

Courage and fortitude required in transformation of leadership

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In order to understand where the modern way of business is headed and how business leaders need to transform to meet the demands of the future way of working, one needs to recognise the underlying factors that have brought us to where we are today. One can look to the Three Ages of Commerce, namely the Industrial Age, Information Age, and the Imagination Age and how they have been significant in shaping business today.



The Industrial Age required management of people. Control equated to power and work was done by means of the systematic management of tasks, with measurements in place to ensure the workers delivered on set objectives. The leaders were all knowing, and the worker was required to comply. Workers were kept ignorant and their performance was measured based on the level of their compliance.

The Information Age demanded a new type of leader. Knowledge now equalled power and the need for visionary people-focused leaders was borne. These leaders were knowledgeable and confident in their roles. Knowledge is openly shared and feedback loops were encouraged.

As the landscape rapidly changed, we were swiftly transcended into the Imagination Age, suggesting that those with the ideas have the power. Workers are the creators and are seen as equals. Teams in this age know that they may not have all the answers, yet they are comfortable with this. Input is valued and is considered a critical trigger for continuous improvement.

Sadly, it is easier to describe the Information and Imagination Ages in theory than it is to see practical examples. Whilst technology and ideas of how work must be done has progressed, people are still grappling with their role in the evolutionary process. We just haven't moved fast enough.

Leaders are struggling to unbundle themselves from their indoctrinated command and control management style and their organisational environments that are still structured in this way. However, leaders have a responsibility to adopt, adapt, and improve, to ensure economic growth in their own business. Leaders need to make the following changes:

- Command and control management has little place in the Information and Imagination Ages. To make the shift you need to consciously adapt the way you lead and manage your organisation. Let go of the control.
- The current way we assemble our working environments promotes staff dependency on management and leadership structures. Organisations need to deliberately remove those barriers with care whilst simultaneously developing the appropriate depth in the resources through coaching-type interventions.
- Enabling employees to self-govern and self-manage will allow them to become more imaginative. Making the necessary changes such as the creation of feature teams, enabling knowledge-sharing and allowing for mistakes to be made are all part of the transformation journey.
- There is a wealth of possibility in employees embracing personal responsibility in their own relevance. This needs to be nurtured and encouraged by the leadership of the organisation as this will grow productivity and possibility.
- The servant leader is not driven by their own ego; they are driven by the success of others. Self-importance needs to be shed if organisations are to evolve into this new age.



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The leaders of the future need to be willing to meet the challenges of today. There is no magic wand that will take an organisation from one state to another, it requires courage and fortitude.

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