

# If you're a leader and you're not learning, you're wasting everyone's time

By Patrick Hollingworth



**U**ndeniably, the business landscape has become considerably more uncertain and more complex in recent times, making the role of organisational leadership even more difficult than before.

To understand why this is the case, it is so very important for all of us to understand how the world is changing. Beyond the buzzword vernacular of disruption, agility and innovation, the world

is undergoing a fundamental restructuring which is being driven by the increased interaction and connectivity of people across the globe, via massive technological improvements. Although some people will claim otherwise, no one has ever before experienced the combined volume and exponential rate of change which we are now starting to experience.

One of the problems associated with this rapid rate of change is that

our educational structures are no longer keeping up.

Think about the traditional education system that most of us have passed through. It's a very linear process that is focussed purely on an outcome (graduating high school so you can get a job or get into university, graduating university so you can get a job, completing an MBA so you can get a promotion). Failing an exam is seen as a sign of failure and



weakness, and is to be kept hidden from others (especially your parents) at all costs.

**How and what**

This linear process starts from a broad base of subjects when we are younger but over time progressively narrows until most people finish with a very specific and often technical skill set. In addition to the narrow specialty of this technical skill set, the skill set has generally been learned through the lens of how and what: how to do what is being learned and what that looks like in detail.

Very rarely is the lens of why used.

**Why**

But as the world evolves the question of why will be more important than questions of how and what. Knowing how to do something and what to do used to give people a competitive advantage, whereas in today's increasingly uncertain and complex business world it is a pre-requisite.

With the ubiquity of Google and Wikipedia, holding information is

irrelevant. It's how you make sense of that information, and how you act, that is important.

**Education is not a finite game, especially if you're a leader**

In today's world we often think of education as being something that stops once we've got a job. We very much see education as being a finite game. And that's a problem. Because in the new world order, education must be seen as an infinite game. If it is not, then the finite game you are playing is already over.

These days, by the time you graduate from a three- or four-year degree at an old world university, the stuff you have learned in the first half of your degree will be out of date. Likewise, the how and the what that you learned in your MBA might also soon be out of date.

Even if adults in the workforce are given the chance to learn, note that it is called adult education, implying that education is primarily for non-adults. (The phrase even seems to have a stigma associated with it, perhaps implying that if the

adult was very good at education the first time around as a child, they wouldn't need to go back again. That type of thinking is as ridiculous as it is old and entirely outdated for the new world.

So if you're a leader of an organisation in this new world of work and you're not learning, you're wasting everyone's time.



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