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# INSTANT EVOLUTION



THE WORLD HAS CHANGED.  
HAVE **YOU?**

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# INSTANT EVOLUTION

*The immediate mental shifts required to succeed in a world that looks nothing like before*

## INSTANT EVOLUTION

Evolution takes millions of years.

You don't have that much time.

In a previous life I worked in Intensive Care Units as a physio therapist. During that time, I often saw patients who had suffered a myocardial infarction (also known as a heart attack).

What always struck me was the response that patients had to the event.

I'm oversimplifying this to make a point, but in general, there were two types of patients.

The first group wanted to get into a wheelchair as quickly as possible so that they could go outside and smoke. Even though their lifestyle was probably a contributing factor to the heart attack, they either could not, or would not, make any changes to it.

The second group of patients, however, were completely different. They underwent what I call an instant evolution. They would immediately stop bad lifestyle habits, create a new set of values, and embrace healthier rituals.

You have not personally been the cause of the current pandemic. No one has. But the reality is that we have nevertheless all suffered a global, collective heart attack of sorts.

And that leaves you with a choice today.

Will you sustain your previous ways of doing and being, or will you undergo an instant evolution?

If you choose to, you can set yourself and your organization on a new path starting this very minute.

You can emerge from this article already showing signs of improvement. But it will require you to make a few shifts to your current way of thinking about the world, the future, and how you exist in it.

Over the past few weeks, I have personally wrestled with many of these mental shifts.

Below I have documented them, along with the mental shifts that I have seen agile CEOs and teams make in response to a new world.

# 1 FROM PITSTOP TO DETOUR

My good friend and co-host on [The Expansive podcast](#), [John Sanei](#), and I were having a chat during the early days of the pandemic. We had both been hit pretty hard as most (read: all) of the events that we were meant to be speaking at had been canceled.

I have forgotten most of that conversation, but one sentence has stuck with me, mostly because it has completely transformed my approach to business since that day. John said, "I'm acting like we are never going back to normal." And just like that I realised that I was in a holding pattern.

It's a really tough but necessary pill to swallow.

Up until that point, my actions were really just a way to fill the void, the space between now and when things go back to the way they once were. Except there's never going to be a 'way things were' again.

Many leaders and teams are doing exactly what I was doing. They are viewing our current situation as a pitstop instead of the detour that it is.

Teams that have parked off in the pitstop are buying time. They are tolerating remote work and when things get difficult, instead of fixing it they say, "We'll deal with this when we are back at the office."

That's not good enough.

Dedicate yourself to the detour.

Commit to the new way of working and being.

You have been given a golden opportunity to create a new operating system for you and your team.

I recently wrote a guide called [Lockdown Leadership](#) which might be useful to you. You can access it [here](#).

It covers ideas such as:

- Creating trust, accountability, and performance in virtual teams.
- Why artificial deadlines are more important than ever.
- The magic question that teams should be asking right now.



This brings me to my favourite new term... hybrid vigour.

## 2 FROM ONE-DIMENSIONAL TO HYBRID VIGOUR

Hybrid vigour is the idea that we can breed two different species together, and their offspring will inherit (the best) traits of both parents.

The easiest example is a Liger, which is a cross between a tiger and a lion. Imagine, the strength and courage of a lion, combined with the confidence of a tiger. An unstoppable machine.

In the workplace, hybrid vigour is a team that's as adept at working online as they are at working offline.

A true hybrid.

I believe that this is the future of work and teams.

Virtual working will continue to increase in popularity. And many view virtual work as an absolute. But over time, the conversation will shift towards flexible working instead.

Teams will consist of members meeting at the office, whilst others connect virtually from across the country and globe.

This trend will be driven by two very human values:

### 1. Autonomy

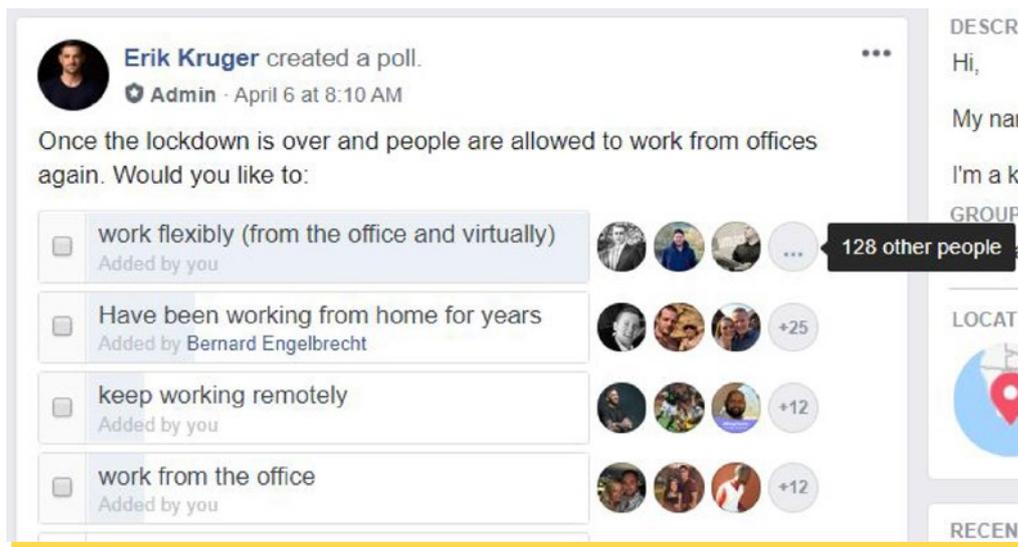
Dan Pink taught us years ago that people want autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Many people feel like they are treated like prisoners when they get to work. Their time is strictly monitored, meaning they have no time to get any personal matters handled. Flexible working, on the other hand, allows people to be the custodian of their time and requires implicit trust that you will get things done.

### 2. Belonging

Since the dawn of time people have wanted to meet around the campfire. They have wanted to find their tribe. As we have seen during the lockdown, when you take away physical interaction, people crave it.

I recently did a small poll in my [Facebook group](#) asking people how they would like to continue working once lockdown is done.

As you can see from the screenshot below, flexible working won by a landslide.



Now is the time to create hybrid vigour.

It requires your team to dedicate themselves to the detour and to become the best possible virtual team that you can collectively be.

- Deal with issues now.
- Develop the team now.
- Be the best virtual team now.

Some of the challenges that you will encounter along the way (or that you might already be experiencing are:

- Feeling that things are just not the same when working virtually. We'll cover this in the next section of the article.
- Team members reporting a loss of routine
- Decreased focus and productivity
- Feeling disconnected from team members
- A spotlight being shone on trust and accountability issues
- A blurring of the lines between work and home life
- Feeling that you need to always be on
- Ineffective and infrequent communication.

All of the challenges above are based on emails and messages that I have received from clients about the challenges they are facing right now.

I won't be diving into each of them at this stage. Although some of them are addressed in this article.

What I want you to take away from this is the following:

- 1** Sit down with your team and ask them where they think there is room for improvement. You might even want to use the list above to discuss each individual challenge with your team.
- 2** Once you have your own list of challenges, decide which 2 or 3 challenges should receive your attention first.
- 3** Then allow yourself a week or two to address each of the top 3 challenges.

The worst thing to do is to overwhelm yourself and your team with a thousand different behavioural changes amidst everything else that is also happening.

Zone in on the most important developmental challenges and address those first.

Don't rush it. Don't become impatient.

If you embrace hybrid vigour now, then once you get back to the office you will have an entire new world available to your team – while everyone else is still trying to adjust to their new normal.

In the long run, you will outrun, outpace, and outgun the teams that are only virtual or only physical.

### 3 FROM PORTING TO UNIQUE APPROACH

All of my work happens in front of people. Speaking, team coaching, team building. All of it requires an audience.

A week or so before the lockdown, I was already self-isolating. But then I got invited to facilitate an offsite workshop for an exco team and could not turn it down.

The moment I walked into the room, I realised how much I had missed the energy of working with people in real life.

The next week lockdown started, and I transitioned all of my team coaching to online. And then I started running into a recurring thought, *"It's just not the same."*

*"It's just not the same"* became my mantra. It preceded every online interaction, whether I was delivering a webinar or facilitating a team coaching session.

I was measuring and comparing every online interaction with its offline counterpart. And I was dead wrong for doing so.

So, perhaps, are you.

Here is a critical lesson that I have learnt. It's important that you don't try and directly port offline experiences into an online version of the same thing. You will be disappointed.

Online is not the same as offline.

But, then again, it's not supposed to be the same.

Online is a different world. One with different and exciting possibilities. Treat it as such. See the way that you work online as a new experience that can be shaped and moulded to fit the purpose.

It's measured in a different way. It should be approached in a different way.

This has perhaps been the single biggest shift that has allowed me to get back on my feet and my business moving forward.

What this has meant for me is to reimagine my business as a digital first business. Since I am the business of sharing ideas, insights, and research for team (and audience) development, there was a natural segue to moving these services online.

In the past few weeks:

- Instead of speaking at conferences, I have been presenting webinars.
- Instead of small group training sessions, I have been recording client specific podcasts.
- Instead of offsite facilitations, I have been facilitating conversations over Zoom.

And instead of comparing any of these experiences to their offline counterparts I have adopted them to make them unique to the medium and to the situation.

Truly liberating.

And, I am now really excited about having this new extension of my business, irrespective of where the future takes us.

## 4 FROM HARMLESS TO DANGEROUS

I went into lockdown feeling really sorry for myself.

It's funny how we can take a global phenomenon and turn it into a personal attack against ourselves and our livelihoods and we ask, "why me?"

This kind of thinking forces us to play the role of victim.

More than that, it makes us harmless.

And when you are harmless, you cannot influence or impact what your future will look like. You become immobilised. Scared, confused, and uncertain of what to do next. It's okay to be in this state.

It's not okay to stay there.

In the beginning of the year, I started talking about the fact that I want people (leaders and teams included) to be dangerous.

Now, to be clear, being dangerous has nothing to do with inflicting harm on anyone. Being dangerous is about doing hard things. About living a life of actions and not words. About taking calculated risks. About courageously pushing into the unknown. I was already obsessed with the possibilities of being dangerous before any of us knew what lay ahead.

Now I am clearer than ever that we all have a choice in front us. Will you be harmless or will you be dangerous?

I have seen many variations of dangerous people during this time:

- The business owner who quickly pivoted to try something new using his existing capabilities and resources in new and interesting ways.
- The leader who sat down with his team to share the honest but unsettling truth that the business might be heading for a shutdown. And then galvanised his team to think bigger and act more courageously to save the business.
- The single parent who lost their income who put their ego aside and asked for help so that they can continue to support the family.

It's both the easiest and most difficult choice that you will ever have to make.

Easy because no-one wants to be harmless. So, Dangerous it has to be.

Difficult because it means stepping up, taking risks, venturing into uncharted terrain, and that you might fail.

But that's also the point.

Failing is an experience reserved for those who venture.

And so is success.

## 5 FROM DECODING TO ENCODING

What I have found very interesting during this time is that no-one knows what the future is going to look like. Sure, there are scenarios and some brave souls are laying their predictions on the table, but no one actually knows.

It's truly uncharted terrain.

This means that we cannot use the future as a guide.

Our old operating system allowed us to project where we would like to go in the future based on a 1, 3, or 5-year time horizon and then decode (breakdown) that future so that we could work towards it today.

You simply cannot do that at this stage.

There is no way to know how you, your team and your business will still need to adapt and shift in the weeks and months to come.

Therefore, don't decode.

Encode.

Input the very best decisions and actions into yourself and your business every single day to create a future that, although uncertain, at least has a fighting chance.

There are four different basic actions that you could take to encode a new future. **Thanks to Niko Canner for this.**

The first is to **exploit** – your current areas of strength and capability. What can you do every single day that pushes your unique talent stack to new levels? (A quick reminder since we so often only use exploit in a negative way. Exploit ~ make full use of and derive benefit from (a resource) – Oxford Dictionary)

The second action is to **explore** – to look for new opportunities and potential collaborations.

The third is to **enable** – this means securing certain resources that will enable you to continue to operate or perhaps to operate in a different way. This could also be finding a coach or mentor that enables you to think or act differently.

The fourth is to **build** – use what you have and think of new ways to configure it. Think about how you can improve your current offering.

Encoding for me every day has been:

- Writing. A lot. As you can see from this article. It has helped me to stress test my thinking and to share it with a wider audience.
- Collaboration. Taking the aforementioned writing and sharing it via webinars for clients or on other people's platforms.
- Building on my current offerings and turning them into a digital first offering.
- Speaking to people who are friends but also mentors to keep me focused and moving in the right direction.

Viktor Frankl says,

***“Between stimulus and response there is a space and, in that space, lies our greatest power. The power to choose how we respond.”***

We love to tell people, don't react, respond. Pause and determine what your next actions should be.

And that's true today still.

Don't just knee jerk react.

Thoughtfully respond.

But do so quickly.

## 6 FROM ISOLATION TO COLLABORATION

I am normally quite the introvert. During this time though, I have found myself speaking more frequently to friends and clients.

In fact, I have felt more creative and collaborative than I have for a while.

However, many people have fallen into isolation.

This is not only a symptom of lockdown or physical distancing.

It's about remote work in general, and the fact that 70% of people working remotely experience loneliness at some point. (Again, this is why I think that the future of work is a hybrid of remote and IRL (in real life) interactions, and not strictly one or the other.)

Here's the secret. The tools that are allowing us to create distance can also bring us closer together.

This might be the easiest shift for us to make.

It's the perfect time to build deeper connections with these four groups of people.

### 1. FAMILY AND FRIENDS

This goes without saying. We all need both moral and emotional support during this time (to give and to receive).

### 2. TEAMS

They need you to tell them what the current situation is and what the way forward will look like. I have always found that teams under-communicate, both in the frequency of communication and in the depth or effectiveness of it. Virtual communication can amplify this problem quite easily. But it can also solve it. So, make sure you pay attention to your cadence and depth of communication. As a side note, I have read that the CEO of Verizon speaks to his 135 000-strong workforce every single day via a livestream. Additionally, he meets with his board twice a week, spends an hour a day on-call with his leadership team, and has 45 key players in the organization that he checks in with every week.

### 3. CLIENTS

Your clients need your support. You are familiar to them in a time that isn't. They are experiencing the same emotions and fears that you are experiencing, and could do with your presence.

### 4. COACH

A coach will improve your thinking during this time. Guaranteed. They help you to think by getting you to talk.

## 7 FROM WEAK TO ZEROWEAK

There is a gift that comes from seeing everything that we have built crumbling before our eyes.

We get to rebuild.

Our new creation can be more aligned to the future, to our current values, and to the life that we have always wanted.

It can also be stronger and more secure than our previous effort.

But to rebuild, we must start with our foundation and that means removing whatever has compromised your foundation to start with.

The Burj Khalifa is currently the highest tower in the world, measuring in at 823 meters.

Do you think its designers spared any money, time, or effort in making sure that its foundation is as strong and as well-laid as possible?

Of course not.

They understand, and you do too, that if you want to build something that represents the peak of human engineering, then you sure as hell provide it with a solid, uncompromising foundation that can withstand external forces.

So, if you want to be at your best and build something remarkable moving forward, why would you not start by reinforcing your foundation?

For me, step one in this process is to remove the things that make you weak.

Human beings are excellent at tolerating mediocrity.

We tolerate poor performing team members.

We tolerate inadequate leadership.

We tolerate irrationally demanding clients.

We tolerate poor habits.

We tolerate bad relationships.

Now is the time to remove mediocrity and build from excellence.

There are levels to this:

### Easy

- Are there subscriptions that you are paying that you could cancel?
- Or certain foods you should be removing from your diet?
- Or perhaps even negative thoughts that you need to be trimming?

### Really hard

- Perhaps there is a team member that's just not a good fit that might need to be let go?
- Or a client that is draining all of your energy?
- Or a personal relationship that has run its course?

So, what is making you weak?

## 8 FROM PLAYING NOT TO LOSE, TO PLAYING TO WIN

I was watching a webinar with Verne Harnish, founder of Entrepreneur's Organization, when he said that we have to shift from playing not to lose to playing to win.

This wasn't something that I hadn't heard before, but it was something that I had forgotten.

As we so often do.

I want to drive two points home here.

The first is that you must play to win.

Especially now.

If you keep telling yourself that now is not a time to sell, then guess what, you won't sell anything. If you keep telling yourself that things will go back to normal, then you will wait and wait and wait yourself into dismal failure.

You must switch gears.

Now is the time to move aggressively forward.

It doesn't mean that you are tone deaf to what others are going through. Or that you become pushy, needy, and desperate.

But it does mean that you start actively working towards a new future. Find ways to be helpful to others, while at the same time building your business.

And that really brings me to the second point and the perfect way to finish this article.

You know what you need to do.

You have heard all this sage advice before. You know all the clichés.

But perhaps, just like me, you needed a reminder of where your focus should be.

In coaching, we believe that people naturally have the answers to their questions. All you need to do is prompt them to think deeply about their situation, allow them the space to mull it over, and watch as they solve their own problems and create their own momentum.

You've got this.

I believe in you.

I hope that you believe in you too.

