

Developing Creative Brilliance in your Team (Part 4)

By Martin Murphy

Step 3 ~ Direction (continued)

"...the way you get the most out of every moment you have on the planet, whether that's personal or for business, is by acquiring new skills and by becoming better at what you do" Tim Ferris

Working towards business freedom

A great question Tim Ferris asks himself is:

"What can I put in place so that I can go completely off the grid for 4 to 8 weeks?"

A lot of the entrepreneurs I've spoken with have experienced work exhaustion. It's easy for them to fall into the trap of being the hero who solves most of the problems that arise in the business themselves. As such, the longest holiday an entrepreneur would consider going on is about two weeks because that's just enough time for them to go away and get back in time to put all the fires out. Plus, with today's technology, there isn't really anywhere in the world that people can't still work from.

This is the classic entrepreneurial myth that business consultant Michael Gerber talks about in his book, *"The E-Myth Revisited"*. Entrepreneurs start businesses so they can enjoy more time, money and freedom. But entrepreneurs usually experience the opposite and have less of all three.

To enjoy a 4-8 week holiday "off-grid" a leader has to put in place systems. But not only that. They've also got to empower the team with some tools that allows the organisation to not only survive the entrepreneurs individuating from the business psychologically, but thriving.

Of course letting go of the role of 'Chief Firefighter' is quite a challenge for most entrepreneurs. They believe that they are the only person capable of solving challenges as adroitly as themselves. Leaving your business in the hands of others requires a lot of courage. This is where training is vital, so the leader or

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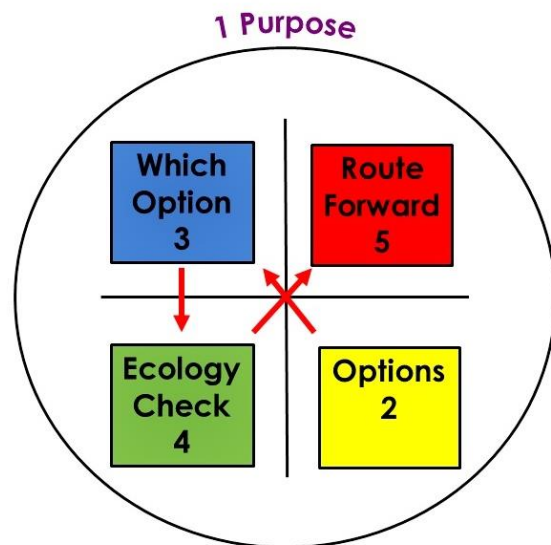
entrepreneur can really enjoy their well-earned holiday by unlocking the creative brilliance of the team.

To expedite this process I follow Myamoto Musashi's strategy of:

'Know the one thing to know the 10,000''

Musashi was a Samurai and military genius who perfected the art of Japanese swordsmanship. His philosophy was to understand the one piece of wisdom that enabled a warrior to handle any situation. This negated the warrior getting confused in the heat of battle with having to decide on which strategy to employ.

With my purpose being to develop the one strategy which accomplishes many things, I developed the **POWER** model. With this robust tool, an individual or team can solve problems and make bottom up decisions safely and effectively, coach colleagues or the team, facilitate effective meetings and lead innovation sessions.



The beauty of this tool is that it is simple to use, it triggers optimal 'flow' states more often and is purpose focussed as opposed to being ego driven which can cause biased thinking. It does however, require self-discipline and self-awareness to utilise the tool effectively.

In earlier articles in this series I explained that people have a preference for certain 'flow' triggers dependent on their personality. Everybody will have a unique blend based on these four general ingredients.

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Driver types prefer to be in the thick of the action, they like risk, they like to be in control and have clear goals and immediate feedback so they know when they've achieved the goal. They enjoy being in *performance flow* states.

Developer types like to be able to concentrate and to do that will often prefer to work alone or with headphones on. They prefer the tried and tested and have a bias for pattern recognition. They like to produce work to an excellent standard. They enjoy being in a *focussed flow* state.

Facilitator types make excellent counsellors and coaches because they like familiarity amongst the team and utilise deep listening to catch the nuances of a conversation. They enjoy being in *connected flow*.

Champions like a rich environment and novelty which can spark their *creative and collaborative flow* states. This is enhanced by an affirmative and egalitarian team atmosphere.

Each of these personality traits are a vital component at just the right time in any situation. They're also disastrous if used at the wrong time. Every personality strength is necessary for humankind to exist otherwise evolution would not have created them. Even psychopathic thinking has its place, although we probably don't need as much as we've got happening around us in the world today and is the reason, it could be argued, why we're experiencing so much conflict.

It is necessary for inspiring leaders to understand what their personality strengths are and when to utilise them. But just as important is to be able to acknowledge when another strength is required. We are all capable of standing outside of ourselves temporarily and from a universal perspective, perceive what the challenge or situation requires. The POWER model helps us do this and I'll explain a few of the ways the tool can be used.

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Innovation **POWER**™

Innovation sessions can become a regular part of any organisation's timetable. It involves escaping the firefighting mentality and requires psychological space and safety. A question can be asked and it's a good idea to try questions which are challenging, perhaps complex and that introduce novelty to unleash the creative flow. Thinking of great questions to tackle is a great exercise in itself. Tim Ferris called it "testing the impossible" when he posed himself the question:

'What if I can only subtract or simplify to solve problems?'

To begin with it could be something as easy as:

"How can we land a £100,000 client by the end of the month?"

But then it could get more challenging by asking the team:

"How could we become more successful by doing the opposite of what we're doing now?"

With the last question, you're now introducing an element of risk and constraints which are triggers of creative flow states. Finding the answer to the question becomes the purpose of the innovation session. Once asked let the team go about their business and allow their inner genius go to work on the question.

At a designated time, the team meet up and then go through the **POWER** model template. The challenge is re-stated by a designated facilitator, then everybody acts as if they are a champion personality to uncover their 'options'. All ideas are proffered and everybody is given equal time to speak. The atmosphere is kept affirmative and creative by the facilitator. These elements are flow state triggers.

After a certain period, the facilitator guides the group to act as if they are all developers to decide 'which option' is best. They must focus on each idea and

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allow their inner judge to critically decide which idea proffered is the best. Everybody must be open to criticising their own ideas as well as the rest. Once this has occurred and the best option has been chosen, we move to the next phase.

The 'ecology check' is probably the most ignored part of our everyday decision making process but it is as important as all the rest of the stages in the **POWER** model. The ecology stage requires the team to think like facilitators which is an empathic process. It asks how the chosen option will effect everybody? What support do people need? Is the option chosen aligned with the organisation's values? What are the long term effects of this solution on the team? Brand? Business? Clients? Environment?

Not asking this question can lead to companies bending rules to make more profit at the expense of other stakeholders. This stage acknowledges the interconnected world we live in. The developer stage is the opposite, it focuses on individual components, what might be termed as rational thinking. The human made challenges created in the world today are often as a result of moving from the 'which option' stage straight to the 'route forward' stage. Using the **POWER** model develops a more integrated thinking and decision making process.

Once the complexities of a proffered solution have been understood and been given the ecological 'all clear', it now needs a strategy which becomes the 'route forward'. Here we assign responsibilities, goals and importantly, a feedback loop is designed so that progress can be monitored.

POWER Coaching™

The **POWER** model is an excellent communication tool. If you are going to communicate with stakeholders, then using the **POWER** template will ensure

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your communications are integrated and inclusive. The **POWER** model is also an excellent coaching tool.

When someone on the team requires some coaching, the coachee can ask another colleague for some time for this purpose. A time and 'safe' space are designated and the two colleagues can meet up. The 'safe' space refers to a place where there will be some privacy and a chance for uninterrupted time. Coaching should also be exercised in confidence. *Connected and creative flow* states are entered into when people are involved in deep listening and coaching is an excellent way to facilitate this particular flow state.

The coachee kicks off the coaching by stating the purpose of the coaching session. The coach then asks for an overview of the situation as it is now. The next question will be:

"What are your options?"

Here the coach can gently tease out as many solutions as is possible from the coachee. By acting as a sounding board in a safe space, the coach will often encourage the coachee to think more laterally, making associations that were not previously apparent. Once the coachee has some options, the next question will be:

"Which of the options do you think is the ideal solution?"

The coachee will then turn a critical eye and by a process of elimination arrive at the best solution. The next stage is the ecology check which will be:

"What support will you need to achieve the goals and how will it affect all the stakeholders?"

Sometimes more information is needed at this point. This tool is adaptable and so if more research is required to test the validity of the proffered solution, the next move is to decide when to meet again after some research has occurred.

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This is followed with another coaching session to complete the process. If the proffered solution is deemed suitable at the ecology check, then the coachee will decide on some goals and drive the solution into existence having been asked:

“What will your route forward be?”

POWER Meetings™

POWER meetings are an effective way to overcome many of the usual complaints that are attached to the meeting process.

Most people have experienced long afternoon ordeals which have left them feeling frustrated, confused or overwhelmed with boredom. A lot of meetings don't achieve what they were intended to do which is to align the team towards a purpose and create an action plan with clear goals and responsibilities moving forward.

Using the POWER model again, with a designated facilitator, a timer and a little training, one can hold very effective meetings. In fact if you really want to push the boat out, it could become the norm that no meeting ever lasts more than 18 minutes. I'll explain how.

Step 1 The purpose of the meeting is sent out along with the time and place, to all the relevant people who should attend. This then gives people time to think about what materials and information they need to bring to the meeting.

Step 2 The designated facilitator of the meeting, armed with notepad/flipchart and timer explains the purpose of the meeting again.

Step 3 Everybody acts as a champion and the facilitator ensures everybody gets equal time to express their creative ideas. Remember time constraint is a great way to get people to focus. The best time tool I've found to use for this purpose is the [Gymboss™](#). It is a cost effective way to set time intervals without

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the need to clock watch. I set the Gymboss™ to four minute intervals with 30 seconds in between to allow time for the facilitator to explain the next step of the meeting process. At each stage and interval the Gymboss™ timer beeps to signal the next phase.

Step 4 After the options have been proffered the team then critique the ideas. When the optimal solution is uncovered, the team then enter the third stage.

Step 5 The ecology check allows time for the team to understand the complexities of the solution proffered. The team may decide they need to ask more stakeholders their opinions and if that is the case the meeting will go straight to the *Route forward* stage, which is to do research and re-schedule another meeting to finish the process. You don't waste time by staying in any phase longer than the designated time, there is no need to.

Step 6 The last stage is the *route forward*. If all the team are happy with the ecology check, then the team develop goals, roles and responsibilities. It is a good idea to diarise a follow up meeting, when necessary, to check on progress and evaluate feedback. Again follow up meetings can take on the same process.

With commitment, training and discipline, no meeting should ever take longer than eighteen minutes again.

POWER Decision Making™

POWER decisions follow a similar path except that the exponent will carry out the POWER process themselves. This is the ultimate in enlightened and courageous leadership. When one person can influence the direction of the organisation from a bottom up perspective. The process is initiated because something in the environment has triggered a challenge. The purpose they have in mind is to solve the challenge. So following the process step by step looks like this:

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Step 1 They first have a purpose in mind. It maybe to solve a problem they repeatedly encounter or a situation which can be dealt with more efficiently.

Step 2 They think about all the possible solutions they could utilise.

Step 3 They critique the solutions that they've imagined and through a process of elimination, they arrive at their best solution.

Step 4 This is when the ecology check becomes so vital. This stage requires the member of the team going to all the people who will be affected by the decision and explain their idea. If it passes muster with everybody who will be affected, then they're allowed to go to the next stage:

Step 5 They come up their own action plan, which they explain to the rest of the team when necessary.

When I was working as a security consultant, I was asked to go to Jamaica and stop drugs being imported on a particular company's aircraft. After weeks of selecting the team and training them, it became time to assess the actual airport and the airlines processes for weaknesses.

One of the biggest challenges was that at the gate, just before boarding the aircraft. Every day it resembled a rugby scrum. This was because the airline often oversold the seats to garner more profit and everybody at the departure gate, wanted to push to the front of the queue. This didn't allow for effective control and search procedures, should they be necessary.

When I questioned one of the staff about this, I was told that it had always been like this. When I informed the member of staff that it would have to change her response was that the manager was an intimidating person who wasn't responsive to new ideas.

I thought about my purpose which was to secure the plane and save the company millions of dollars in airport fines back in the USA.

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I then thought about all the possible solutions. The most effective solution was pretty easy to arrive at. It was to form a barrier and have staff regulate the flow of passengers.

I then put myself through the ecology check. I asked all the relevant staff what they thought of the idea. I also took into consideration the purpose of the airline and also the manager stationed at the airport.

I then went to the manager, knocked on the door and explain my intended *route forward*. I explained why it was good for the passengers, why it would result in more profits for the airline - less airport fines- and I explained how it would make her team look more effective and professional. I also mentioned that they all agreed the new process would make work life less stressful.

After I explained my integrated solution to the manager, she simply nodded and told me to get on with it. Within a few days the team had discovered a case load of marijuana weighing around 30kilos. Once word got out that this airline was seizing drugs, the exporters focussed their efforts on other airlines.

All of the POWER tools explained here have been tried, tested and work. What is important is that training be given and a commitment to follow through. It is easy for people to fall back into ego driven ways when under pressure, so it is vital that the tools become practised until they become second nature. Get in touch if you would like to chat further about empowering your team to success.