

Bright Purple Shaping the Future with Positivity in an Uncertain Climate

Phil Atkinson

I love high energy passionate people. I get ideas from vibrant, enthusiastic folk who always find a positive flipside to any disaster. And boy, do we need these people right now. I believe it is vital that we cultivate positive people to inspire us all to climb out of the recession and build our own route to recovery.

[Scotland on Sunday's review of our positive Mindset event>>](#)

The Background

Nick and I had been talking about staging an event for some time. We met in November 2008 and discussed the dismal economic landscape and the likely fall out for business continuing in 2009.

We were both of the same mindset: being fed up to the back teeth with negativity and pessimistic views, and we agreed to stage an event for colleagues, clients and friends.

We decided a good choice of venue would be London where all the breaking news was coming from, the City with the Madoff explosion and 'City bonus culture' was just about to hit the headlines.

Things had been going relatively well for us, no blazing saddles on the horizon but we had retained clients. We believed we needed to spruce things up – and not in an idiotic and unrealistic Pollyanna sort of way. We needed to be realistic and stretching at the same time, and stage an event that would be a great kickoff for 2009.

Contrary to Popular Trends we went against the Grain

We were not impressed by the media coverage of the current situation attention. We agreed we would be 'contrarian': go against the grain, and do what we could for stimulating some positive thinking and try to encourage others to look for the 'green shoots' comments for which Baroness Vadera was soon to be lambasted by the Government.

A Relaxed Discussion with trusted friends and respected colleagues and clients

Nick took it on himself to invite the movers and shakers of his circle to an event at the Rocket Bar in Adams Court just off Threadneedle St – centre of the UK Financial System.

Nick originally targeted 45 people, some existing clients, and other interesting and prospective clients and associates.

Relaxation & Sharing Ideas

The event was never going to be a speech or a lecture. It does not fit with my style neither would it have been appropriate. I was asked to create a 15-20 minute starter to get discussion flowing with the group, stimulating lively debate, raising issues, referring to practises which we know would raise everyone's business profile, and help us create the culture of growth and recovery.

We both debated and discussed the Mid Atlantic Bankrupts who were running Recovery Clinics as hysterical in their tone as in their credibility. Agreement was to keep away from the extreme positivity shown by others on the workshop circuit and to ensure, above all, that our pitch was credible and displayed integrity and professionalism.

What will work – what will not!

I would only focus on short vignettes on what will and will not work to get us and our businesses out of the recession.

We avoided the simple stuff on risk management, securing lending, cost reduction and the other accountant led information which is useful, but will not change our business attitude and culture.

Cultural Change & Personal Responsibility to drive change

This injection for improvement and recovery will not come from any other source but from within. I made that a key element of my session.

I wanted to 'forget' the Government agencies and other such bodies and various schemes that had been set up to provide some financial backbone for the Banks.

I believe that if we believe, what will happen to us and our business is within our control. We must take the reins to recovery and protect our brands, our business and our own self esteem and confidence.

Replace Control with Trust, Leadership, the Customer, Behaviour and our people

The session was very relaxed and comfortable. No PowerPoint, no flipcharts – just speaking from the heart to the group numbering 50+ who were enjoying beer and nibbles and who were intent on shaping their future the way they wanted it.

It's all about people. It's about valuing our people in a tangible manner. It is about mastering potential. It is about actively engaging with, and listening to, people, and then implementing their ideas for improvement.

It is a rejection of any hint of fear and over control, and is a belief in trusting and motivating our people

Vital & critical key topics for further discussion

The vital and most important issue is that without Leadership there is absolutely no change, and while all around our losing their heads and panicking - we need to review our role as leaders in our business.

Lots of people are looking for support and confidence – and where better than to those in Leadership positions. My firm belief is leaders should be brave, have courage, take thoughtful risks, listen (because ideas come along very quietly) inspire and, most of all, praise and model behaviours.

Our People are Boss watchers – take a good look in the mirror

So be careful, because people are looking at your behaviour. A major theme is that until behaviour changes, nothing changes, and our actions and our focus are central to change.

Most of all we need to learn to master the potential of self and others.

Rapid & Continuous Improvement

Every day we are either ahead or behind our competition. We need continuous improvement and that will not come from restructuring alone, nor will it emanate from technology or process mapping.

It comes from people who have the optimism and confidence to push ahead. We employ people from the neck up – not the shoulders down and we need to get close to them to listen, engage and support them in helping us to get better, and be more customer-focused.

The External Client or Consumer and the Internal Customer

And, yes, although I believe the client or customer is the most important person in the world – it could be argued that until we all work seamlessly with our people as 'internal' customers and suppliers we stand little chance of delighting our external customers.

We talked about the excellent practise of leading companies such as Disney, Toyota, GE, Microsoft and many others in that 20 minutes session.

The Future is Purple: Road to Recovery

After my short talk I met with VP's of Merchant Banks, Finance Houses, Consultancies, Lawyers CIO's, CFO's CEO's HR and Change Management Directors, Sales Directors – what a great set of people.

It's not Rocket Science

Very senior staff from a variety of industries attended the event and over the period of a couple of hours we discussed in a relaxed manner the strategies and the process by which delegates would leverage existing and new business in 2009.

And we talked about people and how we could get the most from them.

Multi Tasking: Rapport Building & Nibbles

The evening went too darned fast. I had meetings in Milton Keynes the next day and had to leave at 1000 pm. The event was only scheduled for two hours but I hear the group were still talking way past midnight.

Nick was kind enough to distribute copies of my book, "the Iceberg Agenda" to all those present. Thanks Nick – I hope it gives people some ideas of how to leverage their most important asset, as the sub title suggests – 'Mastering Potential'.

Shaping Culture Change

I met such great people and they shared with me their strategies for moving on up to deal with building a culture of recovery. My work is focused entirely on [Building Corporate Cultures](#). Some people (wrongly) believe it takes too long. That's an excuse for inaction. Culture change takes as long as you want it to take. One can change a business around in six weeks through focusing on behaviour.

If something is not working, try something different

While others are [resisting change](#), we can be installing change champions in companies and focusing attention on getting others to give change a chance, and emulate best performance.

My belief is that thinking the same old thoughts will get you nowhere – to get to the next level of performance you need to [think and behave differently](#).

If something is not working, try something different. After all, insanity is displaying the same habits and behaviour and expecting different superlative results without any recourse to personal change.

Engagement in Shaping a Positive Future

Businesses are in trouble if they fail to share the mindset which has been outlined. It is 100% true that “Without charismatic and positive leadership no change will take place”. I don't care how much the Government injects into the Banks and the Economy – without the people with vision and verve, we are screwed big time.

I wish you could have been there; the energy levels scored high on passion and the willingness to want to change. So a personal message to Nick - if the Government cannot create a positive 'can do climate' it's up to you – you'd better organise an event in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Let's get Scotland up and running.

Back Here on Planet Earth

Anyway, you can see that behaviour breeds behaviour. If you are enthusiastic and have a strong belief you radiate to others like yourself. I personally keep away from the 'negative ninnies' and gravitate to the 'can do' people.

I am being very serious. Here in the UK, we desperately need to change our attitude to culture change and people management. We need to take action – not be indecisive and wait for others to 'do something' If you, like me, believe this can happen and is within our control please make contact with myself Philip@philipatkinson.com and Nick.Price@BrightPurple.co.uk – because we will not think any other way.

Recovery Raves

Keep an eye on this phrase – this is a new set of workshops which I am running for selected companies. They are highly innovative workshops to get us up off our knees and shaping our future the way we want it.

Postscript

BrightPurple funded the London event. It was totally brilliant. I was so impressed by the positivity of all 50+ people no matter their age or their position – they were all 'can do' people.

I have to thank BrightPurple for their support and help and I would be delighted to support Nick in any campaign or event to increase good sound positive thinking and shape our world they way we want it to be.

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