

Access to Excellence

Photo: Dandelion Heads

Best viewed using Acrobat Reader. Available free from www.adobe.com



I've received a couple of emails from people letting me know they haven't the time to read this newsletter.

Of course there may be any number of reasons not to read the newsletter, but it set me thinking about time.

For the past few months I

haven't worn a watch and you might think that makes it difficult ever to be in the right place, well perhaps, but paradoxically the opposite seems the case.

With a watch it's easy to arrive for a meeting, but often you aren't really there. The watch is reminding you of how little time you have before the next meeting, or to complete the actions from the last one.

So strong is this feeling that you're never actually where you are.

You're never in this moment and your life is whittled away worrying what you have to do, or should have done.

We thus live lives of doing, and never are in the moment of being.

The following captures this more beautifully that I could.

Best wishes Steve Unwin

"Chronos is clocks, deadlines, watches, calendars, agendas, planners, schedules, beepers. Chronos is time at her worst.

Kairos is transcendence, infinity, reverence, joy, passion, love, the Sacred.

Kairos is intimacy with the Real. Kairos is time at her best.

We exist in chronos.

We long for kairos. That's our duality.

Chronos requires speed so that it won't be wasted.

Kairos requires space so that it might be savoured.

We do in chronos.

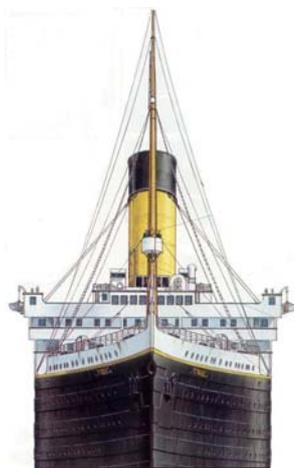
In kairos we're allowed to be ...

It takes only a moment to cross over from chronos into kairos, but it does take a moment.

All that kairos asks is our willingness to stop running long enough to hear the music of the spheres."

**Sarah Ban
Breathnach**

Meaningful Measurement Workshop - May 20 London



"98.4% of all statistics are made up."

With my friends at London Excellence I'll be running a workshop, 'Meaningful Measurement'.

Don't worry, this will be no maths lesson, but an invitation to think.

Measures provide the eyes and ears of an organisation. As the world becomes more complex, inter-connected and fast changing, it's easy to find ourselves measuring the wrong things, in the wrong way at the wrong time, and drawing the wrong conclusions.

Using lessons from sources as diverse as The Titanic

and the doctors surgery, along with ground breaking business thinking we'll explore how measures deceive, distract and mischievously divert our attention. We'll learn what can, should and shouldn't be measured.

You'll gain new ideas, shake some old ones and leave inspired to make a difference.

If you feel caught in the onrushing headlights of the credit crunch, this could just break you free.

"If they can get you asking the wrong questions, they don't have to worry about the answers."

Thomas Pynchon

"Not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that's measured matters."

Albert Einstein



www.accesstoexcellence.co.uk/html/news.html

The mindset for uncertainty

I'm just back from speaking at QC3 in Dubai and would like to share a few thoughts from the trip.

Much of the conference reflected the current 'exceptional' times. I was struck by one speaker's plea from the heart 'I wish we had tools to deal with the unexpected'.

Fire

In my hotel I noticed the fire buttons. My mind wandered and I imagined an Emergency button for Improvement Tools.'



In a fire we'd all be breaking the glass, yet I don't see anyone breaking my imagined glass..

I'm sure many quality professionals would argue this is precisely what we should be doing. And that we aren't because we don't understand, or 'we lack management commitment', or vision or the good sense to realise the power of the tools.

I can't help thinking that if these tools worked we'd be deafened by the sound of breaking glass in times like these.

The real explanation I think is much simpler.

The tools don't work.

That isn't to say that they can't work, just that they very seldom do, and even when they appear to work, it's only briefly and always by accident.

Paradox

My talk in Dubai was on the subject of paradox, and the problem with the tools, paradoxically, is not with the tools, any more than my problem with painting is with the paintbrush.

The paradox for the speaker who wished he had tools to deal with uncertainty, is that the tools are perfectly capable of dealing with uncertainty. The problem is we never use them in this 'uncertain way'.

Art

Following dinner one evening I found myself chatting in the foyer with a friend. We happened to sit near a picture which was what he called rather disparagingly. 'modern art'.

It was a collection of blobs and streaks of colour and when he looked at it, he wanted it to answer the question. 'What's it meant to be a picture of?'

We use improvement tools in much the same way. We want them to provide an answer. 'What do I do next? What is going to work? What's been proven? What's safe?'

Just like the painting, answers are all we are prepared to see. We take

whatever answer we can, or discard the tool and replace it with another until we have an answer.

Uncertainty

An uncertain world doesn't work this way. There are no answers waiting to be unwrapped.

Like the painting, the tools ask us questions, ask us to question, ask us to be questioning, enquiring, alert, nimble alive. Just the things we need to be for a world that will change in an instant and leave us guessing and gasping.

Correctly used these tools



don't provide us with answers, indeed they stop us making the mistake of arriving at answers and instead keep us questioning.

Illusion

Of course, these are not exceptional times at all. Tomorrow has always been uncertain.

We've just grown lazy assuming that today would be pretty much like yesterday, and in the main we got away with it.

For years we've been luck, or is it unlucky?

More paradox.

"The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created--created first in the mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them, changes both the maker and the destination."

John Schaar

"A good question is never answered. It is not a bolt to be tightened into place but a seed to be planted and to bear more seed toward the hope of greening the landscape of idea."

John Anthony Ciardi

"My drawings inspire, and are not to be defined. They determine nothing. They place us, as does music, in the ambiguous realm of the undetermined."

Odilon Redon

"The future has to be unknown, otherwise it's just a piece of the past that has yet to happen."

Steve Unwin

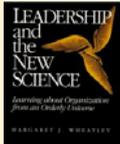
Some of this article's themes are explored in 'Travellers'.



Two Marvellous Books from Margaret J Wheatley

The two books reviewed here are so close to my thinking that Margaret and I could be twins separated at birth. I highly recommend them both

Leadership and the New Science



The 'new science' of the title are the advances in physics, biology, chemistry, quantum physics and elsewhere that reflect a change in understanding about how the world works

Her argument is that Newtonian Science served a purpose, but was always founded on compromise. Newtonian science sees the world through static snapshots and approximations.

It creates a world that is separated and disconnected, a world based on prediction and knowing and on clearly defined roles of cause and effect.

Modern scientific thinking increasingly recognises the interconnected nature of the world, the reality that nothing exists in isolation and that cause and effect are illusions of a dissected world.

Margaret asserts that in attempting to give itself credence Business Management has adopted the artefacts of science, the techniques of measurement and of analysis. But this scientific approach is deeply rooted in a

Newtonian view of the world, a view that is increasingly irrelevant as the world becomes ever more deeply interconnected.

The book will intrigue, inspire and provoke you within its pages, all written in an engaging, poetic and accessible style.

If you are looking for quick answers, tools and techniques, or wish to



remain cosy in your current business thinking, this is a book to avoid. If however you need room on your bookshelf, this might convince you to discard your current library of business books and embrace new thinking.

A Simpler Way

This book is structured around a poem.



It is written in words carefully chosen and reflecting emotion, hope and ambition.

If it seems the most unlikely business book, it is because we have been misled in our understanding that

business is in some way separate .

Work and organisations have habitually been separated by their special rituals, language and vocabulary.

At the heart of this is a belief encapsulated in the name 'organisations' – the belief that we need to organise.

Margaret Wheatley challenges this belief and asserts "The world knows how to create itself – It is self-organising. We don't have to be the world's organisers."

The book invites you to explore this idea, revealing paradox, challenging what you hold dear, questioning your beliefs and offering you insights that may transform your perceptions and future.



A description of the book here will be inadequate and seems irrelevant. To try to convince you that you should read it seems absurd.

This is a hopeful and profound book that seeks to change your paradigms and change your life.

If you're willing to let a book try to do this, I'm sure you'll not be disappointed.

"Most companies say they want creativity, but in reality they do not. Creativity means different and most organisations are set up to eradicate differences."

Professor Jeffrey Pfeffer

"The world we see that seems so insane is the result of a belief system that is not working. To perceive the world differently, we must be willing to change our belief system, let the past slip away, expand our sense of now, and dissolve the fear in our minds."

Gerald Jampolsky

"When I first got here the single most difficult thing was not giggling through every meeting."

**Garry Watts
Chief Exec of SSL**

"Anyone can look for fashion in a boutique or history in a museum. The creative explorer looks for history in a hardware store and fashion in an airport."

Robert Wieder



Click the link for more book reviews

www.accesstoexcellence.co.uk/html/book_reviews.html

Six Days - A Novel by Steve Unwin - Available to pre-order

Bob Jones faces an ultimatum— 'get behind the change program or get out'.

Ironically the ultimatum comes from the same boss Bob has spent five years persuading to support the program.

At precisely the moment his boss buys

in, John is convinced the whole approach is wrong.

He's no idea why his thinking and his world has just been turned upside down. With little more than a feeling he's laid his future on the line and has just six days in which to untangle his thoughts,

or pay the price.

We follow Bob's journey of discovery, rich with insights for everyone in our fast changing world.

Pre-order a copy and be included in a supporters page within the book.



Cover design subject to change

Available to pre-order



www.photonbooks.com/html/six_days.html

Diary Dates - Tehran, London, Belgrade, Sarawak

Meaningful Measurement Workshop London
May 20 See page 1

Succeeding in Uncertain Times Workshop Tehran, Iran

May 22

5th IWC Belgrade Keynote Speech
May 31— June 4

5th IQCS Sarawak Keynote Speech
September 21-23.

If you're looking for an insightful, thought provoking speaker or a workshop to inspire, please get in touch.

Click below for more info.

"We change the world not by what we say or do, but as a consequence of what we have become."
David R. Hawkins



www.accesstoexcellence.co.uk/html/news.html

Newsletter Archive



Past issues available online.



www.accesstoexcellence.co.uk/html/news.html

www.photonbooks.com

See videos, read extracts and be inspired at photonbooks.com



www.photonbooks.com



Many thanks for taking the time to read this newsletter. Please feel free to get in touch.. I would be delighted to hear from you. If you'd like to be added or removed from the distribution list please let us know.

Access to Excellence
+44 (0)1772 751737
mail@accesstoexcellence.co.uk
www.accesstoexcellence.co.uk
www.change-ability.com