

SEVEN KEYS TO RELEASING POTENTIAL IN YOUR BUSINESS, YOUR PEOPLE, AND YOURSELF

By Andrew Bass PhD
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CAR WASH OPTIONS

	FOAM	RINSE	WAXING BLAST	UNDERSEAT CLEANING	DRY	WAX	VALUE	PRICE
Gold	★	★	★	★	★	★	CLEAN & SHINY	£8
Silver	★	★	★	★			THOROUGH CLEAN	£6
Bronze	★	★					BASIC CLEAN	£4

5 DRAE STR
CONTROL
THROUGH
AUTONOMY

- FEEDBACK
1. WHAT'S WORKING?
 2. WHAT'S IMPROVING?
 3. WHAT'S NEXT?

Seven Keys To Releasing Potential In Your Business, Your People, And Yourself

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Why *Releasing* Potential?

In the search for better productivity, it's easy to get caught in a dilemma. Should you cut resources and somehow 'do more with less?' Or should you add resources, investing in new capacity – making capital investments or people investments – in the hope of a greater return?

There's often no 'right answer' to this question – trying to answer it leads to fierce debates and sleepless nights.

Deep down you and your colleagues may suspect neither adding nor cutting will deliver. Certainly both routes carry risks. On the one hand, if you cut, you could lose key knowledge and relationships. The people who remain could end up being overloaded, damaging quality and customer

experience. You might not even save enough to cover the restructuring costs.

On the other hand, if you invest, you face other risks. What if revenue growth doesn't catch up with the additional spending fast enough? Will your investors have the patience to wait for returns to recover? What if returns don't recover?

Instead of choosing between cutting or investing, we've found it's often more fruitful for managers to sidestep the dilemma entirely, and start instead with a radically different question:

'What can we do to release more potential from the resources we already have?'

By boldly exploring that question, most organizations can tap into a vast source of productivity, creativity and capacity. And that can launch you far more securely on the path to the significant performance improvement you seek.

Overview

I've identified seven of the highest potential ways to improve results without adding or cutting, and with low-to-zero additional costs.

The seven approaches covered in this guide are:

Key One: **Value Proposition Potential:** Play the 'Bundling Game'

Key Two: **Frontline Potential:** Tap into ideas from the frontline

Key Three: **Ownership Potential:** Give control to get control

Key Four: **Productivity Potential:** Run 'Model Days' (or weeks)

Key Five: **Relationship Potential:** Create richer networks with your customers and partners

Key Six: **Mindset Potential:** Reverse through limitations

Key Seven: **Performance Potential:** Supercharge everything with real feedback

None of these approaches need be expensive.

The idea is to tip the first domino

How can these inexpensive approaches really make such a difference? The idea is to tip the first domino. Success with any of these approaches will mean that people have behaved in new ways, achieving results that are intrinsically rewarding. As they succeed in new ways, their understandings of what is possible begin to change. People realise they can be effective in creating change. They want to do more.

You see engagement and ownership spike. And you gain learning that can make you much more confident in making subsequent investments to capitalise on the progress.

Key One – Play the 'Bundling Game'

I have worked with many businesses who offered top quality products and services, yet were struggling to maintain prices in the face of determined competition. It's particularly tough when this happens in markets that have stopped growing.

It's hard for technical and professional people to accept, but after a certain point, an increase in quality won't win you any additional business. In many mature markets, all the competitors may be offering the same quality, at least in the eyes of the customer, which of course is where it matters.

So what should you do? Once answer you often hear is: 'We'll compete by giving superior service.' But service standards can often be matched by competitors too. Is the RAC roadside service really that different from the AA equivalent? Is BA's transatlantic business class really that different from Lufthansa's?

It can seem an insurmountable problem, but it depends how you are looking at it. There may be considerable untapped potential to create value – and therefore raise prices – by breaking down and recombining existing elements into new combinations.

One of the most powerful ways to release the potential of your offerings to the marketplace is through imaginative bundling. People like bundles or kits – I think this starts in childhood with birthday and Christmas presents – and if you bundle something appropriately, you amplify its value to the customer disproportionately to your extra input.

Cardinal busts out of a commodity trap

Cardinal Health was in the commodity business of surgical supplies: things like gloves, sutures and scalpels. The company were experiencing intense price competition because hospitals regarded their excellent quality products as essentially interchangeable with those of other suppliers.

But Cardinal hit on an extremely powerful idea: bundling supplies into *kits* that were perfectly matched to specific surgical procedures. So for example, for a hernia operation, they would deliver a kit on the day of the operation, with all the supplies sequenced correctly in sterile packs, simplifying setup, minimising risks of error, and of stock outages, and so reducing hospital inventory and inventory management costs.

With the same basic products, insight into their customer's real needs, and well-thought-out packaging, they cornered the market and earned a well-deserved premium.

***Deliver disproportionately more
value to your customers and
charge a price premium***

You can use a similar approach: think about how to rearrange the products and services you already offer (or can easily add) so that they deliver disproportionately more value to your customers, and give you a price premium above the individual selling prices of the components.

Exercises for Generating Bundles

It's likely that your current array of offerings and capabilities can be made more profitable by intelligent bundling. You can use bundles to reduce the many hassles of using commodity products, to borrow and transfer emotional appeal from one item to another, to help people find a rationale for treating themselves, or simply to take advantage of the fact that people of all ages like 'kits'.

So, how do you develop such combinations? Here are five powerful techniques:

1. 'Before, during and after'. You can use a technique from the theatre to rethink the customer or client experience. Theatre directors sometimes get their cast to improvise what happened immediately before and after the scene actually written by the playwright. That way, they create a back-story which makes the scene itself more satisfying.

Business can do something similar. For example, Virgin Upper Class does a lot for passengers before and after their flight – food, showers, haircuts, even shoe-shines - and it bumps up the value, and so the price, nicely.

How can you make the before, during and after better for your clients and customers?

2. 'Mise en place'. It's a French phrase which means 'putting in place'. It refers to organizing and arranging the ingredients and utensils that a chef will require for the dishes they are going to prepare. It's exactly what Cardinal Health did with the surgical kits they tailored to specific operations. By doing the *mise en place* for the surgeons, they commanded a premium.

How can you make it easier for people to set themselves up to make use of your offering? Can you advantageously do the *mise en place* for them?

3. 'While we're doing that for you...' Among many things, Xerox offer document preparation. They noticed that they were being asked to prepare documents in various languages and realised they could offer to do the translation as an integrated service. They get the economies of scale, so can do it for lower cost than their competitors, and – more exciting – can combine it with their other capabilities to accelerate the roll-out of their clients' new offerings across international markets – for example translating as well as printing user manuals. That's worth paying for.

Can you reduce the number of hand-offs or subcontractors for your clients to help them get where they need to be more quickly, at lower cost, or with better quality?

4. Develop and offer 'car wash' options. I learned this technique from Alan Weiss and have used it to help myself and others dramatically raise value, and so fees in a range of businesses.

CAR WASH OPTIONS

	FOAM	RINSE	WATER BLASTER	UNDERBODY	DRY	WAX	VALUE	PRICE
GOLD	★	★	★	★	★	★	CLEAN & SHINY	£8
SILVER	★	★	★	★			THOROUGH CLEAN	£6
BRONZE	★	★					BASIC CLEAN	£4

5. Put your option bundles together to maximise their appeal. An advertising executive I was talking to recently told me how smart bundling worked for a luxury car manufacturer. Luxury cars are offered with multiple options. But from a buyer's point of view, the most desirable options are sometimes the hardest to justify. For example, few people really need an enhanced sports suspension kit. They may want it, but feel guilty about ordering it. But bundle it with a 'sensible' option like rear parking sensors, and you have an attractive option that people are comfortable buying.

For further consideration

Stop thinking about products and services as distinct. Customers want neither. What they really want is a result – that could come from products, services, or very often from creative combinations of the two.

Template for developing 'car wash' options

EXERCISE: CAR WASH OPTIONS

Value Element OPTION	1	2	3	4	5	6	(EXTRA) VALUE	FEE
PLATINUM								
GOLD								
SILVER								
BRONZE								

Ideas for developing options include: vertical or horizontal integration, one-stop/turn-key, higher responsiveness, extra risk reduction.

Read more: www.basscluser.com/practical-keys-to-innovation-part-1-of-2/

Key Two – Tap Into Ideas From The Frontline

Too many executives overlook the frontline's views, and therefore cut themselves off from a vast store of potential for business improvement.

Sometimes, regrettably, they are deliberately dismissive, seeing frontline people as less qualified and of lower status in the pecking order. 'What can they know?' they ask themselves. More often though, the bias is unconscious – it simply doesn't occur to executives to consider whether the frontline might have valuable insights and ideas.

Whatever the causes, the tendency is damaging. One turnaround specialist I know told me that the first thing he does when called in to rescue a failing business is to talk to the shopfloor and customer service people to find out 'how management have

messed-up the business, and what we should do to fix it.'

The answers are almost always valuable. Time and again, the information to help the business has been there all along, but was ignored by managers.

The frontline know about customers, they know about waste, and they know about bottlenecks. How can you tap into that knowledge?

Don't impose 'solutions': enable people to solve their own problems

Very often the easiest way to improve performance is to get the people you are trying to engage to do it for you. Actually, to do it for themselves.

At one financial institution I worked with, the employee satisfaction survey levels were embarrassing. Employees felt like cogs in a machine. They didn't understand how their jobs fitted in, or why they mattered. Staff attrition was high, and performance was sluggish.

This was despite the extensive training materials and courses the company provided during induction to try to explain the job and its significance.

The solution to both was as simple as convening teams of those very employees – under the leadership of junior managers – and having them design their own induction programme.

The most successful team developed an interactive board game, in which players followed the journey of a trade through its various stages, getting clues from established colleagues running the actual desks involved. Some of these desks were in the same building and could be visited physically. Others necessitated international phone calls. The players raced each other to complete the process. By the time they had finished the game – win or lose – they had grasped the end-to-end process and started to build the relationships they would need across the business.

The solution was far more creative, effective and *cheap* than senior managers expected, and when they were shown to the CEO on his next visit, he immediately sponsored its global roll-out including spending a small amount to have the game materials professionally made.

Gathering and responding to employee feedback: cut out the middle man

Most businesses conduct employee surveys. They can be useful, but I've observed that they risk the following problems:

- *They give you too little information to know what to change.* Many survey questions are useless as sources of information. If I ask you how well your manager supports you in your job on a 1-5 scale, what can I do with the answer, regardless of what it is?ⁱ
- *They can set you up to fail.* If instead of numerical scales, you ask open response questions, employees may make impossible requests. When you fail to deliver on them, they will be more unhappy than if you hadn't asked them.
- *They are responded to too slowly to change employee attitudes.* I've seen too many surveys

which were issued in March, with the report-back in September, and half-hearted follow up actions in November, or later.

In short, surveys often give busy managers a large, ambiguous, time-consuming and expensive to-do list that may not do the trick even if you can implement it

A great way to sidestep this is to compress the whole information gathering, processing and responding processes into a massively parallel exercise over a highly compressed time period.

Here's an easy and low-tech way to do just that.

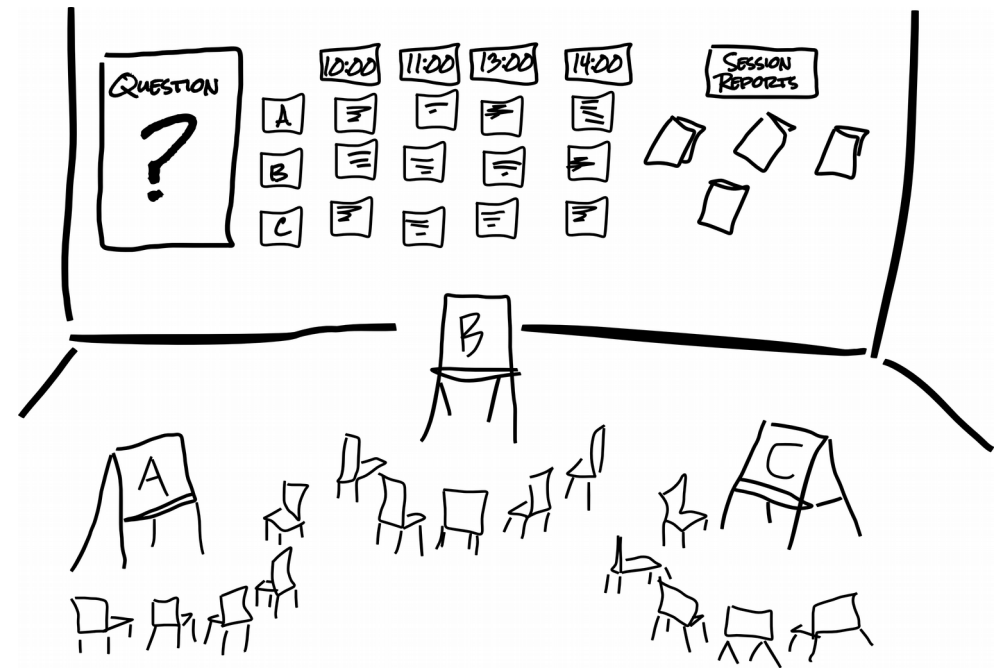
Exercise – Open Spaceⁱⁱ

Open Space is a way of holding a self-organizing large group meeting to address an issue of importance to all the participants. The issue, or *focal question*, might be something like: 'How do we improve cross-functional collaboration?', 'How do we accelerate product launches?', 'How do we improve flow through the facility?' or 'How do we give clients a seamless service in different geographies?'

In contrast to most meetings, awaydays and retreats, the agenda is not set by the organizers, but is determined 'live' by the participants – those people who are close to the daily action.

In contrast to the slow decision-making cycle of a survey-based approach, information gathering, decision making, and response planning happen in one event.

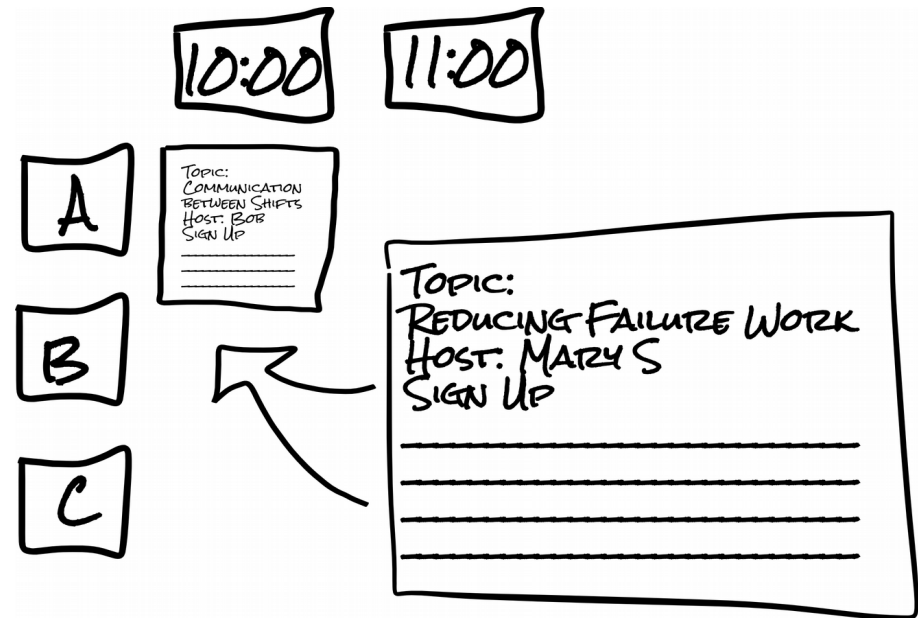
Set up the room as shown.



Then give the following briefing

- We are here to address... (the focal question).
- We as a group will determine the agenda, and we may adjust it as we go.

- If you want, you can now decide to run a session on a topic you believe relevant to our focal question.
- In the centre of the room you will see pens and paper.
- Make a sign-up sheet and announce the topic, time and location of your session.
- Place the sign-up sheet on the wall in the relevant slot.



- You host the session, and are responsible for producing a session report.
- Anyone can go to any session – please sign up on the sheets on the wall.
- Post the session reports after the session
- We will revisit the agenda during the day

Open Space is based on four principles and one 'law'.

The Four Principles:

1. Whoever comes are the right people. Participation is voluntary and more participants is not necessarily better.
2. Whenever it starts is the right time. Be relaxed about time.
3. Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen. Let go of your expectations.
4. When it's over, it's over. If there's no more to say, move on.

The Law of Two Feet: If you're in the wrong place move to somewhere which will be a better use of your time.

Final Thought

If you will just give permission, space and some sponsorship (including a modicum of inexpensive resources) your employees could do wonders for you and your business. The difficulty sometimes is that as the leader you might still be trying to preserve the illusion that you must come up with all the answers.

Key Three – Give Control To Get Control

How long does it take for a radio signal to reach from the Earth to a Mars-roving robot? The answer is anything between 4 minutes and 24 minutes depending on the relative distances of the two planets. That means that if you want to control the rover, you can't just treat it like a drone, hooking up a camera to the front and steering it using a game controller back at mission control.

Why? Because in the 8 to 44 minutes it takes for the signal to yo-yo to Mars and back, your precious rover could already have driven over the edge of a cliff.

What's the solution? You have to build up the capabilities of the rover to sense and respond to its surrounding autonomously.

This is not about empowering the rover in recognition of its robotic dignity. It's just the way the engineering has to be done.

In the same way, if you want an organization which is responsive to the market and to customers, you can't have every decision escalated to senior management. If you do, you'll be outmanoeuvred.

You'll also create a sense of learned helplessness in your people that will seriously degrade your capabilities.

Take the hill

The military have had to confront this issue. The traditional command-and-control model, whereby all movements are directed from headquarters simply doesn't allow an army to respond quickly enough to the unfolding action in modern warfare.

To combat this, many militaries use what they call Mission Orders or Mission Command. There are a number of variants. I came up with the following format as a business-friendly version.

Technique: The REWARDS Format

I came up with the mnemonic 'REWARDS' to make it easy to remember:

Results required

Evidence for success

Why is it the result important?

Agree to make a contract

Resources and support negotiation

Decide the level of documentation

Support the delegate

Here are the steps in more detail:

1. **Specify the results you want**, not the method, and hold people responsible for the result. In the words of General George Patton: 'Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results'. As well as benefiting from their ingenuity, there's another plus: if you are too specific about the route to

achieving a goal and there turn out to be unforeseen roadblocks, some subordinates will give up and dump it back at your door: 'You told me to go this way, and it didn't work, so I give up – over to you'. If you have specified the destination, not the route, then the onus remains on them to find their way – it's reasonable for them to request extra help, but not to give up.

2. **Specify evidence**, how will you both know for sure that you got the result? Here's a common, and very annoying problem: you ask someone to do something, and what you get is not what you wanted, but you can see how they got the wrong end of the stick. You end up settling for what you didn't want, or having the work done over – a real nuisance.

Usually the culprit is vague language. Sometimes trickier operators will exploit the opportunity presented by ambiguity in order to further their own agendas, or just so that they can swing the lead. Make it absolutely clear what you want to see,

hear and/or feel that will confirm the result. E.g. 'What I am really after is a one page press release on my desk, with all the right facts and contact details already filled in, that makes the reader feel like they want to get on the phone for the story immediately'.

3. Make it clear why the result is important at two levels of objective above. Individual jobs, especially staff jobs which are similar even in different industries – HR, accounts, IT, estates – can seem quite disconnected from the world of living, breathing customers. Explain how the result you are requesting contributes to the mission of the business. It helps people get motivated, it shows how your request is reasonable, and it enables them to improvise if they come up against problems.

4. Make it plain that you are proposing a contract, or agreement, ask them if they accept. You can coerce people to do things, but that's not delegation. Instead, you ask them (explicitly or implicitly): 'Are you prepared to sign up to this? If

you do, you are accountable.' Be vigilant that they don't accept too automatically. Consider playing devil's advocate. Maybe they ought to go and do some research before they commit themselves. If they are more junior, this is a big opportunity to coach and develop them.

5. Allow the assignee to negotiate changes to the specification, including resources, support and ground rules. Ideally you want someone who says, 'Yes, I can make this happen for you, as long as I have the following resources'. The negotiation process is crucial for creating commitment, and is the process inherent in transferring 'ownership' of the job.

6. Decide the level of documentation. A simple email will be enough in some cases. In others, something more akin to a project proposal, with milestones, metrics, etc. will be needed. Your decision about appropriate documentation will be a function of a number of things, including your level of trust in their competence to deliver.

7. **Monitor and support**, but don't solve all their problems for them. There's a difference between delegation and abdication.

8. **On completion, acknowledge results and give out rewards.** This doesn't have to be a big deal, but it shouldn't be skipped either. Since real motivation is intrinsic, the best reward comes from helping someone feel personal satisfaction and an increasing sense of competence.

I have found it best for people to follow the process formally, step by step, until they and their reports become familiar with the process, after which time it tends naturally to streamline.

How REWARDS can release individual potential

I was working with a talented up-and-coming PR executive on a professional mentoring program. During a break in a meeting she informed me she had been promoted and was having difficulty with her new staff who were failing to meet deadlines.

When she challenged them, she was frustrated by their creative excuses, and she was starting to hate hearing herself carp on at them.

I introduced her to the REWARDS format and asked her to let me know how she got on. A fortnight later she emailed me: 'I used the format with one of my staff. I felt much more confident that I was setting the lead, but the most surprising result was a few days later when I wanted to check on progress, which I knew had been inadequate. Rather than carp about how little had been done, I whipped out the agreement and cheerfully asked her, "so how would you evaluate how well you are doing based on the evidence we agreed?" She was stunned! There was no opportunity for excuses. She volunteered that she needed to get her act together and I said I would support her as long as she really went for it, which she did.

'I think she's happier now too, because no-one likes to have to squirm in front of the boss like a child who hasn't done their homework. Now they know I

mean it, people negotiate their responsibility and for the most part deliver as originally agreed. It's a happier, as well as tighter, ship.'

What about organizational Potential?

I go into a powerful way to apply REWARDS to organizational questions in the next chapter.

For more: www.basscluser.com/how-to-delegate/

REWARDS worksheet

Download template from the website.

R esults required
E vidence for success
W hy is it the result important?
A gree to make a contract
R esources and support negotiation
D ecide the level of documentation
S upport the delegate

Key Four – Run Model Days or Weeks

Has this ever happened to you? You want to achieve some ambitious daily, weekly or monthly performance level in some area of the business. It could be anything: zero defects, 100% schedule attainment, response to client enquiries within a certain time, quotes out within a certain time, or zero unsafe acts. Everyone acknowledges the importance of the goal, but in practice it is rarely if ever met, and if people were honest, they'd admit that just can't see how to do it.

The idea of meeting such standards day-in and day-out can seem insurmountable if it's never been achieved before. But what if you made a game out of it? What if you start by trying to achieve the standard for just one day, or one week?ⁱⁱⁱ

In one manufacturing plant, Tom, the factory manager, was struggling with a common issue. When they were under time pressure to meet delivery promises people rushed, and quality suffered.

To address it, Tom organized a 'model day' experiment. He selected a day that was two weeks ahead and attached a simple goal to it: *For one day*, meet the aggressive schedule with zero defects. See if we can do it, and discover what we can learn from trying.

He briefed the team using the REWARDS format:

Results required

'A week on Thursday, on the line for machine #3, we will achieve 100% of our planned schedule with zero defects.'

Evidence for success

'We'll track performance on an hourly basis on the white board next to the machine (displaying standard vs actual and %).

'Final result will be announced at end of the day.'

Why is it the result important?

'If we miss our schedule, it creates a domino effect on overtime and means requests for you to work weekends.

'Plus, if our customers get orders late, they will be unhappy, and may move to other companies to supply them. If that happens then there will be less work, and that could mean fewer jobs.'

Agree to make a contract

'We want everyone on the team to agree to pursue this goal, so we've asked you to please tell us what you need.'

Resources and support negotiation

'I'll draft in an extra supervisor to help with ideas, and I will roll my sleeves up and work with you.'

Decide the level of documentation

'This form documents our experiment – I'll put it up on the whiteboard.'

Support the delegates

'I'll be around all day, and we'll compare notes on how we did over drinks and snacks at the end of the shift.'

Everybody on the team was enlisted in the preparations.

What happened?

The exercise was a great success. As Tom explained:

'I used REWARDS to brief everybody on what we were going to do. We actually tried it on two lines on two different days. We started by picking straight runs with no changeovers so that we had a good chance of success. It was great that everybody who was on the factory floor that day had a go – everybody rotated in and out of those lines. And at the end of the day they were running over to the whiteboards to find out: “Did we get it?”'

'It engaged people. Especially when I explained the “Whys”: a lot of people had never been talked to like that. Previously, the attitude was: “If we don't get it done - oh well.” They didn't understand the consequences. They appreciated having an explanation, and they appreciated knowing the results. Now I am picking lines with change-overs to make it more of a challenge, and we're going to

make a documentary so we can show it to teams in other plants.'

The steps

- Identify an ambitious performance level you want to achieve.
- Pick a date two or three weeks in the future on which you will aim to have a perfect 'model' day.
- Announce your intentions well in advance. Brief the relevant people using the REWARDS formula.
- Record the preparations and the action on the day, using photos and videos.
- Hold an all-hands meeting afterwards to review lessons, and discuss how that level of performance can become the new business-as-usual standard.
- Set the next challenge.

Expert Tip

Model days are a great way to get started, but model weeks can be completely transformative. When you target a whole week, you'll find you have to involve the wider organization. In a manufacturing situation such as the one described, for example, you may need to rethink the way salespeople make promises to customers. People who never get asked, like maintenance or cleaning staff, may turn out to have answers to your performance challenges. Or you might discover that you need to rethink the way the schedule is constructed and who needs to have an input so that customers experience a smooth and dependable service. It becomes a further opportunity to tap into your organization's potential.

Key Five – Create Richer Networks With Your Customers And Partners

When you read a story about Boeing working with Rolls Royce, or IBM working with Cisco, it's easy to forget that this is a kind of shorthand. *Boeing* as an entity doesn't work with anybody. If you zoom in on what is actually happening, you realise that John and Simone from Boeing, are working with Jill and Karl at Rolls Royce.

Some businesses have much deeper and more richly interconnected relationships than others. In one case, the only contacts might be between sales people and purchasing people, or between CEOs. In others, the relationships are so intimate that if you observed a meeting, you'd be hard pressed to know who works for which business.

Which is better? While there are exceptions, generally, more interconnected is far preferable. You're better informed, have more influence, have more options if you need to correct errors, and learn of new business opportunities more quickly.

Yet many people inside organizations have very little if any customer or client awareness, let alone contact.

How a legal team increased revenue by 10% for free

One legal team was operating within an extremely competitive part of the banking sector. They were under pressure to grow, and wanted to increase the share of business they received from a major financial institution. As was traditional, the two partners brought in all the business, and handled all client contact. This created two big problems: first, the partners were flat out and couldn't increase the amount of their time they spent selling. Second, it meant that no one else in the

team was learning to build the business. If the partners moved or retired, the remaining team would lack the contacts and skills to remain competitive.

Here's how the situation was quickly and cheaply turned around:

- A crash course in simple relationship building skills (for more on this, see my book with Helga Henry entitled *Networkability: Building Your Business One Relationship at A Time*).
- Mapping the current relationships among the firms' and the clients' people at all levels, as well as the issues and concerns of the various decision-makers. See diagram on page 29.
- Rating the current stage of development of those relationships using a pipeline model, and displaying the combined relationship in such a way as to show current strengths, gaps and opportunities. See diagram on page 30.

- Developing actions with the best chance of strengthening those relationships.
- Implementing actions and then updating the displays. Actions included partners bringing junior colleagues to meetings and introducing them as 'up-and-coming', mid-level associates seeking out their counterparts in the client organization, and even PAs arranging to meet the client's PAs for lunch.

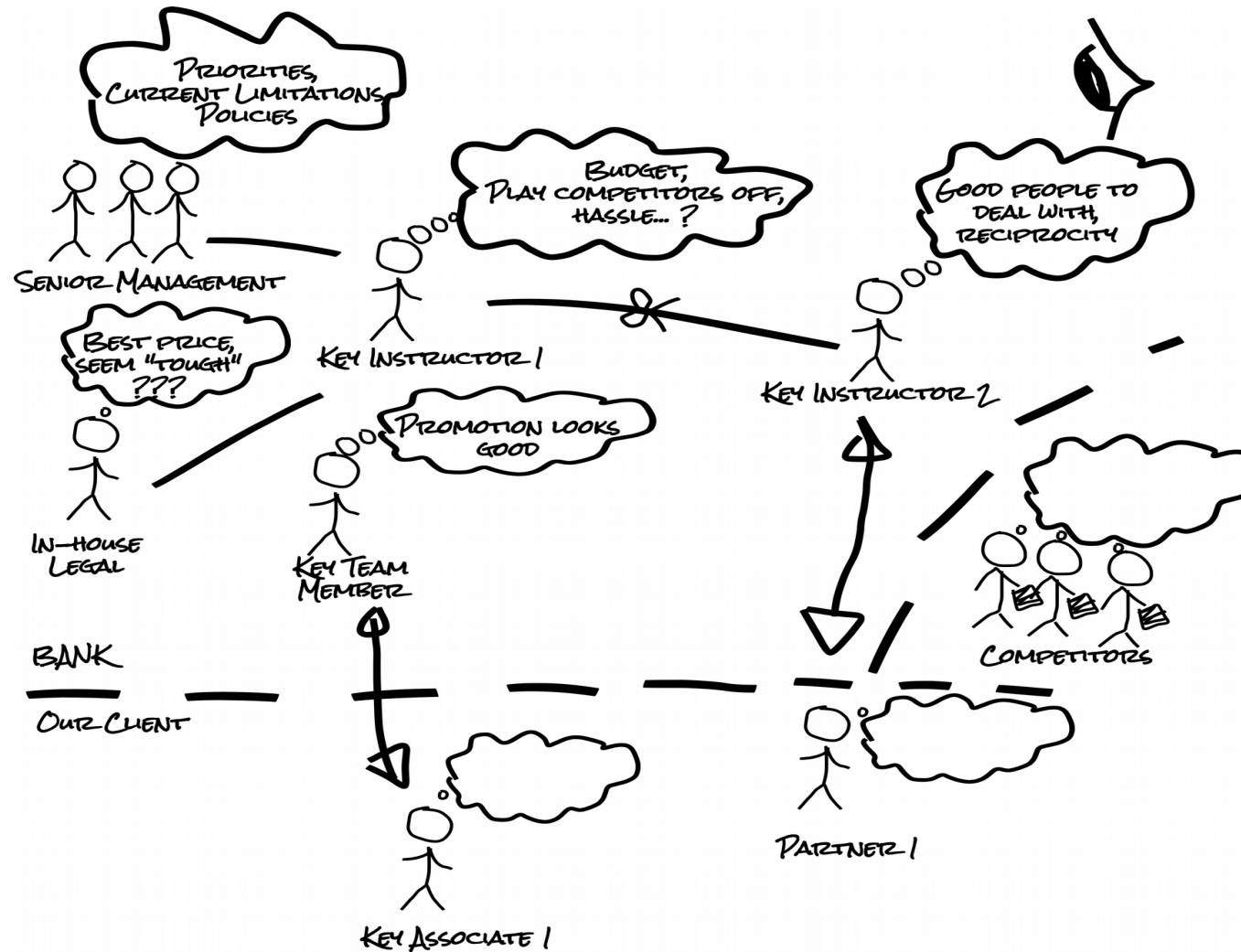
The results were fast. Over a six month period, a team with seemingly no way to increase its fees without extra hires was able to generate an additional 10% in fees with minimal effort. The results were produced by people who weren't even seriously expected to sell anything, and at no additional cost to their current marketing budget.

Other benefits followed. Partners found that their time was freed up to attend to the relationships with the most critical senior decision-makers. The exercise enhanced the client's perception of the Firm's depth and breadth of service, and

strengthened prospects of continuing longer-term business. The project was rolled out within the law firm nationally, with similar results multiplied.

There were also developmental benefits. Individuals and the team reported an increased sense of control of business development and of their relationship to the client in a competitive environment. And with everyone having a real role to play, team building has been accomplished in the best possible way – through shared success in a real-world situation.

Mapping Relationships



The Relationship Matrix

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y
1																									
2																								
3																									
4			Decision maker							Gatekeeper							High quality source of information								
5																									
6		Joe Bloggs	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc	etc
7	Ann	4	3	2	4				1			5	5	2	3		1	1	1	1					
8	Bob	4	4	2	1				1				5		3	3	1	1	1	1					
9	Claire	2	3	3	2	4			1	4				2			1	1	1	1			1		
10	Don	2	3				4		1				4						1	1			1		
11	Elise		2						1		4	3	2	5					1	1		3	1	1	
12	Fred		1				2		1										1	1	2	2	1	1	
13	etc								1										1	1		1	1	1	1
14	etc																								
15	etc																								
16																									
17																									
18																									
19																									
20	Target- Not known	1																							
21	Known	2																							
22	Actively Networks	3																							
23	Customer	4																							
24	Multiplier	5																							

(Answer as individuals)

"would they recognise you if they passed you in the street"

"will make time for a call or meeting"

"regular contact and relationship actively developing"

"have given you substantial business"

"introduced you to work"

This technique works very well not just in professional services, but in many B2B situations. It also works in very large organizations where for example a staff department provides services to another area of the business.

It's very straightforward to get started. Simply download and complete a relationship matrix, and you'll see gaps and opportunities which you and your colleagues can easily respond to.

Download your blank version of the Relationship Matrix from my website:

www.bassclusker.com/downloads

Expert Tip

People often say things such as 'everyone's a sales person' or 'everyone is in the quality department'. That's great. This technique will give you a way to turn this fine sentiment into action. We have found that:

- People who are not in traditional sales roles can absolutely win work – clients do not always need to deal with senior executives or official salespeople before they are prepared to give work.
- 'Ones and twos' add up– it's not just about hitting sixes. Small initial jobs won by junior staff can lead to much large pieces of referral work.
- Teams that coordinate their efforts can quickly win more work from large clients.

Key Six – Reverse Through Limitations

The biggest cap on your potential, and that of your business, may be *your thinking about what is possible*. In trying to come up with ways to improve the business, the tendency is to extrapolate from the past. We tend to expect the future to proceed incrementally from the present, and we assume that the way things will happen will pretty much be the way things have happened in the past.

Reasoning forwards like this means that exciting futures which are perfectly possible can *seem* like they are impossible.

Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla Motors and Space X, has spoken about the difference of thinking by analogy versus thinking from first principles.

Space X entered a market where people thought about new rocket designs by analogy with existing designs (what I describe as thinking from the past to the present to the future). As a result of this thinking process, space launch vehicle prices had been flat-to-slightly-increasing for years.

But Musk and his colleagues noted that the price of the bill of materials for a rocket was a small fraction of the cost of then-current rockets. Therefore, he concluded, there was the opportunity for a fundamental rethink to dramatically improve results.

He and his colleagues rethought rocket launchers from first principles and created a launcher for a few percent of the going rate. Another engineer, and former dogfighting instructor, John Boyd did something very similar with the engine of the F-16.

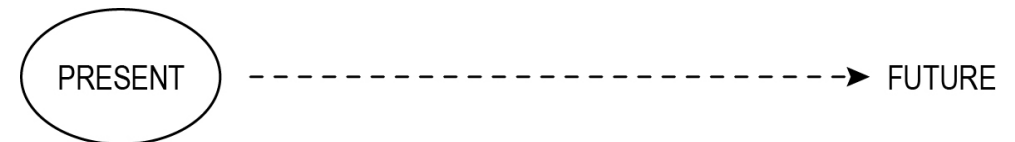
That's great for engineers dealing with physics-based problems, but the idea applies far more widely. How can you escape from the limitations on

your business or career that are imposed by thinking by analogy from past, to present to future?

The technique I describe below is the single fastest way I know to disengage from assumed limitations. It works phenomenally well for individuals and organizations alike. I've used it to help an unknown provincial art lecture become a sought-after painter selling canvasses for five figures at one-man shows in London and New York, a divisional vice-president mobilise a new country-wide growth push worth \$100 million, and a former Mars executive develop a revolutionary social impact investment vehicle that's transforming the fortunes of a coastal town that had fallen on challenging times.

Exercise: Back from the Future

1. **Identify and stand on a timeline, starting from the present and looking out into the future.**



2. **Pick a really big, worthwhile, motivating goal, without, at this stage, being concerned about how realistic it is.**

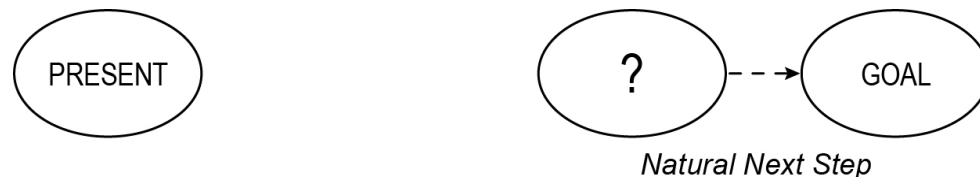


3. Step off the timeline and identify a position in the future where 'someone' is successfully involved in achieving that unreasonable goal.

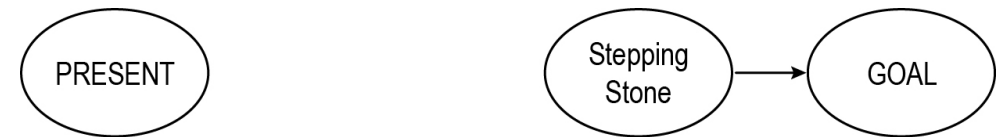


4. Identify the step *just before* 'that someone' achieved the goal. Ask the key question:

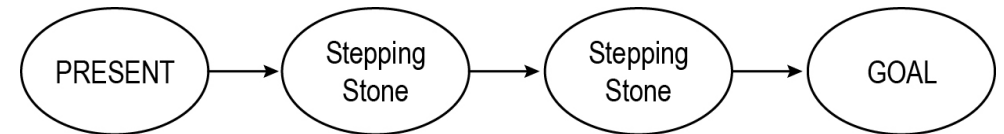
'What has to *already* be there (or be true) in order for 'that someone' to achieve the goal as a natural next step?'



5. Step into that position and check that *if* you were there, you could take the next step and realise the goal.



6. The position you've identified now becomes the new (stepping stone) goal.



7. Now ask yourself:

'Is the stepping stone an unreasonable goal for *me* – or could I just get it done?'

If it is still out of reach, use the same process again, this time making the *stepping stone* the goal for 'someone' (as in Step 3) and identify the step before it (using the key questions from Step 4). Keep going until you reach a 'reasonable' stepping stone.

If the stepping stone is reasonable – you're ready to get started.

Expert Tip

The trick is in how rigorous you are when you ask the question, 'What has to *already* be there (or be true) in order for that *someone* to achieve the goal as a natural next step?' I.e. not what would have to be true for you.

'That someone' is not subject to the same imagined limits that you are imposing on yourself.

Key Seven – Supercharge Everything With Real Feedback

The term 'feedback' is much misunderstood and has been diluted and distorted from its original meaning. Recovering that meaning is a key that can supercharge all the other keys in this guide.

As a leader or an ambitious individual contributor, it's vital to make sure you create effective feedback loops for yourself first, and then for the rest of the organization.

Real feedback is vital steering and learning information that can dramatically improve performance. But most so-called feedback is actually no such thing, and generally does little to support improvement.

Typically, opinion masquerades as feedback. This just creates unreality and even dependence. A typical exchange might go as follows:

Manager: 'That was a great presentation.'

Staff member: 'Thank you.'

The manager walks away congratulating themselves on offering praise. But, did the staff member really learn anything they could use to improve?

And consider those 'feedback forms' that ask you to do the following sorts of things:

How would you rate Mary's work attitude?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate the content of the session?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How did we do?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What is anyone supposed to do with the number?
How can the recipient adjust their actions in order to improve?

What feedback really is, and what it is not...

Feedback is steering information, not opinions, evaluations or judgments. Think of the sailor with the oar over the back of a Spartan ship sailing to Troy, maintaining course by keeping the mast aligned with a star. The ship is constantly being diverted by the wind and the waves – feedback is the process which makes successful navigation possible.

Heinz von Foerster^{iv}, defined feedback as: 'The return of part of a system's output to change its input.' In other words: when the star drifts to the left relative to the mast, that is feedback that the oar is too much to the right. The sailor can recognise his behaviour (the way he is holding the

oar) and its effect in the world (the drifting of the star to the left) and adjust accordingly.

The Captain could stand by the navigator all night saying 'That's good', or 'That's bad', or 'I rate you as a 6/10 steersman', but it wouldn't help performance one iota. The performer must recognise their own behaviour and its effect in the world.

Feedback only makes sense if you are committed to a goal...

Like the archetypal steersman, someone can only treat incoming information as feedback if they are actively engaged in pursuing some goal (which they might have got from a REWARDS session – see Key Three). Feedback is something you actively get, before it is something you give.

So let's start with refining the way we seek and use feedback for ourselves to improve our own performance. If that weren't interesting enough, we

will then be in a far better position to ensure great feedback for others, and for the whole organization.

Technique

Use the 3Q formula to build on strengths and bounce back from disappointment.

Ask yourself what I call the Three Feedback Question:

1. What did I do that worked?
2. What did I do better than last time?
3. What do I want to work on next?

I learned these from a top football coach. They work amazingly well. The real accelerator question is number two, because it creates amplifying feedback, literally a 'runaway success', both to tell your brain to continue to focus on what is working, and to frame disappointing results in as constructive a light as possible.

They are great to ask reactively after a key performance: a meeting, a presentation or a sales call, for example.

It can be even more powerful to ask them proactively at the end of the day, week, month and year.

In fact the following exercise combines these timeframes and is something I like to do periodically with my coaching and mentoring clients.

For more: www.bassclusker.com/how-to-get-your-own-feedback/

The 3Q Formula – The Three Feedback Questions

<p>What did I/they do right...</p> <p>What worked ...</p>	... today?	... this last week?	... this last month?	... this last year?
<p>What did I/they do better...</p> <p>What improved...</p>	... today?	... this last week?	... this last week?	... this last year?
<p>What would be most profitable to work on...</p>	... next?	... over the next week?	... over the next month?	... over the next year?

Exercise - giving feedback to others

You can easily see how to use this framework with others. Pick three people and tell them what they are doing that is working, what they are doing that is improving, and what to work on next. Do it today.

Expert Tip

Peter Drucker, in his highly influential book *The Effective Executive*, emphasized the crucial importance of building on strengths. Instead of focusing on correcting inevitable weaknesses, the leader should focus instead on 'making strength productive'. Doing so will often have the beneficial side effect of making weaknesses irrelevant.

The Three Feedback Questions, question three in particular, give you a simple, quick and pragmatic way to build on your strengths, and those of the who organization.

Conclusion

Let's quickly summarise the seven keys again. They are:

Key One: Value Proposition Potential: **Play the 'Bundling Game'** – recombine the individual components of your offerings into kits, options or bundles that have more combined value than you would think by looking at the components singly.

Key Two: Frontline Potential: **Tap into ideas from the frontline** – the frontline know about customers, they know about waste, and they know about bottlenecks, tap into that knowledge.

Key Three: Ownership Potential: **Give control to get control** – use the military-proven technique of Mission Command as a framework for building the required *aligned autonomy*.

Key Four: Productivity Potential: **Run 'Model Days' (or weeks)** – it's much easier and more appealing for people if you set challenges with careful attention to the time-frames. It becomes a challenge.

Key Five: Relationship Potential: **Create richer networks with your customers and partners** – mapping the point-to-point relationships between your organization and another one can make easy-to-exploit opportunities jump out at you.

Key Six: Mindset Potential: **Reverse through limitations** – escape from thinking by analogy with the past. Think backwards from what you want, with reference to first principles. Design the solution for 'someone' rather than for you, so that you don't unnecessarily impose your assumed limitations.

Key Seven: Performance Potential: **Supercharge everything with real feedback** – use the Three Feedback Questions to build on strengths and create a positive and reinforcing mindset in yourself, your people, and your whole organization.

Final Thought

Although I've broken the business of releasing potential into seven keys, I think you can see how they can be used either singly or in combination. I hope you can grasp the underlying mindset. It's essentially an entrepreneurial one. It's also a prudent one. None of these approaches need create much if any risk. And because they increase the amount and quality of information, they can actually reduce the risk of any subsequent investments.

Once you see you are getting a response, you know you can up the commitment from a position of strength.

More Resources

Feel free to share this e-book with your colleagues and discuss with them how these ideas can help you release the potential in your business.

If you want more information or an informal chat about how we work and can help you and your business or team release their potential, get in touch with me at andrew@bassclusker.com

The website www.bassclusker.com has a wealth of information and actionable articles, podcasts and newsletters. Sign up for updates for free.

About Andrew Bass PhD



Andrew is the founder and principal of BassClusker Consulting, a leadership and strategy consultancy that helps organizations to do better and faster work with the resources they *already* have.

“Andy Bass is that rare consulting talent who appreciates the synergy between strategic direction and committed support. He sees the job through until the client sees the practical results.”

Alan Weiss - Bestselling author of *The Ultimate Consultant* and *The Innovation Formula*

He has worked across a wide range of industries and sectors including packaging, professional services, technology, media, health, financial services, automotive and education.

“Andy doesn’t repackage old ideas, he adds a genuinely new approach and engages with his clients with real empathy. Seriously impressive!”

Craig Preston, Area Director, Corporate (Birmingham, Leicester, Bristol), Aon Risk Solutions

While based in the UK, Andy travels extensively, and has worked in the US, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Finland, Mexico, Russia and China.

“As a coach, Andrew has a gift for offering unusual ways to look at issues that make the right decision suddenly seem clear.”

James Stevenson, Group Risk and Insurance Manager, SEGRO Plc



Andrew is author of the book *The Performance Papers: Incisive Briefings for Busy Leaders*, published by Bookshaker.

"IAC people are benefiting hugely from the content of this book and additionally from Andy's expert guidance in aligning our people with our objectives and turning strategy into action."

Jens R. Höhnel, Global Co-CEO & President Europe,
International Automotive Components Group (IAC)

Andrew has a PhD in Software Engineering from Aston University, and a BSc in Computer Science and Ergonomics (the application of human sciences, especially psychology, to design), also from Aston.

Outside of work, he has dabbled in the dangerous world of stand-up comedy (with decidedly mixed results!), and plays lead guitar in a tribute band dedicated to the music of Canadian progressive rock band Rush.

- i You may say: 'As long as it's a 4 or 5, who cares?' But that is exactly what you should care about, since the way to release potential in your business is by understanding and building on your strengths. Being told you are good is nice, but if that's all you hear, it's a major missed opportunity.
- ii Open Space was originated by Harrison Owen, and it's in the public domain. It's worth reading Owen's work if you want to get more information before trying it. I offer this description with acknowledgment to the purists who might feel I'm missing some key elements or disregarding some philosophical niceties. The fact is, the approach as I'm describing it works, whether or not it counts as 'pure' Open Space. While it can easily be run internally by someone who has been through the process once or twice, it's probably worth hiring an experienced facilitator for the first time you do it.
- iii This idea was pioneered by Robert Schaffer in a number of books and articles including High Impact Consulting.
- iv One of the pioneers of cybernetics, the trans-disciplinary study of effective organization, control, regulation and communication.