in embracing innovation – a word that has become the ultimate empty talisman for executives and marketers. Usually what they actually want is a new HR manual with the word ‘creativity’ on the front page and some breathless language about ‘engagement’ and ‘empowerment’, a fresh logo, some fig-leaf CSR and an ‘innovation space’ with bean bags, primary colours on the walls, and nothing too sharp.

They are not prepared to do the hard work of cultural change that’s required to unleash true innovation in their organisations. As Peter Drucker famously said

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast”.

I tell my clients that innovation is really the culture of asking the right questions – and it takes brave organisations to ask them. There again, as Seth Godin points out:

“Increasingly, there are only two kinds of companies: brave and dead.”

But, once you’ve got the right culture and keep nourishing it almost anything is possible. I know this because I’ve been lucky enough to know and work with some of the greatest innovators of the current age, who are building the next and who understand that the future we need has no interest in the stories you’ve found comfortable in the past. The old Chinese proverb states:

“When the winds of change blow some people build walls, some people build windmills.”

I like to work with the windmill builders – and share their lessons with the world.
Get serious about creativity and make your thinking funnier

Tim Reid spent over 20 years working with some of the world’s most creative organisations, including global ad agencies and innovation consultancies, before having his first sitcom ‘Car Share’ taken up by superstar comedian Peter Kay and commissioned by BBC One.

As an innovation consultant, Tim has helped many clients – from beer brands to broadcasters; confectioners to condom makers – reimagine the future and reinvent their businesses. As a coach, Tim has enabled hundreds of teams across the world re-ignite their own creative potential and have bigger, better ideas.
So here are 5 big lessons in creative development that became really clear to me as I co-created and co-wrote Car Share.

1. Picture the idea

When a colleague and I were bouncing thoughts around, looking for a big sitcom idea, we were pretty pleased with ourselves when we thought about a car share scheme. But that was just the spark of a thought, not an idea. There are a thousand different roads we could have taken that down.

It was only when we built the thought up... let's only see them in the car... on the way to and from work... let's make them a straight-laced bloke, and a flighty, chatty female colleague... that it really came to life. We could see every scene, in our collective mind's eye. And we loved it. We bounced it around between us, with childish, playful energy, laughing and writing, until the first episode was landed.

The lesson: Make sure your idea is a fully formed concept you can see in your mind's eye, not just a theoretical thought.

2. Use your momentum

If we had done things conventionally, we’d have stopped writing the first draft after one episode. That’s the normal route for pitching a sitcom idea. We didn’t know that. We were in flow and we were having too much fun to stop. So we wrote the whole series. Six episodes. And I think it’s better for it.

The characters, the storylines, the tone of the whole show was developed and crafted in 3 months as we ping-ponged the scripts between us, and I’m sure that momentum helped us to keep it feeling real.

The lesson: when the creative juices are flowing, don’t stop. Use your momentum to keep the energy behind the idea.

3. The power of collaboration

If you can find a creative partner that complements your style, that bounces positively off you, and you them, your thoughts will spark new thoughts off each other. Together you get an energy that soon becomes self-sustaining, self-generating. Your ideas become bigger and better; your thinking becomes quicker and sharper as you try to impress and amuse each other, and you get more expansive in your thinking. But you get better at getting reductive too. When you need to trim the fat, lose the journey ideas, if you have a partner you trust, it’s much easier to do as a team.

The lesson: creativity is a team sport.

4. Make it real

Move your idea from the theoretical into the real as early in the process as you can. We acted out our first few scenes in an imaginary car, made up of two kitchen chairs in a city centre apartment.

It made us laugh, but also made us think of what John and Kayleigh would be doing in the car; how the physical act of driving would disrupt their chat; how they might fiddle with the radio, the mirrors, the glove box... stuff we might have missed if we just kept writing at our laptops.

The lesson: rapid prototyping, acting out the idea, bringing your idea to life early in the process will help you refine, test and build it.

5. The best ideas come as jokes

That’s pretty obvious for comedy. But it’s just as true in innovation. There’s a moment in any ideas session when the energy changes, the creative juices start flowing and the ideas come thick and fast. It’s when people start to laugh and have fun. When people stop worrying ‘what if they laugh at my idea’ and start embracing the laughter.

Advertising legend, David Ogilvy, said “The best ideas come as jokes, make your thinking as funny as possible”, he was right. We laugh at things that surprise us, that feel a bit risky, and that shine a light on a truth. That’s what the best ideas do.

The lesson: don’t be afraid to be funny. And if people start laughing at an idea in your workshop, see it as a sign that there’s a great idea in the room that needs landing.
A reminder of what leadership and teamwork are all about

Caspar Craven is an entrepreneur and adventurer. He believes in challenging conventional thinking on how leaders and teams become truly effective and create extraordinary results.

Caspar has 30 years’ experience in building teams to make things happen. Starting as an entrepreneur at the age of 14, he has built and led teams in global corporations, start-ups, struggling and high growth businesses and on a trophy-winning world racing yacht.

But his toughest challenge by far was building his family team to sail around the world: with his wife and three children aged 9, 7 and 2.

Two short stories to remind us what leadership and teamwork are all about.

Slow Down. What my 5-year-old Daughter reminded me about leadership

My 5-year-old recently reminded me what leadership is all about.

She had a friend over for a playdate. Her friend was struggling to understand how to play a game (it was Cat Bingo). She stopped what she was doing. She went to understand where he was stuck and to help him.

Isn’t that the key attribute of leaders? To show empathy. To understand those around you. To help others develop.

Leadership isn’t a title. It’s something you live by virtue of your actions. It doesn’t matter if you are 5, 35 or 75. Here’s the pattern I’ve noticed. I’ve seen it in the research I’ve read, from brilliant leaders that I’ve spent time with and learnt from, and from my own experiences. It’s that the single most important characteristic of any leader is empathy. Showing real and genuine concern for those in your team, for those around you.

Here’s the advice paraphrased from my little one:

Slow down a moment. Take notice of those around you and what they need. Show compassion and help them on their journey.
Story 2 - Why are you really here?

I looked down at my notes. My slide clicker was in my hand. My friend and former colleague was speaking and was sharing how we knew each other and why I was there. It was almost time for me to take the stage.

It was 15 years ago that I left KPMG. Things felt like they had come full circle. I was back, this time about to present to a group within KPMG in Boston to about to talk about culture, vision, mission and values.

Back then, quite frankly I didn’t understand what culture, vision, mission and values meant. It was a bunch of mumbo jumbo.

Since then I have been on quite a journey from building multiple businesses, selling one of them and sailing around the world with my family.

Over the last 15 years I have learnt the necessity of values, mission, culture as the difference between surviving and thriving. So, it was an odd feeling going back to my corporate world and delivering a talk on this subject.

Little did I know that I was about to learn something.

I’d been doing my research and had done a deep dive into the culture and values of KPMG and what they were all about.

What I found truly surprised me but also resonated deeply with me. The first question in their documents was this: “What’s your personal purpose? Why are you here?”

Here’s why it surprised me. For the last 18 months I’ve been speaking to companies about leadership, teamwork, culture and values. Although I know how fundamental personal purpose is, I’d been shying away from it.

Why? Because from my own corporate days I had made the assumption that companies would be reluctant to embrace that message of finding your personal purpose, because of the fear that some people might leave and go live their true purpose.

AND NOW.

Here was KPMG having it as literally their first question. I could not agree more with the philosophy.

If you know what’s driving you and you are clear on what’s important to you and your family, it unleashes an astonishing amount of drive and energy. Align that drive and energy with a powerful and meaningful mission for your company and you will be flying. Both personally and in business.

Ask yourself this question:

What’s truly important to you in life. Write it down and get clear on your purpose and drivers. So many of us fail to do this and go through life reacting rather than taking control.
Future thinking requires exploring alternatives and building flexibility

Angela Oguntala is a futurist and a director at Greyspace - a design and futures consultancy that partners with organisations to think, plan and design for the future. She has worked in education, healthcare, finance, fashion, sustainability and in a range of other spaces across culture and technology. Clients include IKEA, Hermès, Microsoft, Philips, and various media groups. She has also been an advisor for policy organisations and large-scale city planning projects in Northern Europe.

Angela is a Salzburg Global Fellow, and has been named a Future Innovator by The United Nations ICT / Ars Electronica for her thinking and work. In 2017, she was named a leading creative entrepreneur by Kinfolk and featured as part of their best-selling book series The Kinfolk Entrepreneur.

The saying goes “Everybody loves progress, but nobody likes change.”

But ever-present change is here, and it’s accelerating. Our continued relevance and success will largely be tied to how creatively we think, plan, and design for these changes. This is where a futures thinking mindset can be the key differentiator in keeping people and organisations fit for the times ahead.

Exploring Alternatives

What happens when people live to age 160? What if the subscription economy means that we will, all, soon own absolutely nothing? What industries will blockchain disrupt? Will a robot, really, take my job? These are very real questions, of very real futures, that we might find ourselves living in, soon. These same questions may scare some and equally excite others, however, this is clear, we can’t outrun or avoid the impacts of the fast changes that we see and feel happening all around us. What we can and should be doing instead is developing the capacity to deeply explore these changes before they come to life - to pick apart the trade-offs they present, the rewards, the risks, the alternative outcomes we might be facing.

This futures thinking mindset will be the mark of resilient people and organisations in the times to come. But that’s not because we can predict the outcomes of what exactly our lives will be like 2, 5, 10 years from now. Instead, it’s because a mindset geared towards exploring alternative future environments and the different pathways to those environments opens up new opportunities that we would not be able to see or understand if we are only focused on the present day.

The World Economic Forum has said that Cognitive Flexibility, a skill actively cultivated in much of futures thinking, will be one of the top skills that we will need in the workforce of tomorrow. That’s because Cognitive Flexibility is about having the mental ability to shift perspectives, to shift mindsets and it’s about flexible problem solving. It helps us when we’re faced with new, and unexpected situations and it also helps us to update our belief systems when we get new information in. This is the very essence of a creative and flexible mindset which anchors innovative and emergent leadership, teams, and practices. We build our creative flexibility by merging design thinking, ethnography and strategic foresight. This hybrid thinking strengthens our ability to explore how our world might change - to explore the future. And by this exploring of the future, we can find ways to deeply impact the present.

Building Flexibility

This mode of thinking leads to the discovery of new patterns in how markets, people, technologies and policies might shift and what people and organisations should do to be flexible to these new realities. It’s key to remember that it’s not just about the shape of the issue as it looks today, whether that’s for AI or antibiotics, but it’s about the trajectory and the drivers that will push these areas into tomorrow.

The keyword here is alternatives. There are many different versions of the future and the patterns that we see in today’s world will stop, reverse or change directions in the next X amount of days, months or years. As such, a focus on alternatives, moves us away from narrow ‘yes/no’ questions like “Will a robot take my job?” to the deeper question of “If a robot does take my job, then what do the alternative futures without work actually look like... and how will I thrive in each of these worlds?”
How do we stop doing this to ourselves?

Jack Milner enjoys simultaneous careers as a director, comedy writer, business facilitator and speaker. He has over 20 years’ experience helping organisations and individuals articulate and memorably communicate their ideas.

Jack says that “Skills learnt from the world of stand-up comedy and improvisation means fresh, natural and compelling communication…and can help audiences understand complex stories.”

As director for the West End, film, and radio, Jack knows how to take often dry, technical information and render it clear and memorable, no matter who the audience.

He’s worked with top comedians, theatre and Soap stars as well as a lot of stressed out executives.

Jack’s clients include some fairly hefty businesses including Google, Microsoft,Virgin Media, the BBC, Ofsted, National Theatre and the Armagh “Look and See” group!

We had a conference last month. 50 of us flew in.

A row of bankers turned to the Whistle-blower at the end of the line. “Two days of PowerPoint presentations. On the first day, after about 10 minutes, as another slide came up I thought, ‘I’ve got two more days of this, how do I cope!?’. Then I said to myself, ‘I’ll put a smile on my face, stare in the direction of the presenter, and think happy thoughts.’ So that’s what I did. I didn’t listen to a single word… for two whole days.”

For a few seconds there was silence, then another man nodded. “Yep, I did the same.” There were more sighs of agreement, the dam had burst, clearly, this had not been a successful conference.

Then a middle-aged man at the centre of the line, who had been staring at the floor, looked up. “I organised that conference; he’s right. It was two days of death by PowerPoint. And we do it every year. How do we stop doing this to ourselves?”

How much money and resources were involved in putting together this conference? Never mind that no one listened or was physically or even mentally there.

The cost of bringing 50 bankers (flights, pay and accommodation), of their preparation time (for presentations that no one would listen to), and then the negative energy created and then not dissipated, must have been humongous.
So how do we **STOP** doing this to ourselves?

Here are the 7 solutions we came up with within the ensuing 30 minutes of that workshop

#1 Be clear on the purpose of the presentation, the impact you want to have on your audience and answering the “So what?” question. As in why should I listen to this? Then deliver your answer to that hypothetical question with passion, stories and intent.

#2 Do you really need PowerPoint? I know speakers who are brilliant with slides. I know plenty who are just as extraordinary without slides. Watch the wonderful Brene Brown deliver her TED talks with hardly a single slide.

#3 Here’s a simple but powerful trick. Use the ‘B’ or ‘W’ button on your keyboard or clicker. This turns off PowerPoint (or more accurately turns the screen to Black or White). Hurrah!

#4 Lose as many words as you can. See if you can reach 5 words or less per slide (it takes 500% more effort to read 8 words). You’ll be giving clarity by talking around the images, and a good image says 1,000 words.

#5 The most successful TED talks average 3 laughs per minute. On many of them, 60%+ of the laughs come from funny slides. Simple. Make some of your slides humorous.

#6 Use alternatives to slides. Try props, flip-chart; make it interactive, make it emotional.

#7 This is an extra that I didn’t discuss with the bankers. But this is key to avoiding “boring presentations”. When working with new comedians I talk about the need to go over the line. Most fear the silence of the audience, the non-laugh, so in an effort to ensure they ‘don’t fail’, they play safe. Result: their comedy occupies the dead humour zone frequented by late night DJs. To find something more interesting and funnier they have to move over the line. Likewise, with your presentations, move them over that line.

Finally, use this neat trick from the world’s greatest theatre director, Peter Brook. When directing Shakespeare, he would say to himself, would an audience of 10-year-olds be bored by this? If the answer was ‘yes’, then he changed the production until his imaginary audience of 10-year-olds was engaged, entertained and inspired.

Try doing the same thing with your presentations. Then you won’t ever have to wonder, “How do we stop doing this to ourselves?”
You don’t have to be a genius to be a leader of genius!

KEVIN GASKELL
My view is that people are incredible.

Ordinary people, led well, can achieve extraordinary results. I believe that people can be inspired to stop chasing immediate rewards but rather think about building something that lasts, creating something of which they are proud.

Apparently, everyone is 5% genius. A leader’s role is to combine the team’s 5%'s and thereby create a complete genius. My job as a leader is not to be a genius, but to be a genius creator. Short term incentivisation is replaced by long term inspiration, creativity and pride. Under achieving teams are transformed. We create a culture of continuous change and innovation. We build a fun environment that is fair and achievement oriented. We praise progress rather than scold failure – we catch people in, not catch people out!

I now focus on transferring the skills and techniques of inspirational leadership to others. There are a number of core principles:

01 High performance begins and ends with engagement. The leader’s role is to establish a clear vision of success. Everyone needs to understand what success will look like, what it will sound like and what it will feel like. What will it mean for the customer when we get there? Our teams discuss that vision and make it tangible. Everyone in the team has a role to play so we give them the opportunity to get excited and engaged.

02 Challenges are opportunities for growth. Address the fear of change by discussing the new status we are striving for. Evaluate carefully the opportunities and the marketplace and deal only in facts. Get excited together by being enthusiastic about the freedom to make real and substantial change. Invite team members to move quickly.

03 Make it easy for the team to contribute. Build a clear, but simple, plan. Share it. Invite comments and ideas. Excite the high performers to become leaders at every level in the organisation. Be totally inclusive of talent and ideas – let people dream! Communicate the successes of individual’s ideas and improvements. Quietly identify low performers and address the issues: motivation, skills, other? Provide support once, then twice. Don’t carry passengers.

04 Praise first, challenge later. Provide regular feedback. Make heroes of the high performing teams by praising their approach to a challenge. A positive approach can be transferable to other areas. High performers will run with the opportunity. Leadership is about creating a positive culture and letting the team run. It is not the end of the world if it goes wrong.

05 Recognise that people are amazing. Leading teams to high performance is about creating the belief that ideas and challenge are progress. Set a positive example, be approachable, consistent, and make champions visible. Positive belief is an energy which transfers to others.

Given the opportunity and a supportive culture an inspired team will surprise themselves and others with how much they can achieve. The role of an inspired leader is to identify that opportunity and to create that culture.

Kevin Gaskell is an extraordinary leader who has led iconic brands Porsche, BMW and Lamborghini to unprecedented levels of success before creating global businesses from scratch. A corporate trailblazer, serial entrepreneur and world class team builder he has been recognised as one of the most outstanding leaders of his generation.

As a CEO, chairman and founder Kevin has enjoyed success in sectors including data, technology, manufacturing, brand marketing, landscape gardening and professional services.

He has repeatedly led teams to achieve extraordinary performance in companies ranging from 7 to 7,000 employees. During his career of founding start-ups, driving turnarounds and leading major brands his teams have built over £3 billion in shareholder value. One of his companies was recognised as the best private equity investment of the year. Another was reported as the 7th most innovative company in the world. Kevin sincerely believes that ordinary people can achieve extraordinary results.

Kevin has played international cricket but now relaxes by playing in a rock band. With his son he has walked to both the North and South Poles and climbed some of the world’s highest mountains to raise money to fight cancer.
Bruno Marion, nick-named the futurist monk, is an expert in global trends and innovation.

For the last 30 years, Bruno has been travelling around the world, meeting CEOs, monks, all kind of gurus, people in jail, super rich people, super poor people, artists, scientists, high level politicians, members of the special forces, activists and successful entrepreneurs.

In that time, he has read thousands of books on the latest innovations in science, technology, philosophy and spirituality. He has been experimenting with cutting edge technologies, investigating new types of governances, smart cities and disruptive ways of living.


Our world has become more uncertain because it has become chaotic.

And that could be good news for all of us. It has become chaotic essentially for three reasons: the increase in the number of people, speed and connectivity.

Within just one or two generations, the world population grew incredibly from 3 billion to over 7 billion.

Human civilisation is also facing an unseen increase in the number of connections between people. Over 3 billion people have access to the Internet. And since 2014, there are more mobile phones than people on this planet.

More and more people being more and more connected, that’s exactly what we need to have a chaotic system!

We learned at school that entropy reigns and nothing can escape the implacable hold of the second law of thermodynamics: “And to dust you shall return.”

The theories of chaos teach us that all this is but one facet of the story. They show us the emergence of an incredible complexity ever since the universe began. From atoms to molecules, from the reptilian brain to the brain of mammals until we arrive at the neocortex in man, the universe has not ceased to surprise us with its inexhaustible creativity. That is the other facet of history.

The theories of chaos show us how a system can evolve towards greater complexity and create breakthroughs. If you have the right mindset and the right tools!

So, what can we do?

We can learn two very important things from Chaos Theories: chaos is not mess. There is a hidden order in chaos, called a strange attractor. The other thing we learn is that in chaos, one
can see auto-amplification. A small action, a new way of doing things, can have a dramatic effect. The meteorologist Edward Lorenz discovered that “The simple fluttering of a butterfly’s wings in Japan can unleash a few weeks later a storm in New York.”, what is known as the butterfly effect. One single action, one single project, one single individual transformation may change your company … and the world.

We can “hack” chaos to our advantage if we create our own strange attractor, our dream, a new vision.

Try it for yourself and see how and if it works.

First define your dream(s). If you are familiar with meditation, meditate, if not go for a walk in a nice environment, the more nature and peace, the better. Then, try to visualise where you would like to be in one year. Be ambitious, don’t limit yourself, this is a dream! Where do you live? With whom? What do you do? Etc. Be as detailed as possible. After this visualisation, then sit down, take a piece of paper and write down whatever you have seen in your future.

You just started to build your own strange attractor, the first step to discover how to hack chaos! Next step, you now can use the butterfly effect. Read your dream every day. When you read it, you should actually live it, feel it (feel the taste of the food, the love you may feel for someone, the temperature of the room where you want to live, etc.) By doing so, consciously or mostly unconsciously, you will make micro decisions during the day that will lead you to your dreams!

Don’t believe me? Try it!

What we can do at a personal level, we can do at a larger level for our companies or the world. Let’s find new dreams and new narratives. And let’s use the right tools to benefit from the Butterfly Effect!

Will you join the journey? What’s your dream for yourself, for your company, for the world?
A critical aspect of contemporary business is agility.

The agility to do things differently to the way that we’ve done things before.

In nature the most successful systems are not simply the most efficient. They are the most agile. Which is why agility in the world of business is an essential topic that organisations are incredibly interested in, but few pursue in any meaningful way. Why? Because we too often think that the creativity, which underpins agility, is a chaotic, messy and serendipitous process shrouded in the mysteries of art. The premise of this thinking is that creativity requires the brain to make big jumps by bringing very disparate ideas together.

In fact, the brain never makes big jumps. Just as you can’t travel from the desk in your office to the door without passing through the space in between, the same is true for the space of ideas. Which means creativity is in fact not creative (at least not as we usually think of it). Rather, ‘creativity’ is only creative when seen from the outside. Creativity is instead a way of being that can be learned by anyone. Which begs the question: “Why is it so difficult?”. The answer is in understanding how the brain sees the world.

Perception is fundamental to everything the brain does, from what we know, think and believe to the clothes we wear and the people we fall in love with. Everything begins with (and indeed is) perception. Which means that if we are to understand creativity we have to understand how the brain creates what it sees, and then use those principles to enable us to see differently. What we’ve learned in neuroscience is that THE biggest barrier to seeing differently is our innate fear of uncertainty! Which, as the world becomes increasingly interconnected through technology, is becoming the most significant challenge for companies (and individuals) to maintain agility.

Grounded in the neuroscience of perception there are 5 principles by which the brain resolves uncertainty. These principles – once employed – are essential to not only enabling better leadership, but also facilitating more creative ways of being in the world at large. Indeed, if you truly want your organisation to thrive in an increasingly uncertain world, then you need the people who make up your organisation to live creatively, rather than simply apply learned rules that enable short term efficiency, but which also become quickly obsolete.

Understanding the principles of agility, on the other hand, offers a deeper level of understanding that transcends context (eg. E=MC^2 is as relevant to a chicken as it is to a star). What is more, it is not sufficient to be told these principles. It is important to enact them, because knowledge in the brain is ‘embodied’. Which means the brain can only truly understand by actively doing.
change assumptions
change perception
Mark Gallagher has held leadership roles in the sport of Formula One motor racing for over 30 years. This includes spending 15 years on the management boards of two Formula One teams; Jordan Grand Prix, and Red Bull Racing. Until 2012 he headed the Cosworth Formula One engine company.

During his career he has worked with some of the sport’s greatest World Champions including Brazil’s Ayrton Senna and Germany’s Michael Schumacher as well as British stars Jenson Button and David Coulthard. Today he runs his own consulting business and is a Formula One analyst for media organisations including BBC Radio 5 Live, ESPN Sports and Sky Sports.

When I am asked to deliver business insights from the world of Formula One motor racing, I often ask clients what it is they want to achieve.

Not just from their event or conference, but in business and in life. Being clear about your purpose, defining your ambition, is really very important.

The great thing about running a Formula One team is that we define success and failure in very simple terms. You win, or you lose. Twenty-one times a year we post our results, facing our competition head on, in a race of technology, process, systems and people.

So many times, I am asked if the technology is more important than the people. Yet the one thing every successful team in Formula One learns is that it is your people who determine outcomes.

Twenty years ago ‘my’ team, Jordan Grand Prix, won its first Grand Prix. The race was in Belgium, the track was the formidable Spa-Francorchamps circuit, and on that Sunday in late August 1998 we beat the very best in our business. Or, to put it another way, on that day and in that moment, we became the very best in the world.

Having joined the team during its start-up phase - there were 34 of us when we began the journey in 1990 - I had experienced first-hand the benefits of being small, agile and - to use modern parlance - disruptive. We did things differently, challenged established ways of thinking. Each of us did the equivalent jobs of three or four people in the large teams, and in our very first season we finished 5th in the World Championship, out of 17 teams. Naturally we grew. More people, customers (sponsors) and financial risk. A large factory, more complexity and the challenges inherent in making a business mature. We worked hard to sustain the entrepreneurial spirit which had held us in such good stead during the early years. Quick decision making, an agile organisation in which people were tasked with getting on with the job and made accountable. We drove a responsibility culture.

During the first seven years of our existence we had achieved everything except outright victory. We’d taken pole positions, enjoyed fastest laps, finished in every position imaginable including 3rd and 2nd, but never the win. In Belgium, on a rainy afternoon with the mist and fog enveloping the Ardennes mountains everything finally came together.

It was meant to be; our team, still eager, young and determined to take risks, faced the might of Ferrari and McLaren, with their lead drivers Michael Schumacher and Mika Hakkinen. We had employed Damon Hill, a former World Champion and tasked him with showing us how to put the final piece of the jigsaw in place.

Damon delivered in fine style, in a car which our 300 staff had designed, developed, manufactured, upgraded and perfected. Not only did he win, but our other car, driven by Ralf Schumacher, finished 2nd. We became the first team in the entire history of Formula One to score its maiden victory with a 1-2 finish.

How did it feel? Hugely satisfying, an enormous sense of achievement after 8 years of constant toil. I called our Chief Technical Officer, who was back at base in England, working on the next design. He was emotional. I asked him if he was ok?

“I am,” he said, “because this is our purpose as a company. To win, to be the best, and today we are. This is what makes the quest for perfection so worthwhile. This, after all, is our passion.”
Every company I work with tells me they have high performance people.

Every company I work with tells me they have high performance people. Most companies believe that. So, what do you believe makes a high-performance culture? Do you know why you succeed?

In air combat, maximum performance is right on the edge of failure. If you fly to 99% performance, the opposition will out turn you and you lose; pull a hair's breadth beyond 100% and the aircraft loses all its energy and you lose: maximum performance is right on the edge of failure. In today's world, organisations cannot afford to be out-maneuvered by the competition. Aviation leads the world on human factors – how and why do human beings make mistakes and what can we learn from these? How do you, as a leader, create a culture where people are happy to share their failures? 60% of aviation accidents (military or civilian) are caused by human error, whereas only 6% of incidents (mistakes and errors that did not result in an accident) are reported. All that learning not shared...lost. And that is from highly selected, highly trained...and annually tested...individuals.

But we all know that mistakes are not just limited to aviation. Let's accept the assumption that many of the highest performers, intelligent, driven characters through school progress to take medicine and become doctors. These are some of society's highest performing people. Further, let's assume that the very best become surgeons. These are a highly select group. But here's the rub...how come they take the wrong kidney out? There is only a choice of two! And this is not isolated. In Australia, 18000 people die every year from preventable medical error; concurrently 55000 become permanently disabled from preventable medical error! And these are some of the highest performing people on the planet. Many recognise, that if aviation had the same culture as the medical world, there would be a major flying accident every week!

All companies rely on their top 20%: their high performers. But in a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous world, human beings make mistakes. High resilient organisations learn rapidly from such errors. Innovation relies on an acceptance of failure. Agility is predicated on the speed of learning. BAE Systems work on two principles: we never make the same mistake twice and, we replicate our success factors. Many organisations claim to be learning organisations, they also claim agility and resilience, but do their actions match their words? Does your organisation have a systemic learning culture: fail fast, share fast, learn fast? Are your highest performers sharing their failures? Or do you suppress mistakes?

The key to survival, let alone high performance, is the speed, depth and breadth of learning. Why do you think they separate prisoners of war? Because learning is a social construct. Human beings learn faster together. It is the key competitive advantage to your business thriving in a tsunami of change.
“If you fly to 99% performance, the opposition will out turn you and you lose”

JOHN PETERS
How much should we plan for the worst?

Brexit and Trump mask less conspicuous challenges and greater changes ahead.

We live in the most unpredictable times since the 1930’s, so we are all personally in bumpy, uncharted waters. We hope for the best but how much should we plan for the worst? Sit tight, I will end this piece with optimism...

Europe: Brexit is a side show in Brussels compared to the strains being placed on the Union by the increasing lurch to populism of member states. Hungary, Poland, Austria and Italy are the most obvious examples, but Germany is also being nudged that way. Populism; mostly it’s a significant move to the right despite what Italian socialists may claim. The flashpoint is immigration, but lack of sovereignty is really at the root.

The 28-member states signed up to something they increasingly dislike: unaccountable governance from Brussels.

Merkel has been a phenomenon but she is holding on by a thread for now. A new coalition and leader will emerge soon and it will be more focused on German self-interest. Merkel has been Europe’s saint but times have moved past that being desirable for Germans, they are increasingly disillusioned with the conduct of other member states. Expect a more populist leadership within the next few years.

The Euro is the bigger question; can it survive? Logically it should not, it is and will continue to harm the southern member states. The most likely member to bail first is Italy, which cannot (and will not) stick to the rulebook. Germany has done better than anyone from the Euro but it has not been without cost and frustrations such as with Greece. The upshot of the turmoil in Europe is that I think the Union is heading for a major re-calibration of its mandate and the retirement of its current leadership may signal the start of the loosening of the Union. It will be messy but a good thing. Remember that one of the major spurs behind the Treaty of Rome was to create a Europe that will not fight itself. The opposite is happening; for the past decade the EU has been more divisive than unifying. Ironically, member states will I think in 10 years’ time have an affiliation that is closer to that which we will have.

Brexit looks increasingly as though it’s going to be ‘associate membership’. EU rules without a voice (they never listened to us until we got tough anyway!) and without the most demanding strings attached such as free movement and the rule of the ECJ. Soft Brexit it may be but it’s pragmatic and not disruptive. Almost business as usual. (Written July 2018)

Trump has moved from being alarming to predictably at odds with common sense and decency. His ignorance will be his undoing and his desire for an ill-conceived trade war may be his Waterloo. It is already starting to hurt the blue-collar workers that he did so well to attract two years ago. The business-friendly conservative approach has been helping markets to record levels but the trade war will start to dent that too. There is an equity asset bubble right now; let’s hope that its deflation is slow. Robert Mueller may yet pull a surprise in his investigations but if anything brings Trump down it may be something less world threatening such as tax fraud. It did for Al Capone and maybe it will be something mundane that finishes the most globally reviled leader of the free world of the past 200 years.

The overriding theme of the last two years has been uncertainty. By this time next year, the future path for the global economy will be far clearer. So, plan for the best in the medium to long term and exploit all opportunities in the short term.
Stephen Archer is a business man, commercial and leadership consultant and economic analyst much quoted in print and broadcast media for his incisive and un-spun views on business and economic matters.

A consultant to FTSE and multi-national companies in the UK, USA and beyond at CEO level, Stephen is well placed to provide commentary based on direct experience as well as being up to date on global economic issues.

He provides analysis on global EU and UK business trends, talks about what measures governments should take and what businesses need to do to break free of the economic cycle, restore confidence and maintain competitive strength. Stephen also speaks to the challenges of effective leadership in the modern world and the remedies.
Adrian Furnham is an academic, a consultant on organisational behaviour, a writer and a broadcaster. His academic career has taken him to The Hong Kong International Business School, London University, Oxford University, Henley Management College, the Norwegian Business School and the University of KwaZulu Natal.

He is currently a founding Director in a management consultancy specialising in corporate evaluation and design having previously spent more than 25 years as Professor of Psychology at UCL. He has written 82 books, in his spare time!
What sort of negotiator is Mrs May?

Shrewd and canny, tough and unyielding, beguiling and flirtatious; upfront and upbeat? What sort of help does she receive and who should she turn to for advice?

Is she more like Mrs Thatcher or Mrs Merkel? Does she have an advantage being female surrounded by predominantly males? There is no shortage of books and courses on negotiation skills. And with good reason. It is one of the most important and transferable of all skills. You negotiate with your boss and peers, partner and children as well as many people you might employ on a part time basis.

What of women as negotiators? Dare one suggest that there are (socialised) sex differences in the way women negotiate? Or, totally radically, that there may be biological differences based on evolutionary principles?

So what advice to give women who have to negotiate at work.

Catherine Tinsley and colleagues at George Washington University offer some evidence-based advice.

Swap negotiating roles with other females and take it in turns to support each other.

Negotiate in teams, hetero- or homogeneous, and be seen as a team member, but if you become the team leader, assert always that you are negotiating on behalf of all members.

Stress if you can, the idea of “out of the norm behaviour” by asserting that very point. “Normally this issue would not trouble me but…”

Time your requests well, opting for favourable conditions because self-advocacy is seen as less unacceptable in times of plenty vs. scarcity or threat.

Argue from your position rather than your personality or gender. For example, say “It behoves me as a manager,” “I would not be a good director if I did not.”

Rather than just being an unusual female negotiator it is a good idea to highlight multiple roles such as employee, manager, community supporter etc.

Network with others who are less gender sensitive, who see individual differences more in ability, experience and personality terms than simply the great gender dichotomy.

Appeal to common aims, goals and values across teams, departments, areas so stressing shared interests and cooperation.

If you want a promotion or salary increase, frame the request in terms of your crucial contribution to your department or team unit. It shows you are caring, have concern for others and espouse communality. So, you are negotiating for your country, your people, the next generation... not yourself and your ego.

Good advice based on research or patronising nonsense? It is difficult to even mention sex/gender differences at all these days. Researchers often have to be courageous, naive or unwise to research or write about sex differences.

One of the most famous international “cases” was the President of Harvard University, Lawrence Summers, who suggested that it was women’s (relative) lack of mathematical ability that explained the sex differences in the Science Faculty at universities.
Dirty tricks, skulduggery & data portability

Tony Fish is an author, investor, serial entrepreneur and maverick.

He is a visiting Fellow at Henley Business School for entrepreneurship and innovation and an EC expert for Big Data.

He is entrepreneur in Residence at Bradford School of Management and Law, lecturer in innovation and entrepreneurship at the London Business School and lecturer in AI and The Future of Disruptive Technology at the London School of Economics.
Taking control over one’s data is less about where to store the data and more about freedom of choice about where or rather how the data is used, monetised and by whom.

Given that platform companies such as Apple, Facebook and Twitter, as examples complicate, confuse and officiate what they are actually doing with our personal data, how can you position your organisation to become your customers’ trusted partner? As a context, economics defines utility companies as having one differentiator - price. Given the ubiquity and certainty of one unit of utility is the same from wherever you buy it, the market players create bundles and offers to hide the actual price and to make comparisons near impossible.

What happens when your service is FREE?

The focus here is in the application of the same tricks, skulduggery and confusion that market players who have access to your data use to hide the truth about what they are doing with your data. Let’s use Facebook as an example.

Looking to the left of Figure 1 - this is how as a user you log into Facebook from the web or mobile. The user is able to go to settings and control some of their preferences on sharing and privacy but there is nothing to control the use of their personal data. It is not obvious to find preferences, and descriptions for each tick box are unclear. The user has a perception of control but in reality, to get the most from Facebook, you follow the suggested set up and this gives Facebook control over your content and data. Our user Lubony spends an hour finding the right setting and opts to restrict sharing to friends only. The user now perceives that their data will only be shared with their immediate Facebook Friends - which is true unless one of the friends reshares or cuts/pastes and shares. There is also nowhere in the preferences, where you are given the choice to share your posted data, searches, and other behavioural data with third party providers.

What we can learn from looking left is that platforms do provide user preferences, but make it vague and difficult to use. Users don’t understand that their belief in preferences as control is misfounded.

When our user Lubony signed up to Facebook and had to make choices, this became a SIGNUP and an acceptance of their Terms and Conditions. It is not consent, there is no choice. You agreeing to “signup” forms a contract bound by these terms. This contract document which you have no option but to accept spans over 14,000 words, and is hardly succinct.

You have now accepted their terms and conditions. These terms set out that Facebook is entitled to do lots with your data. A simple interpretation of these terms is that Facebook sells your data to bring in revenue to support the service.

Facebook is touchy about this point and is clear that they don’t “sell” any of your information to anyone, and never will. It is all in the interpretation. Whilst Facebook doesn’t sell on your information like your name and address, its goal is to compile a digital version of you from your shopping habits to your political preferences and aggregate that data in a way that will allow advertisers to target you. Advertisers pay Facebook to use this data they have collated. So, they have not sold your data, they have sold the access to the digital you.

As a user, I should be able to accept that I am the product for a free service and that data can be used to provide the free service, but what we should be entitled to know is who Facebook contracts with, what the terms of the contracts are and so provide some balance and transparency.

The opening to this piece suggested that as business leaders we ought to be thinking about permissions and consent. A key message is that taking back control over one’s data is important as it will force the market to become more transparent and business leaders need to be ready. Data portability will create a massive new opportunity for you if you have a strategy for data.
MFL (Maria Franzoni Ltd) was formed after years of working in both business and Speaker Bureaux.

MFL is a small but mighty team of very experienced people who really want to make a difference to an organisation and go beyond the speaker booking to create real change and continued momentum for clients.

We don’t see ourselves as being in B2B or B2C, but in the H2H business; human to human. We strive to be more than just a Speaker Bureau, we want to help make a real difference to clients and to speakers by curating great expertise.

Our network

MFL is proud to be a licensed office of the London Speaker Bureau, a global network with 18 offices in Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia and North America. Co-founded in 1994 by the current visionary CEO Tom Kenyon-Slaney.

Our unique relationship with the LSB team allows us to offer a truly global roster of speakers whilst remaining small, nimble and agile.

Maria is Operations Director of We Do Things Differently, a cultural change practice. The WDTD team: Mark Stevenson, Jamil Qureshi, David Price, Tim Reid and Jack Milner aren’t just successful entrepreneurs and business-people, they’re also all independently successful artists, performers and writers. WDTD works with clients as diverse as UK Sport, Comic Relief, NASA, Unilever, BBC and the National Theatre.

MFL is a founding member of the European Association of Speaker Bureaux (EASB), on 1st March 2018 Maria took on the role of EASB co-chair.

EASB enables industry professionals to meet, discuss and enhance business cooperation at a European level, with the ultimate goal of helping to promote the benefits of using a Speaker Bureau, as well as creating a code of ethics by which the members of the association should always conduct their business.

Who are we?

Speaking Business Podcast
Hosted by Maria Franzoni

The Speaking Business Podcast is a weekly show hosted by Maria where she chats with the bureau’s speakers about their life, work, passions and leisure so that listeners can get to know the person who is the speaker behind the mic.

Podcasts are available on iTunes, Stitcher & Spotify

You cannot run a successful speaker bureau without great speakers, so it made sense to set up a business supporting speakers. Speaking business provides coaching, training and mentoring for speakers who are:

| Industry and Corporate internal speakers wanting to hone their content and presentations so that they are not outshone by the external guest speaker and get the top ratings. |
| Established speakers who want to enter into new markets, develop new content, build longer relationships with clients, move into executive learning/masterclasses; |
| Speakers starting out, experts in their areas that now want to move into the business of speaking and need guidance/assistance. |
Services we offer include

- Keynote speeches
- Masterclasses
- Workshops
- Article writing
- Presenting
- Awards hosting
- After dinner speeches
- Board Advisory
- Consultancy
- Coaching
- Mentoring
- Presentations skills training
- Conference speakers
- Executive learning programmes
- Performers
- Entertainers
- Comedians
- Celebrities
- Musicians
- Fire-Side Chats
- PR and Endorsements
- Personal Appearances
Speakers’ Books

Available at Amazon

- Deviate: The Science of Seeing Differently by Beau Lotto
- Chaos: A User’s Guide by Bruno Marion
- Where the Magic Happens by Caspar Craven
- High Potential: How To Spot, Manage and Develop Talented People At Work by Ian Macrae & Adrian Furnham
- Inspired Leadership: How You Can Achieve Extraordinary Results in Business by Kevin Gaskell
- The Business of Winning
- We Do Things Differently
- Engaged: The Neuroscience Behind Creating Productive People in Successful Organizations by Amy Brann

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