

Is work without purpose worth doing?

Something radical is happening in Irish workplaces. We are on the verge of a new economy and it's being driven by people who want purpose, not just a pay cheque. Janice Valentine reports.

If I was to ask you to define what is innovation, what would you say?

These buzz words might litter your answer: Radical. Fast. Agile. Lean. Novelty. Design thinking.

But when you break it down into something that's relevant to just about everyone who works today, and get rid of distracting buzz words, it's about *change*.

One of the top thought leaders in innovation, Stefan Lindegaard said in a recent article that, "The organisational structures need to change. They are not built for the upcoming challenges and opportunities, and we need to experiment much more on what will work the best for the future of business".

Let's be clear about something. At the organisational level, it's not about change in the context of rigidly managing it to enforce new ways of working; ways dictated by upper tiers of management. It's about empowering people to make the changes they see fit and then supporting those people who are resisting the change.

At an individual level it's about understanding your place in a constantly shifting environment; what will help you do that is knowing how your purpose links to the organisation's vision. If vision guides the organisation, mission guides the individual.

Purpose matters. What else?

Another purpose evangelist (the other being myself), Jay Shetty, a guest speaker at the *Intrapreneurship Conference* in Stockholm this autumn, said, "Finding and living with purpose is key to both organisations and the people working within them."

It is absorbing and hopefully auspicious that a conference whose focus is on innovation has Jay as one of their speakers this year.

As well as having a strong purpose, what else matters? Well, confidence in your ability to support innovation is hugely valuable. Confidence is what'll motivate you to make your purpose tacit within the organisation and communicate ideas that might go against the corporate orthodoxy. It's not easy standing out from the crowd.

So if innovation demands we have high levels of confidence and have a strong purpose, then it makes sense for aspiring innovators to strengthen their emotional intelligence.

Soft skills are the foundation stones of great companies

Using our strengths and honouring our values not only enhances confidence but builds resiliency. And this is important for us to cope with resistance to our ideas and manage the various conflicts that'll most likely occur as we forge new paths through old, rigid structures and systems, to innovate.

When you think about it, it's ironic: what have typically been described as 'soft skills' are now the solid foundation upon which innovative organisations are built.

It's confusing times for sure. But exciting.

On the verge of a new economy

We are, according to PWC CEO, Bob Moritz, at an inflection point; we're on the brink of a new economy. Aaron Hurst has called it the 'Purpose Economy'. Defined as “an economy where value lies in establishing a purpose for employees and customers - through serving needs greater than their own, enabling personal growth, and building community”.

It seems that purpose, a key focus of PWC's recent CEO survey, now presents corporates with another key performance indicator: *impact*. Time to add another column to the bloated KPI spread sheets and this one is called 'making a difference'.

I think this presents tremendous opportunities for employees who've been constrained for too long by the hard edges of the complex organisational structure, to thrive. And for those who're just starting out on the ladder - millennials fuelled by their desire to make a positive impact on the world - well, isn't this the perfect time to be entering the workforce?

Intrapreneur's Squad

These opportunities will not be easy to pursue; because to some people, all of this change presents a significant threat. And this is the reason I'm running *Intrapreneur's Squad*, which is a series of monthly workshops in Dublin.

The aim of *Intrapreneur's Squad* is to help employees of the major corporate organisations understand innovation in the context of the purpose economy and provide tools and frameworks to support them succeed in it.

Join me on Monday, June 12 for our next session. [Register here.](#)

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