



*The only source
of knowledge is
experience.*

- Albert Einstein

**THE 2017 *FAST TRACK*
SCHOOL OF LIFE**

Over the last 12 months we worked with more than 150 companies from 18 countries and 5 continents – an amazing mix of cultures, industries, organizations, personalities, dreams, biases, behaviors...

What an amazing learning journey – some of it surely challenged the textbook wisdom, some sounds counterintuitive, some will cause disagreement!

Life really proves to be the best classroom! We are happy to share some of what we learned

CHARACTER TRUMPS TALENT. 100 TIMES OVER.

When building teams, we look first for IQ, skills, experience, capabilities. WRONG. The world is full of talented and intelligent people who achieve ...nothing. The main ingredient for amazing results is CHARACTER - mental and physical stamina, perseverance, love and passion for what you do. Exceptional performance comes from deliberate practice. Deliberate practice is so difficult that no one can do it without passion and stamina. Pity that our kids over study math and English at school and not how to build character and mental toughness.

SETTING GOALS IS PERSONAL!

We study markets, hire consultants, produce forecasts and do risk analyses to define the RIGHT goal. Even worse – a REALISTIC goal. WRONG. Goals are rarely a function of the market, but of the personal ambition, self-confidence, appetite for risk and the mindset of the leader. And this is fine! We just have to be aware of it. The goals you set just must be bigger than...yourself. If your goal does not scare you – it is not good enough.

BOLD GOALS GENERATE ENERGY.

Companies believe the main reason for setting goals is to achieve them. WRONG. Goals have a much bigger purpose. Different goals attract different kinds of people and set a different spirit. The size of the dream determines the size of the obstacles we face and what we consider insurmountable. Goals change perceptions. What we focus on defines what we notice. The value of goals is not in the future they describe, but the change in perception of reality they foster TODAY. Incremental planning puts you at the mercy of the status quo and your past circumstances. Companies are proud to be "results-oriented", Results are just... results of the actions we take. Focus should be on deliberate practice and mastering the ACTION that will get us the result. Targets should focus on process and behaviour improvement and make this a DAILY practice. This, in our mind, is the foundation of agility and organisational speed.

PEOPLE TRUMP STRATEGY.

Companies spend enormous amounts of time and money to analyse strategy, profits, markets, customers and not enough to select and grow PEOPLE. This is NOT optional anymore. The ability to find, attract, grow and retain AMAZING people is THE BIGGEST competitive advantage today. It is grossly overlooked. Often the HR people are just responsible to make sure the documentation is in order. If HR is not one of the top 3 decision makers in the company you either have the wrong person heading HR, or the wrong boss managing the HR person. It is a TOUGH job, that requires strategic focus, commitment and deliberate practice. Companies who have high growth ambition do much better hiring pirates rather than polished industry captains.

WE ONLY GROW WHEN WE FACE CHALLENGES.

All remarkable things are on the outer side of the comfort zone. People like to be praised and complimented. It feels nice, it gives you a confidence boost. The only problem with it is – it does not help you grow. We only advance our thinking when confronted with a different opinion or challenging questions. The ability to keep two opposing thoughts in the mind at the same time is the ultimate sign of high intelligence. Great teams have a culture of brutal honesty, and consider negative feedback as a gift. A-Players love it. Mediocre people hate it. Fights do not damage the relationship between people, but makes it stronger. A players do not sit quiet, do not need instructions and do not hesitate to openly express their views, even when this contradicts the majority or the boss. Good people are Self DRIVEN. Attracting, keeping and growing such people should be a priority.

SPEED IN ORGANIZATIONS DOES NOT COME FROM DOING EVERYTHING FAST. NOT EVEN CLOSE. SPEED COMES FROM MASTERY OF THE 80/20 RULE AND ABILITY TO TAKE DECISIONS FAST.

It is WHAT you do BEFORE HOW you do it. Deciding on the ONE thing that you need to do FIRST and having the discipline to stick to it till it's done is the ULTIMATE PRODUCTIVITY HACK. Quick decision making is a function of the individual abilities and simple organizational structure. Simple organizational structure means having ONE person responsible and no layers of approvals. At the bottom of it is the trust of the leader that people will come up with their parts and the willingness to experiment and make mistakes.

PREOCCUPATION WITH DATA KILLS HIGH GROWTH STRATEGIES

Often “we need more data” is just an excuse used by managers who do not have the guts to take decisions. Most failures are caused not by absence of data, but by lack of clarity, conviction or speed. Fast growth companies dedicate fixed time to data gathering and do not go beyond it – flex scope not time.

Once we believe that the opportunity is out there, “we will figure it out” proves to be the only right answer to any future related strategy and execution questions. Great leaders listen intensely, but do not follow the “decision by a committee approach”, neither do they care to be liked or politically correct. In organizations that polish the rough edges something terrible happens – NOTHING. Great leaders have the balls to take decisions. Fast. Sometimes against all odds. Fast beats perfect

TIME IS FINITE, ENERGY IS INFINITE. FOCUS ON ENERGY.

There is no point in focusing on managing time better – we all have 24 hours. However, our ability to generate energy and distribute it more smartly is endless. The head is connected to the body. Not paying attention to one leads to inferior performance of the other. No one can ignore the fundamentals – sleep, food and exercise – without paying a price. Great leaders make no difference between work and play. They do not look for the right balance between the two, but for harmony. Work and play are the two sides of the same coin. The higher the peak of intensity, and the lower the valley of relaxation, the more productive we are.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNTRIES ARE EXAGGERATED.

The main principles of leadership, management, business logic and common sense apply across borders. Get these right FIRST, before you start to worry about the subtle differences. And above all, to thine self be true.

REAL LIFE EXPERIENCE, STRONG BUSINESS INSTINCTS AND COMMON SENSE TRUMP BUSINESS EDUCATION.

Leaders and executives who achieve the most amazing results are not the ones with degrees from top universities or the ones gone through the sophisticated training systems of multinationals. Some of these traits you are just born with. It pays back to find and attract the people who have it!!!

GREAT LEADERS READ A LOT!

Self-confidence and aggressiveness are in fine balance with tremendous intellectual curiosity and humility. They ask more questions and make less statements and never hesitate to say “I do not know”. Reading is like searching for gold. You may only find 2-3 books that will change your life, but to get to them you might have to read a thousand – at the right time. And then put it in Action.

COMPANIES AND TEAMS KNOW A LOT, BUT IMPLEMENT A LITTLE.

9 out of 10 companies ignore the fundamentals. They get bogged down by sophisticated management theories, complex recommendations by consultants, and get nothing done. 9 out of 10 companies will make a HUGE jump in efficiency and performance just by putting the fundamentals in place – right people, clear strategy, fast execution, adequate cash, and exceptional personal efficiency.

IN SUMMARY

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2. SETTING GOALS IS PERSONAL!
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4. PEOPLE TRUMP STRATEGY.
5. WE ONLY GROW WHEN WE FACE CHALLENGES.
6. SPEED COMES FROM MASTERY OF THE 80/20 RULE AND ABILITY TO TAKE DECISIONS FAST.
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