

# indian management

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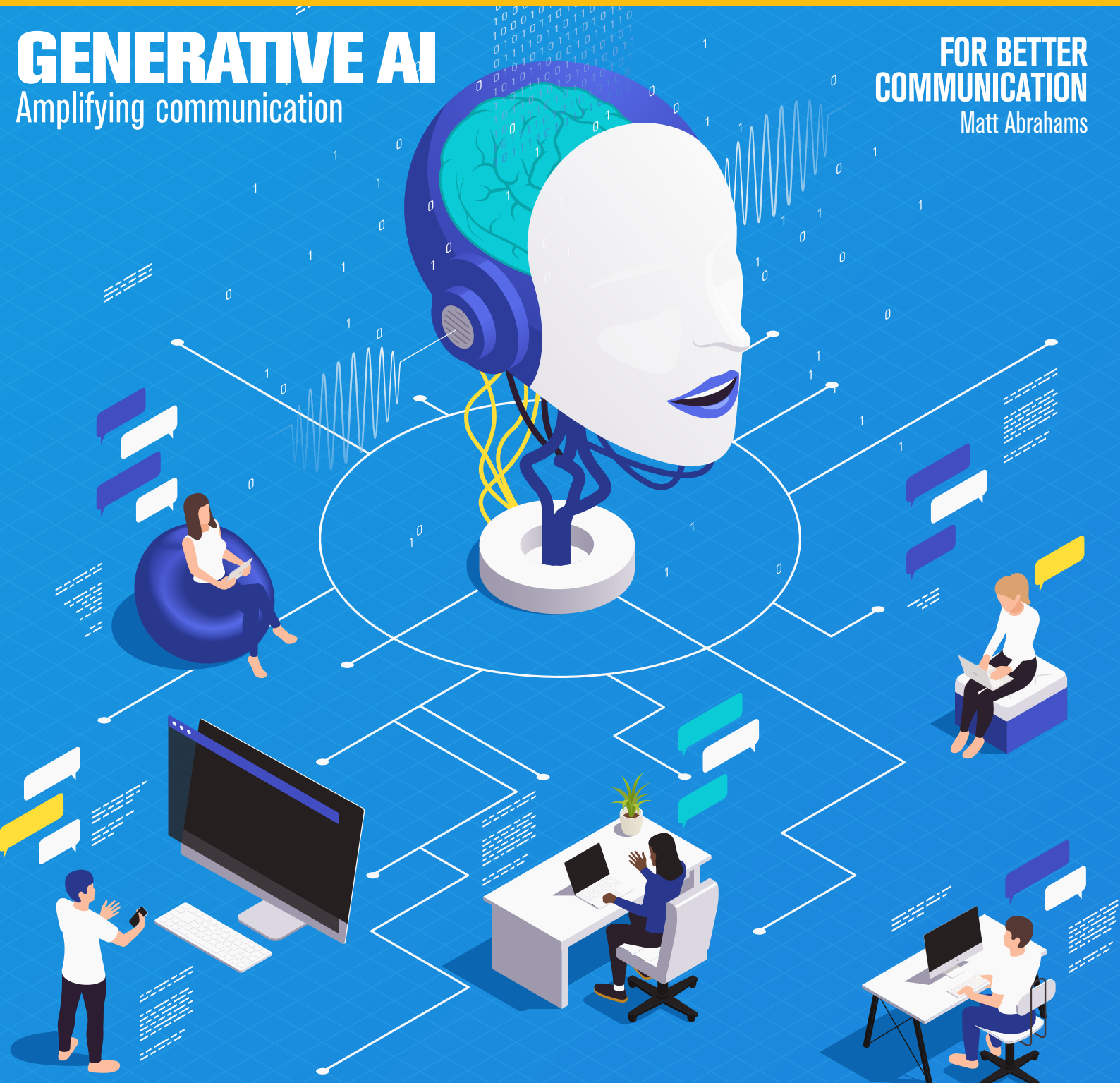
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## GENERATIVE AI

Amplifying communication

## FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION

Matt Abrahams



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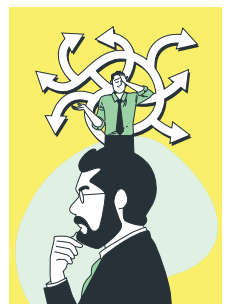
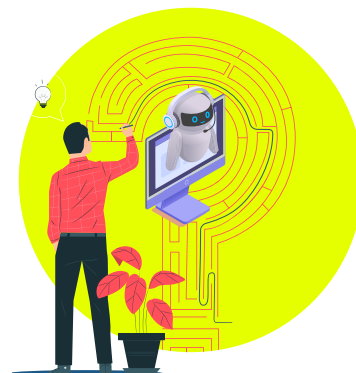
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# Generative AI: Communicating at scale, cheap and fast

**Shrinivas Dempo** is President, AIMA & Chairman, Dempo Group of Companies.

**GPTs typically come with the risk of intellectual property rights violation. The users have no way of knowing the source of training data and they can inadvertently use bits and pieces of someone's copyrighted information, design or art.**

**G**enerative AI has produced great excitement because of its magical ability to inform and create in a given context, instantly and with remarkable variations. Executives and organisations are racing to gain a lead in exploiting the powers of generative pre-trained transformers (GPTs).

Creativity and communication are the popular area of applying GPTs in business. AI is increasingly automating communication with internal and external stakeholders, and it is allowing creation of content, design, and code even by those without training for these tasks.

Executives who lack the competency in writing business letters, presentations, marketing messages, press releases, etc. now have online help. Also, now anybody can make decent quality logos, slogans, advertising copy, music, videos, podcasts, websites, even software code, without

technical knowledge.

Generative AI is a genie at the disposal of executives and organisations that executes their wishes instantly and without costing as much as the people who would otherwise be needed.

The GPTs not only bring the results from their usually large training data, they also learn every time a user prompts them. The more one uses the GPTs, the more it learns about the user and the user's unique requirements. Businesses are increasingly relying more on AI for their knowledge management and communication jobs than people. Many organisations are using GPTs compositions and designs as inputs for subsequent refinement by skilled people.

In fact, using GPTs' output without human validation and modification is risky. The excitement to jump on to the GPT bandwagon and the lure of cutting cost by replacing people with AI has to be tempered with the realization that GPT is a tool and not a solution.

GPTs do typically come with the risk of intellectual property rights violation. The users have no way of knowing the source of training data and they can inadvertently use bits and pieces of someone's copyrighted information, design or art. Many popular GPT services have been sued by original content creators and copyright owners. Given the mystery about the data used in training GPTs, it is critical to diligently check the generative AI's output for possible intellectual property violations. Indiscriminate use of generative AI can lead one into a legal minefield.

GPT users also must be mindful of the data

**Not many companies would have the computing power, money and people to build their own GPTs straightaway. Still, they need to convert their continuously expanding in-house information and knowledge into intellectual property.**

security risks involved. After all, it is just another cloud service and there is always the possibility of human error in sharing data in addition to the risk of hacking of the GPT platform. Some major technology companies have prohibited their employees from using GPTs because they uploaded critical business information on AI platforms to get their work done.

However, the most immediate issue with using generative AI is filtering substance from rubbish and sorting reality from


hallucination. Though GPTs are improving in their answers and output, there is always a possibility of getting absurd or inaccurate information. After all, GPTs construct responses and outputs by utilizing the data at their disposal, based on high frequency of different data featuring together.

Organisations that use GPTs have to ensure that humans validate the results from GPTs. Ease of use leads to laziness and automation leads to irresponsibility. Human validation of GPT results is particularly important these days because there is a race among competing GPTs to accumulate users by being early in the market, and it is likely that many GPTs are launched prematurely.

The users have the option of training GPTs with in-house data to get the kind of results they want. One may need a GPT for a specific

domain of knowledge and knowhow, such as health or financial markets. Some financial information services have already built their own GPTs. They use their own historic and live data to train self-built GPTs, which increases customers' confidence in making important decisions based on their alerts and answers. It also enhances the value of the company's intellectual property.

However, not many companies would have the computing power, money and people to build their own GPTs straightaway. Still, they need to convert their continuously expanding in-house information and knowledge into intellectual property. It is possible to take an 'off-the-shelf' GPT and train it on domain-specific or company-specific data.

Generative AI is a tremendous tool for creativity and communication and this technology is likely to dominate business in the coming years. The key is to look past the hype and use the GPTs that work for the organisation and do it sensibly. 

*The opinion expressed is personal.*

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

Ever since it was invented and developed, over the years, artificial intelligence (AI) has been touching our lives in myriad ways. Solving complex problems, developing smart machines and devices—including automobiles, communication devices, medical equipment, finance software, military applications—and overall, automation in most fields, if there's a problem or a requirement, AI is there to help.

Two such areas where AI is finding profound applications are 'communication' and 'decision making'. From something as common (today) as reminding one about the missed attachment in an email to complex tasks such as analysing speech patterns and tone, and giving feedback on improving them to help communicate better, AI has been assisting us in sending our 'message' more clearly.

In today's world, where time is of essence, AI can be really useful in 'telling the time, without building a clock'; which means, it can aid in making our message precise and concise without having to give the details, thereby generating an impactful outcome. Add to this, the magical capability of 'generative AI'—the likes of ChatGPT, et al—and we have a game changer technology in the field of communication. Generative AI helps in language translation and simplifying complex concepts. This ensures clear communication, and improves efficiency.

However, there are downsides to the proliferation of generative AI in industry, too. These are mostly related to cyber security and technology-adoption. So while treading carefully is advised, leveraging this technology to the fullest can reap dividends for both, organisations as well as their stakeholders and customers.

Do write in with your views to [imeditorial@spentamultimedia.com](mailto:imeditorial@spentamultimedia.com)

*Maneck Davar*  
Maneck Davar

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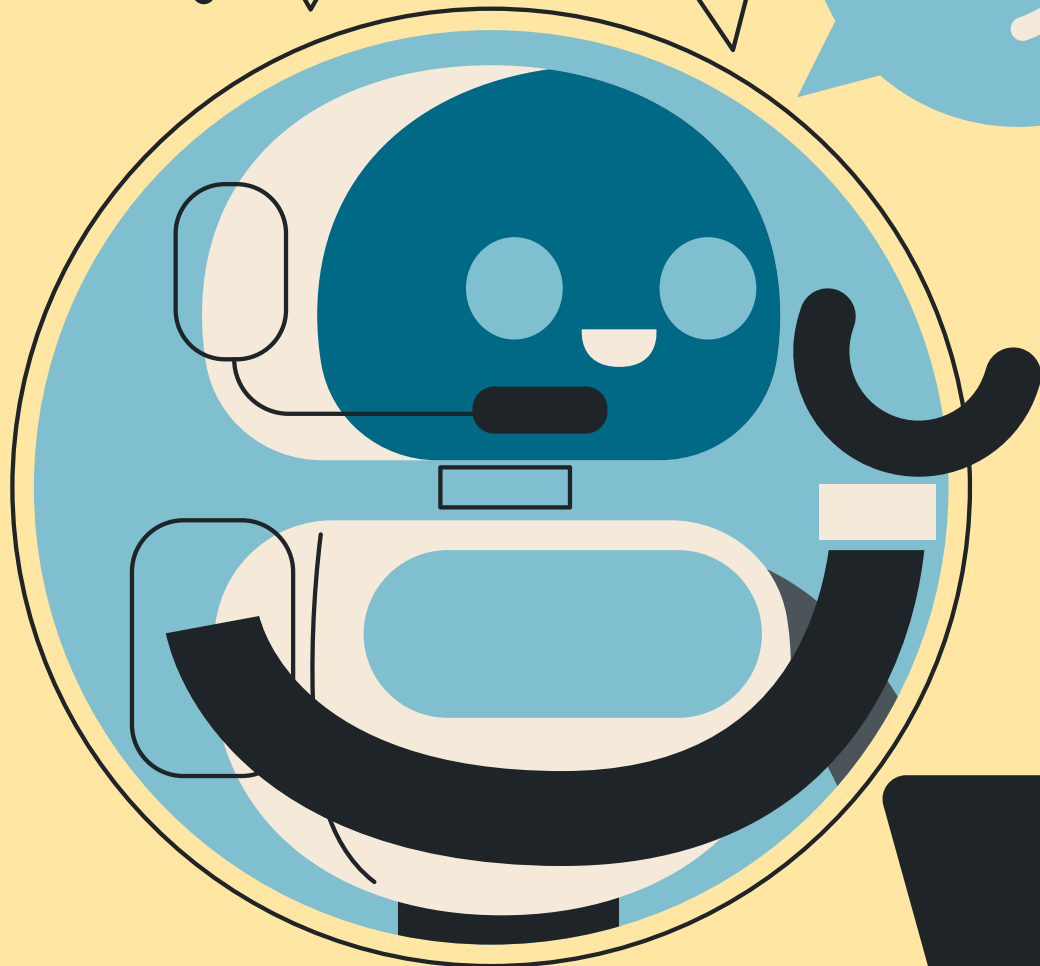


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A文



# A CLEARER MESSAGE





# For better communication

*Generative AI can help all of us to be more connected, clear, concise, and confident in our communication.*

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◆ MATT ABRAHAMS, AUTHOR, *THINK FASTER, TALK SMARTER*





Dinesh Bhogale

**T**he ability to communicate clearly is critical to success in our personal and professional lives. Given the importance of effective communication, we have, over time, created tools to help us—from spell check to confirmation checks before sending emails to virtual reality speaking simulations. Tools can help us hone and develop our communication, and many of us have been saved from embarrassments of misspellings,

sending messages with missing attachments, and even reducing our anxiety via practice. Yet, no tool, to date, has had the impact that generative artificial intelligence (AI) affords us. With generative AI, the likes of Chat GPT, Bard, and more, we now have the ability to enhance our communication in incredibly comprehensive and complete ways. In what follows, I will highlight the positive impact generative AI can have on four critical areas of communication: connection, clarity, concision, and confidence.

### 1. Connection

The fundamental mistake many people make when they communicate is that they start from the wrong place. We begin crafting content that focuses on what we want to get across, rather than consider what our audience needs to hear. In so doing, we miss an opportunity to connect with our audience and make our content maximally relevant and salient. Connection is critical. Research from multiple fields such as psychology, marketing, communication, and others have shown that audiences are more likely to tune into and process more completely messages that are important to them. By connecting to our audience, we are likely to improve the uptake, remembering, and likely acting upon of our messages. So how do we connect? We must take time to complete some reconnaissance, reflection, and research.

Generative AI is a powerful tool to learn about your audience and what is important to them. With the right queries and investigation, you can learn important information that will allow you to tailor your message to increase connection. For example, you can learn the following useful information about your audience:

- Knowledge level and experience with your topic;
- Likely attitudes around what you are suggesting;
- Areas of resistance, concern, and hesitation.

With this deeper understanding of your audience, you can adjust your communication to be targeted to the appropriate level and provide the detail that is most likely to be important to them.

For example, if I am proposing the implementation of a new customer resource management (CRM) system, I would benefit by knowing who in my audience has worked for companies that had CRM systems in place

and what customer satisfaction scores looked like before and after the implementation.

Chat GTP prompt: Using these companies [enter your audience members' former companies] identify which are Salesforce CRM customers. What are the JD Power and associate satisfaction scores for these companies for the most recent year and 5 years prior.

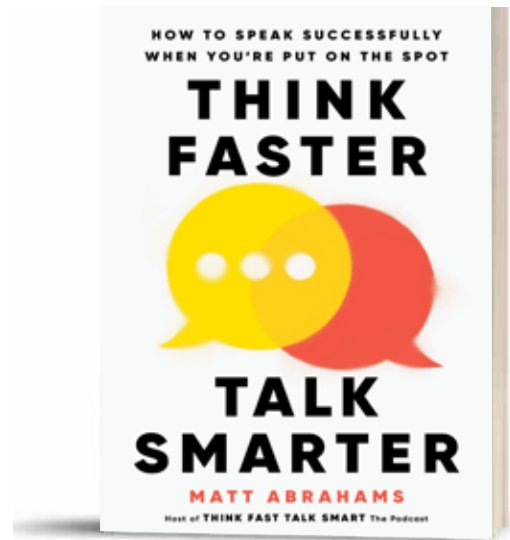
## 2. Clarity

Whenever we communicate on a topic that we know well, we suffer from the 'curse of knowledge'. That is, we know too much about the topic and, therefore, take shortcuts like using acronyms or leveraging a domain-specific lexicon full of jargon. Think back to when you first started your current job. How did you feel when you encountered terms and concepts that were foreign to you? It is uncomfortable, distracting, and perhaps off-putting. We certainly do not want these reactions for our audience. The only antidote for the curse of knowledge is empathy. We need to scrub our speech for likely unfamiliar terms and ideas. Our goal is to be clear and help our audience digest our content.

A tried-and-true tool for enhancing clarity is proof reading and focus grouping content. Generative AI can be both your proof reader and focus group. You can provide it your outline, scripts, or transcripts from spoken content and ask for output that informs you about your clarity:

- Frequency of acronyms present;
- Overall academic grade level of the content;
- Number of complex sentences (i.e., sentences with multiple phrases or clauses).

The results will help you make decisions about how to make your content more accessible. Perhaps you will define your terms up front or leverage an analogy to clarify a concept.



For example, if I am walking through new regulations coming down from authorities, I might speak my guidance into a voice memo and load the transcript into an AI tool. I would ask for number of acronyms and approximate grade level.

Chat GTP prompt: Using this transcript, itemise the acronyms used, and identify what grade level this is written at.

## 3. Concision

My mother has a wonderful saying, which I am certain she did not create, that rings often in my ears when I speak: "Tell me the time; don't build me the clock." We often say more than we need either because we are discovering what we want to say as we say it. Or perhaps, we are trying to demonstrate our brilliance or cover all of our bases. Longwindedness can be seen by your audience as confusing, distancing, and a waste of time. Who among us has not thought at some point during a Zoom meeting: "Please get to the point!" We live in a world where attention is the most precious commodity. We cannot afford to bore



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or distract our audience because once we lose them, it is hard to get them back.

You need to be vigilant to focus your communication on the essentials. Concision is all about prioritisation. What is the bottom line for your audience. Using generative AI, you can input your outline, scripts, or transcripts from spoken content and ask it to truncate or paraphrase what you have provided while focusing on whatever your key take away is. This not only helps you to be concise in this particular message, but if you do this often, you will begin to develop concision reflexes that will help you be more focused in the moment.

For example, if I am detailing our implementation plan, I can ask AI to paraphrase what I have input while keeping the milestone dates highlighted.

Chat GTP prompt: Using this script, reduce the content by 20 per cent but keep the milestone dates at the start of each paragraph.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Matt Abrahams** is a lecturer, Stanford Graduate School of Business. Matt is also author, *Think Faster, Talk Smarter: How to Speak Successfully When You're Put on the Spot* and *Speaking Up Without Freaking Out*, and host, *Think Fast, Talk Smart The Podcast*.

#### 4. Confidence

We can have connected, clear, and concise content, but if it is not presented confidently, we can fall flat and miss an important opportunity. Most people—over half of us—are nervous in high stakes communication situations. Our anxiety can cause us to be flustered and to forget. Nowhere do we get more flummoxed and stressed than in spontaneous speaking situations where we have to respond on the spot (e.g., answering questions, giving in the moment feedback, fixing our faux pas, etc). Reducing our anxiety, not only increases the likelihood that our messages will land properly, but it also reduces the likelihood that our anxiety signs (e.g., stammering, shifting, saying, “um”) will distract our audiences.

I have written a new book *Think Faster, Talk Smarter* on the topic of spontaneous speaking, and based on my research for the book, it is clear that preparation is key to being more comfortable and confident. Taking the time to practise aloud is key. Of course, this begs the question: “How can I practise being spontaneous?” AI can help. You can ask AI to generate questions for you on a specific topic. When a question comes up, answer it out loud and record the answer. Take the transcript and enter it into AI to check for connection, clarity, and concision as mentioned above.

For example, if I am giving a presentation on a new strategic direction for my team, I can ask AI to craft likely questions from an engineering team when we make a shift like I am proposing.

Chat GTP prompt: Generate three likely questions for an engineering team switching from a waterfall development approach to an agile development approach.

Generative AI can help all of us to be more connected, clear, concise, and confident in our communication. By partnering with AI in our preparation and practice, we can better help our audiences to understand, remember, and act on our communication. ■







Brad McLain, PhD, founder of Designing Transformative Experiences LLC and author of *Designing Transformative Experiences*, opines on learning how to work and lead on deeper levels. McLain is on the faculty of University of Colorado at Boulder; Director of the Center for STEM Learning; and Director of Corporate Research at National Center for Women in Information Technology.

**MYTH  
BUSTER**

# A deeper path to meaning

I cannot tell you the number of leaders I have spoken with recently who have expressed the desire to go beyond their tradition leadership roles and duties...managing people, processes, meeting deadlines or quarterly targets. There is a growing thirst for something deeper that has come to the surface in the post-COVID era. It is about learning how to work and lead on deeper levels.

Experience Design Leadership is about harnessing the fascinating psychology of our most important life experiences into an entirely new view of leadership. It is a view that recasts leaders as experience designers and explores the potential that this paradigm shift opens up for transforming lives and empowering those we lead with the fire of self-propelled identity growth. In my book, *Designing Transformative Experiences*, I address several myths around this new view of leadership. Here are some of them:

## **MYTH 1: PEOPLE DO NOT CHANGE. FUNDAMENTALLY, WE ARE WHO WE ARE.**

Actually, people do change. In fact, we cannot NOT change...it is the basis for 'transformative experiences'. In my work, I define transformative experiences as learning experiences that have an identity impact, changing the experiencer's sense of self in some important way—who you believe yourself to be or who you aspire to become.

This is perhaps most evident with people who have experienced life tragedies. We see identity-reinventing in veterans returning from deployment and rejoining civilian life, survivors of catastrophic events who deal with survivors' guilt, people who are facing chronic illness and those with life-altering injuries or surgeries, and more. We also see it in more ordinary situations, including divorce, death of a spouse, or parents becoming empty nesters. When life knocks us around, we are invited to abandon

former ideas about who we are and dig into our undiscovered depths to rekindle old identities or conjure new ones that will carry us forward into the unknown. We also see it in life's more positive transformations, such as finding your passion-work, meeting your love, graduating, landing that big job, or any experience that invites us to re-define ourselves.

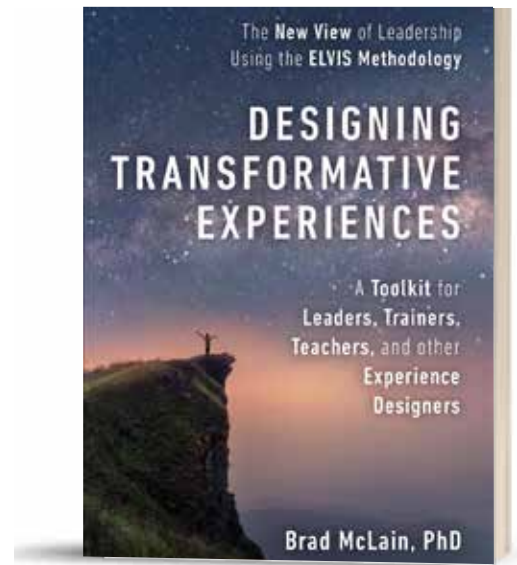
Our identities are fluid throughout our lives as we learn, grow, and age. The old adage that 'a leopard cannot change its spots' misses the point entirely. It is far more accurate to say that it is not the leopard's spots that change, but the leopard itself that changes underneath the spots. The leopard cannot not change. Neither can we.

Experience Design Leadership empowers us to harness this natural process and asks, "What would happen if we applied design thinking to purposively generate experiences that may be transformative for those in our spheres?"

## **MYTH 2: TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES HAPPEN TO US—FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES AND CONTROLS.**

People typically describe their most transformative experience as something that happened to them, over which they had very little control. But upon closer investigation, we find that transformative experiences ultimately come from within us, regardless of external triggers or circumstances. How does this work?

Ultimately, we translate all our experiences into narratives, something that our brains are hardwired to do. Our most powerful experiences are translated into our most important narratives. If these resulting narratives are important enough, they become part of our identity narratives. Identity narratives live in that carefully guarded library within our heads



that contain our most valuable possession: our sense of self. These are the stories that inform who we are, how we experience life, what we can do (or cannot), and who we want to become. When an experience alters our sense of self through this process, it becomes a transformative experience, and it has the power to change our lives from within, the lives of others, and the world beyond.

Therefore, Experience Design Leaders learn to design experiences that invite their employees to put their existing identities on the edge of discovery; at risk of change and growth. These invitations come as identity-tailored tasks, stretch assignments, promotions, and other challenges that require them to evolve. Experience Design Leaders also need to become expert narrators, supporting the meaning-making process which, if done right, empowers people to become more self-aware and intentional authors of their own life trajectories.

**MYTH 3: EXPERIENCE DESIGN LEADERS ALWAYS INTEND POSITIVE EXPERIENCES.**

Our most transformative experiences do not occur in our comfort zones. Rather, they happen in DIS-comfort zones. They demand we explore and embrace the unknown, the new, and often the difficult, both in the world outside and in the world inside us.

When people talk about getting out of their comfort zones, they are talking about vulnerability. Generally speaking, we do not like vulnerability. We avoid it when we can. We struggle with it when we have to. We eliminate it wherever possible. Yet, vulnerability traces that razor-edge frontier between life's more severe experiences and our own undiscovered selves. Life on that frontier is unmapped and often unfolds unpredictably, beyond our plans and expectations.

Discomfort zone experiences require a special kind of self-permission to become vulnerable in the face of the unknown, both inwardly and outwardly. Experience Design Leaders help their experiencers identify and take risks necessary for growth. This requires some knowledge of risk psychology and the ability to tailor risks to the identities of those you lead, intentionally building the kinds of experience designs for experiencers to confront their vulnerability and engage exactly where "thar be dragons," beyond the edges of the map of their known experiences.


**MYTH 4: EXPERIENCE DESIGN LEADERS CONTROL EXPERIENCES.**

Experience Design Leadership is not something we do to our experiencers; it is something we do with them. It is an invitation to both the designer and the experiencer to co-create a transformation.

Since transformative experiences

are subjective to each individual and ultimately emanate from within, I am talking about designing opportunities with high probability for generating a transformative experience. Leaders create the optimum conditions for transformative experiences to occur. You, as the designer, present the doorway. Your experiencers have to walk through it themselves. But you also provide much more. You offer the room, the furniture and decor, the lighting, and everything else. As the experience designer, you are the leader, architect, interior designer, and personal host. You do not control the transformation, although you help to guide it in a positive direction. You invite others to one of the most precious opportunities that we have in life: to author our own change journeys in becoming better versions of ourselves.

**MYTH 5: EXPERIENCE DESIGN LEADERSHIP IS A SIMPLE CHECKLIST OF BEST-PRACTICES.**

Experience Design Leadership is an entirely new view of leadership; a new identity of who a leader is and what a leader does. Embracing this stance is to redefine success for yourself and those you lead in terms of identity growth, which translates into retention, performance, and whole-heartedness in the work we do together. The method in my book is called ELVIS: The Experiential Learning Variables and Indicators System. It includes a framework for understanding how transformative experiences work and a toolkit with seven design elements for leaders to use. Building your skills as an Experience Design Leader is not hard, but it does involve an identity transformation, changing who you are as a leader. 



# Recommended reads



## EVERY TEAM ACTUALLY DOING BUSINESS BETTER

**Author:** Darren Ashby and Atif Sheikh

There are a lot of good books available on the importance of 'Purpose' in business. What sets this new book from transformation experts Darren Ashby and Atif Sheikh apart is that it reveals what it actually takes for a business to go beyond a purpose statement and become truly purpose-driven.

This no-nonsense guide for is perfect for business leaders looking for a practical blueprint on how to connect their organisation's strategy, culture and purpose. It draws upon real-life case studies of successful (and failed) change initiatives in organisations across different industries, including Tesco, EA, TSB, IHG and Aviva, to show how leaders can actually deliver on both commercial and societal promises and achieve a faster, deeper and lasting transformation.



## 21ST CENTURY BUSINESS ICONS: THE LEADERS WHO ARE CHANGING OUR WORLD

**Authors:** Sally Percy  
**Publisher:** Kogan Page

There is a unique story behind every business success, and by understanding these stories we can glean some fascinating insights into the behaviours and characteristics of the leaders that transformed their ambitions into reality.

In this new book, business writer Sally Percy expertly tells the stories behind some of the world's most innovative leaders in a thoroughly entertaining, informative and enjoyable way. From the stratospheric success of Jeff Bezos to the secret genius of Bitcoin's Satoshi Nakamoto, 21st Century Business Icons uncovers the truth behind figures that may sometimes be divisive, controversial or polarising, but have undeniably shaped the way business and society works today.





**THINK FASTER, TALK SMARTER: HOW TO SPEAK SUCCESSFULLY WHEN YOU'RE PUT ON THE SPOT**

**Author:** Matt Abrahams  
**Publisher:** Macmillan Business

Even the most experienced business leaders will know the feeling of dread when being put in a situation where they have to speak in front of an audience, unprepared. Being able to speak spontaneously is an invaluable skill that can inspire others and make a positive impression in some of the most meaningful moments in your life.

Author, Matt Abrahams is a Stanford University lecturer and host of top business podcast, Think Fast, Talk Smart. He provides a six-point methodology, backed by science, that will enable readers to cut through the anxiety arising from these stressful, impromptu circumstances to create and deliver crisp, compelling and calm communication. Highly recommended for anyone who wants to speak out, spread their ideas, and ultimately share their story.

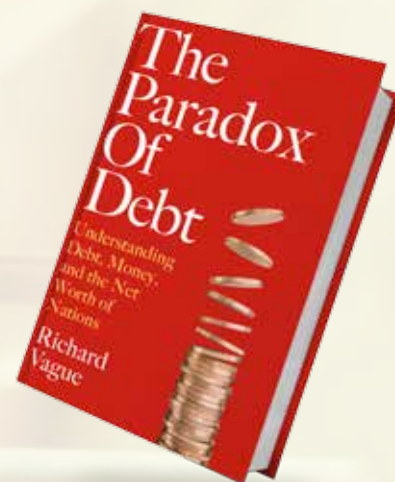


**LEADER AS HEALER: A NEW PARADIGM FOR 21ST-CENTURY LEADERSHIP**

**Author:** Nicholas Janni  
**Publisher:** LID Publishing

As a business leader today, you will no doubt be fully aware of the unprecedented technological, social and environmental challenges you and your organization are facing. You may also have felt the toll that this uncertain and complex business landscape can take on you, both personally and professionally.

In Business Book of the Year, Leader as Healer, Nicholas Janni argues our idea of leadership must adapt to a new model which rejects the outdated mindsets that are directly contributing to poor performance and problems of personal and mental health. He shares lessons on how leaders can bring all parts of themselves to the table – body, mind, heart and soul, with a foundation of strong purpose, in order to expand our capacity to meet the leadership challenges of our times.



**THE PARADOX OF DEBT – A NEW PATH TO PROSPERITY WITHOUT CRISIS**

**Author:** Richard Vague  
**Publisher:** Univ of Pennsylvania Pr

When we talk about the economic impact of debt, most people would naturally focus on government debt. However, this is only part of the picture, and as business leaders it is important to also consider the impact debt has on our companies – and even our individual households – if we are to truly understand our place in the global economy.

In this fascinating new book, Richard Vague reveals pioneering data that shows rising debt is the primary source of economic growth, new money creation, and wealth creation globally. Yet, paradoxically, it also brings heightened inequality and, when left unchecked, can lead to economic disaster.

Based on a decade of research, The Paradox of Debt is recommended reading for any CEO, CFO or business leader, and will change the way you think about private debt.





*People will want to follow in the future leaders who are bold and courageous, unafraid to make difficult decisions.*

**STRATEGY**

◆ STUART MCLACHLAN AND DEAN SANDERS, CO-AUTHORS,  
*THE ADVENTURE OF SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE*

# Unlock value-creation

**E**very day, our media channels are filled with sustainability-related live stories. We are no longer in a world of activists, scientists, and consultants presenting PowerPoints and white papers on what might happen in a climate-changed future, we live in it.

This has changed conversations around ESG completely. Every conversation we now have is in a reality context. When we talk about carbon reduction, there are fires and floods to relate to. When we talk about regenerative agriculture, there are droughts and polluted waterways to relate to. When we discuss ocean protection, there are overfishing stories to relate to. When we discuss human rights, there are reports around exploitation to relate to – the list goes on.

But these existential threats do not always lead to action, as the systems we are trying to change are ingrained and stuck in existing models. But the passion and desire are now much more present and no longer just

stemming from the few visionary pioneers who saw it coming.

We have assumed that we can deploy infinite models for growth and prosperity in a linear model whilst on a foundation of finite resources. We face a crisis that will demand a leadership response of courageous decision-making. We can hunker down, tick some boxes, buy time, and shore up our pension pot. Or, we can become leaders for our time: courageous, humble, heroic, and adventurous.

In our new book *The Adventure of Sustainable Performance*, we show how sustainable performance is a way of operating that unlocks value creation advantages by placing the organisation in the service of an environmentally sustainable and socially just future. We believe that the adventure of *Sustainable Performance* will allow humanity to thrive indefinitely within the constraints of our planetary boundaries.

For leaders aiming to achieve this advantage, we suggest that there are three questions to consider when weighing up decisions that open up new pathways for sustainable performance.

## 1. Does this decision deliver on my purpose? Why do you matter?

Corporations used to have clear public purposes, and in some parts of the world they still do. Now, we expect businesses to exist to make money and investments to be made to make more money. But profit is the consequence, the product of purpose. Where no genuine purpose exists, the level of trust in corporations is so low that it takes a long time to get stakeholders to commit and believe in the stated mission. But where purpose is soaked in authenticity, it inspires, gives meaning, and is a driving force for change. Why? Because it gives an answer to the why you matter question and an answer to all your stakeholders as to why they matter.

A company can have any kind of purpose—an intent to deliver something that underpins its reason for existence—and it does not have to be connected to sustainability. However, a purpose is at its most useful when used to connect an organisation's authentic values to delivery via rigorous, meaningful, and measurable outputs.

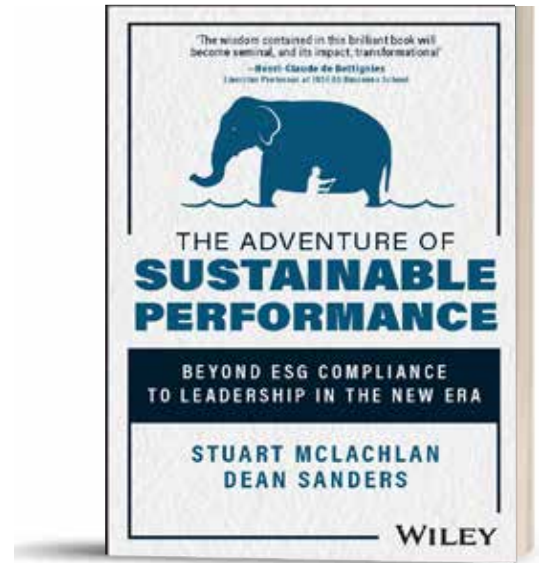
For those of us working in sustainability, purpose comes with a capital 'P'. Our version of purpose is simple: it is the positive impact you want to create from the actions of your business translated into something anyone can understand.

The power of a proper purpose should ripple throughout the business, from top-down and from bottom-up through the supply chain. Across every aspect of the business's value chain, the purpose should be living and breathing, thereby ensuring its authenticity and mobilising energy amongst its stakeholders.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Stuart McLachlan** is CEO, Anthesis Group. Stuart is co-author, *The Adventure of Sustainable Performance: Beyond ESG Compliance to Leadership in the New Era*.



## 2. Does this decision stem from our values?

Values and how they drive your business or organisation are a vital part of the sustainability shift. All businesses and organisations should have foundational values: the core beliefs of why they exist, the drivers of their purpose, and the reason that they create impact in the world.

We also operate inside the context of the values and norms that society holds and what we culturally, at national and international levels, subscribe to. Cultural norms shift and change with time and increasingly impact how leaders have to make decisions. Make a poorly informed or ill-advised values-less decision, that does not reflect where society is, and there will be some kind of explanation required very quickly, if you have not already been cancelled. Whilst some of this goes too far, the pendulum swing has taken us to a new place with lots powerful and progressive movements paving the way for leaders to reflect, support, amplify, or expand.



Customers, stakeholders, and citizens all need to know what is driving you and your business or organisation, how you are showing up, what you stand for, how you will fight, and what you will protect. These are all the types of questions that come with the sustainability shift.

### 3. Does this decision advance our sustainable performance?

To advance a company's sustainable performance, leaders must think creatively about the trade-offs between carbon, water efficient, or zero-waste facilities operating sustainably in unsustainable regions, and the return of these investments over a longer term, to deploy capital more wisely and truly protect the value of assets.

This is about externality innovation, by which we mean understanding the externalities (positive and negative) of our value chains and identifying opportunities there to internalise the issues and make them sources of value and strategic advantage.

Recently we have been working with larger companies grappling with SBTi net-zero ambitions for 2050 to help identify new technologies and ventures with whom they can partner to accelerate their decarbonisation programmes.

In this work we are already seeing interesting hybrid connections between the longer-term horizons of the corporations and the speed and agility of entrepreneurial businesses totally committed to making a positive impact.

### Creating value for all

When all three answers are aligned, wise decision-making for the positive impacts of sustainable performance are clear. In conversing with Guillaume Le Cunff, CEO of Nespresso, he framed it this way: "At Nespresso we want to make each investment in sustainability a new business opportunity."

The leaders today are the first generation of leaders to have the unequivocal truth, and in this short window of opportunity, they are also the generation we rely upon to lead us through the sustainability challenges of our time and into the next era. The leaders that people will want to follow in the future will be those who are bold and courageous, unafraid to embrace the world in all its chaos, to make difficult decisions.

It is time to reframe our definition of success, which has become an increasingly evasive word. Reframed into the reality that an existential crisis such as we face is the greatest leadership challenge we could ever imagine.

Foundational to the next era of sustainable performance decision-making will be the creation of value for all stakeholders across the entire value chain. If we get it right, we will enjoy free energy; land and oceans will be revived and become productive; and food and clean water will be abundant for all. **IM**



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dean Sanders** is Chief Enterprise Officer, Anthesis Group Dean is co-author, *The Adventure of Sustainable Performance: Beyond ESG Compliance to Leadership in the New Era*.





*Confirmation bias can be avoided by challenging our current beliefs, being open-minded, and willing to evaluate all evidence objectively.*

◆ DR VINCENT DEFILIPPO, AUTHOR, *BRAKING POINT*

**MANAGEMENT**

# An objective approach

**T**hroughout my career as a CEO and leader, it was a rare luxury to have all the relevant data before I was faced with making a decision. A large majority of the time I had to make decisions with incomplete information, sometimes going with my gut instinct instead of a well-thought-out plan of action.

Unfortunately, this type of approach to decision making left me open to a cognitive dissonance called “confirmation bias.” With confirmation bias, I found myself paying more attention to data that supported the decision I was thinking of making or had made, while dismissing data that did not.

When influenced by confirmation bias, decisionmakers will seek information that confirms their existing beliefs or biases, while ignoring or discrediting information that doesn’t support them. They will only look for evidence to confirm what they already believe, rather than looking at the available evidence.

We see this too often in our current political climate and social environment. However, confirmation bias can impact all aspects of our daily lives. People are unwilling to be openminded and inquisitive

concerning their opinions, beliefs, or learned experiences. Instead, they hold onto preconceived thoughts or existing beliefs and go all in — even if evidence contradicts them.

When afflicted with confirmation bias, we tend to rely on personal biases when searching for information. We selectively remember the information that supports our view while forgetting information that doesn’t. Human nature causes us to see what we want to see and look for and interpret information in ways that confirm our expectations.

In our personal lives, this leads us to choose a life partner or friends who have the same beliefs and values that we have. We seek information and other individuals that support our own beliefs. We surround ourselves with people who have the same interests, beliefs, and opinions simply because we want to validate our opinions and not have anyone challenge them. Instinctively, it’s just self-preservation. We want to feel good about ourselves, believing that we’re right and intelligent.

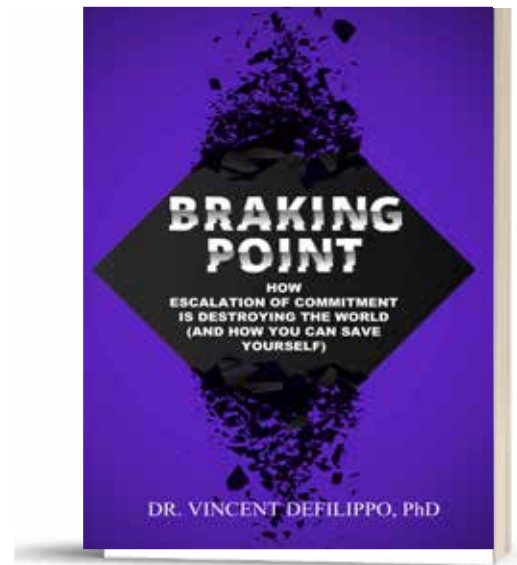
When this morphs over into our careers and how we select team members we’d like to work with, it can cause growth to stagnate.

If we only surround ourselves with like-minded people, how can we expect to learn about new ideas, new cultures, different perspectives, and alternative solutions to problems? A diverse workforce is one filled with ideation, creativity, and innovative thinking. If everyone thinks and acts the same way, we may stifle creativity and development.

An entrepreneur or organizational leader must become aware of the pitfalls that confirmation bias creates for their teams and their organization's growth. These include: **Missing the big picture.** Confirmation bias can narrow perspective by allowing only information that supports the decisionmaker's beliefs and ignoring everything else — especially team input. This can limit understanding of complex issues and make it difficult to see alternative solutions to growth and problems.

#### **Overlooking opportunities.**

Confirmation bias can cause entrepreneurs to overlook opportunities that don't align with their existing beliefs or opinions. This can prevent a team from discovering new information, exploring new ideas, or considering alternative approaches. Further,



it can lead to missed opportunities to solving a problem efficiently, growing revenue, or pursuing a joint venture with a beneficial partner — which can all have a significant negative impact on an organization.

**Making flawed decisions.** Entrepreneurs run the risk of making flawed decisions when they only consider information that supports their existing beliefs or opinions. By not taking into account all the available information, the leader or team may overlook important information or make assumptions that aren't accurate. Missed diagnosis can cause catastrophic outcomes if the wrong decisions are made consistently.

**Seeing things as black or white.** As we see in our current political environment, confirmation bias can contribute to polarized views with no room for refinement, compromise, or adaptation. This creates a divisive atmosphere and negative work environment, and makes it difficult for



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an entrepreneur or team to find common ground with people who hold different views.

So how can we put ourselves in a position to make decisions that will avoid confirmation bias and lead to the highest probability of success?

**Challenge assumptions.** First, look at an opinion or belief you hold firmly. Instead of considering the ways in which you may be right, search out ways in which you may be wrong. Ask questions like, “What evidence do I have to support this belief or assumption?” and “What evidence contradicts it?” Critically think about all supporting and conflicting evidence.

**Seek out diverse perspectives.** Expose yourself to contrasting sources of information that may challenge or contradict your assumptions. Don’t ignore or shut down new ideas or alternative solutions. Actively seek out perspectives from a wide

range of sources, including those with whom you may disagree. Involve your team in constructive conversations or brainstorming sessions to avoid relying only on your existing ideas.

**Survey all evidence.** A third step in avoiding the pitfalls of confirmation bias is to gather all available evidence, even if it doesn’t support your existing assumptions or beliefs. This forces you to open your mind. Consider even including a few far-out alternatives. Compare options side-by-side to see the big picture clearly. Keep an eye out for evidence that supports any one of the available alternatives.

Our desire to defend our existing beliefs is a telling symptom of confirmation bias. We can avoid this by challenging our current beliefs, being open-minded and willing to consider new information, and evaluating all evidence objectively. ■



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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# INTERNET MARKETING

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