

ReThink

When business as usual
no longer works



James Kirk
Mark Sinclair

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James Kirk & Mark Sinclair

yBC Press

ReThink: when “business as usual” no longer works

James Kirk and Mark Sinclair

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Mark founded yBC to deliver no-nonsense business advice through video and social platforms back in 2005. The business has since morphed and expanded, and yBC now delivers digital platforms and content globally. Mark is responsible for the commercial & consultancy side of the business, delivering on key client accounts. He draws from decades of marketing and business development experience and uses his expertise to deliver on a wide range of marketing projects for clients of all different sizes.

James and Mark first started working together as Barristers & Solicitors at a commercial law firm in Wellington, New Zealand, in the mid 1990's. James went on into experiential media and advertising while Mark went into PR & marketing, before in 1999 they won a pitch together with a third partner, pitching against incumbent ad agency powerhouse Saatchi & Saatchi. The task: to launch New Zealand's first youth mobile brand. By 2003, James and Mark were working from London, Bristol and Hamburg and in 2005 they founded yBC. Adopting a "right team member in the wrong place" philosophy they had built their core team to 18 people by mid 2019, with colleagues in London, Bristol, Edinburgh, Hamburg, Budapest, Hong Kong, Singapore, Auckland, Christchurch and Wanaka, and a strong client base in the UK, Europe and Asia. See www.ybc.tv for more information, services and case studies.

Acknowledgments

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We're grateful to our many clients for trusting us with their business, and for so often taking a "leap of faith" to do something daring. We're happy that such leaps have paid off.

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James & Mark - July 2020

“The point is, in business you don’t need to reinvent the wheel. To survive the significantly changed business landscape, it is more about adapting multiple innovations from the wider business world as they emerge. You can be like a chef, taking various ingredients to concoct a new recipe. But you have to move swiftly.”

James Kirk and Mark Sinclair

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Introduction:

When “business as usual” no longer works ...

Even before the events of late 2019 started to unfold in Wuhan, China we were already living in a time of huge change. We were facing significant pressures from technological, environmental, social, political and economic quarters. On so many fronts, it was becoming clear that organisations and indeed entire industries would have to seek new ways of doing business. In a sense, we knew that things couldn't continue as they were.

That was all before the arrival of Covid-19 suddenly, shockingly and globally.

This pandemic is arguably the biggest challenge any of us have faced in our lifetime, with impacts which are only beginning to unfold as we write this. The immediate impacts on health, families, personal freedoms, friendships, travel and communities are obvious. The wider impacts are just coming into view.

Coronavirus will almost certainly represent the single biggest shock to the global economy since World War II: it has fundamentally shifted our fiscal priorities and hit almost everyone's back pockets from the outset. Economists agree that it will have long-lasting impacts, but of course nobody has a crystal ball.

One thing is for sure: the concept of “business as usual” will be confined to history. New rules of engagement are emerging, and it is likely that uncertainty and rapid change will be part of our new “norm” for some time to come. Flexibility and resilience will be key, more than ever before. Those businesses unable or unwilling to adapt swiftly will fail.

For many, this new world order will seem counterintuitive. As futurist Graeme Codrington (see Chapter 1) pointed out to us almost a decade ago, “Every company is designed perfectly, by definition, to get the results it’s currently getting.” So that’s not a great starting point for dealing with significant change, particularly when the playing field has been violently tipped overnight. Being nimble, innovative and flexible are key.

How should you react in a way that drives actual value, and enables your business to survive and thrive with the “new rules” in place, whilst not reverting back to some of the “business as usual” patterns which may still seem second nature to many? This will be deeply uncomfortable - for most of us, it will be about as familiar as exploring deep space.

While the challenges you face today may be new, it doesn’t follow that the answers all need to be newly “discovered”. Indeed, some of the inspiration for new ways of working may be much closer than you think. At times like this, the key is to start by looking outside your industry.

But what are you looking for? Innovation and inspiration. New tools and methodologies. Catalysts for change. Different perspectives. Solutions you wouldn’t otherwise have explored. Experiences others have had but which you can learn from. Questions you wouldn’t normally ask yourself. Stories which spark ideas.

There are lots of clever people out there who have literally transformed their sport, industry or business, or who have developed new ways of doing things in their chosen field. We’ve been very lucky to spend time with some of them over the last 15 years, and find out more about what makes them tick. In the course of building various channels

(largely video based) we've interviewed hundreds of leaders from business, academia, sport, entertainment, the military and politics.

This book contains snippets from a small sampling of our favourite encounters during that time. Personalities like Iron Maiden's frontman Bruce Dickinson, business celebrity Sir Richard Branson, psychopath expert Dr Kevin Dutton and tech journalist Robert Scoble. We recall building VR content for a financial services company in the Austrian Alps and standing on the edge of a disused clay pit discussing the impossible with the founder of the Eden Project.

So why should any of this be relevant to you?

This book is a starting point for yBC's growing body of ReThink content. With ReThink, yBC will bring together video clips from many of our interviewees from the last few years, so that their unique viewpoints are all in one place for you to pick out ideas that make sense for your business. We will also add to the library significantly in the coming months with new material we gather along the way, including people specifically addressing the new world we face: travel restrictions, social distancing, rethinking our approach to business, the environment and life. This is like TED, but offering you solutions which others have already put into practice. In many cases, implementable business, leadership and performance techniques.

Importantly, ReThink is not about "telling" you what to do or how to do it. There are no "five steps to success", and there's no set blueprint.

In contrast to the plethora of "self help" business material out there, we share snippets of interviews with people outside of your industry who have done well, achieved the impossible or redefined how their industry works. People who have reimagined, rebuilt, refocused, redefined their efforts, and achieved incredible results.

We focus on people who literally “re-think” ways of doing things, while others just do what their peers are doing.

In this book, we start with some of our favourite interviewees. People who are setting global trends, achieving world firsts, or trailblazing for their industry or sector. You’ll see why as you read about them and, if they spark interest, click through to a selection of snippets from their interviews to see what you can learn from them.

The point is, in business you don’t need to reinvent the wheel. To survive the significantly changed business landscape, it is more about adapting multiple innovations from the wider business world as they emerge. You can be like a chef, taking various ingredients to concoct a new recipe, all of your own. But you have to move swiftly.

This also means you benefit from the investment others have made - sometimes significant and in the millions - testing, refining and adapting until they find the “solution”. And happily, it means you’ll benefit from the mistakes, fails and misfires other people have experienced en route to “getting it right” for their organisation.

Bottom line... ReThink helps you pick out the best ideas that the market leaders use, and deploy them in your own industry – fast.

Enjoy this first pillar of our ReThink work. See you out there.

1

How not to get sucked into your industry's orthodoxies and go extinct

We interview a man who spends his life preparing CEOs for the future of work, education and life. Probably one of our most fascinating interviewees in 15 years – he still holds the record as our longest individual interview.

It's buzzing in the streets of Soho, London, four stories below. We're sitting in a trendy boardroom of a smartly renovated georgian building, with the early afternoon sun pouring in. The interview has already been going an hour, and I suspect we're only halfway through.

"It's very easy to get sucked into the orthodoxies of your own industry, to think that the way you've always done something or the way you're seeing the world is the right way to do it. This is made even worse by benchmarking."

Graeme Codrington is a futurist. But not the type who talks with childlike glee about crazy gadgets, flying cars and teleporters to get people excited. He has spent the last 20 years talking to CEOs and boards of multinationals all around the world - household names like BMW, IBM, Gillette and Coca Cola - about "gearing up for the future." He's a deep thinker, and they pay him to think, research and ultimately challenge them about the future.

He tells me about a project he and his research colleagues have just finished. They've presented to a global shipping association, and the picture they presented to

the board was not what they'd expected. But as a result, they are considering huge, brave changes which they normally wouldn't contemplate.

“Part of the problem is that very few companies see the disruption coming and adapt in time.”
Graeme Codrington

We then talk about healthcare, retail, hospitality and financial services - all industries which will experience huge change. All industries in which he has worked closely with clients. “I love the challenge,” he says. “I don't always get people to see the light immediately, but my job is to start them on that journey - to switch the light on.”

He doesn't pull any punches. “Part of the problem is that very few companies, big companies, see the disruption coming, and adapt in time, they normally have to do it retrospectively.” He pauses for a second, adjusts his glasses. “Every company is designed perfectly, by definition, to get the results it's currently getting.”

“Changing people's mind-sets is about the toughest thing I think that you can do because you can't actually do it for somebody else. A mind-set probably best happens in an 'aha' moment. You know, when the penny drops, or the paradigm shifts, or whatever idiom you want to use for it. We've all had those 'aha' moments in our lives, but if we think back at some of the 'aha' moments you've had, you probably didn't plan them. They happen serendipitously, just sort of out of the blue.”

Graeme has a very clear view of this complexity and interconnectedness. He talks about the “five forces” which will impact every business in every industry. He talks

about technology replacing professionals - lawyers, doctors, accountants being replaced by technology.

He talks nano technology, various types of disruption, and four levels of institutional change. He talks generational theory - in fact that's one of his favourite topics. Others are the future of work, leading in a changing world and innovation in a time of disruption.

The interview lasts almost two hours. It's the longest any of our interviews has lasted - a record which holds true today. That's not because he speaks slowly, but rather because he has incredible depth of knowledge in an area we all want to hear more about - our future.

After the interview, we descend into Soho and find a tiny coffee shop, where we continue the conversation, without the camera rolling.

Since this first interview, I've had Graeme in front of the camera twice more - once at the top of the Gherkin (at the time, London's tallest and most recognisable building), and once in a boutique cinema in the East End. Each time, I'm impressed by his clarity. He's persuasive, he's well researched, he's a great storyteller and - as we find out over time - he's usually dead right.

A selection of clips from some of our interviews with Graeme are found on a [dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

Rage against the machines: advising Obama about the angry people

An academic and advisor to then US president Barack Obama, Erik and his co-author Andrew McAfee make sense of the onset of automation, AI and robotics.

Professor Erik Brynjolfsson is distracted, but he has a good excuse. He has been advising the Obama Administration on what he calls “The Second Machine Age”.

yBC is here in Washington DC, at a conference venue across the street from the White House. From the top floor bar, you can see the secret service guys on the roof of White House, protecting the President. yBC is on assignment for tech giants DXC, to interview Professor Erik Brynjolfsson about his new book. The next 60 minutes will blow our minds and change how we think about the world we live in.

The MIT professor’s fame precedes him. We came across him in our work with SAP Lab’s Paul Hofmann in 2012. Now two years later he has made it his mission to educate politicians and business leaders about what he is calling a second industrial revolution with huge consequences for society as we know it.

Because the computer age is more than 50 years old, Brynjolfsson believes the world’s leaders have missed the significance of the disruption we now face.

“We think that the effects of the second machine age will be at least as big as those of the industrial revolution”, warns Brynjolfsson. “In the first machine age, the industrial revolution, automated and augmented our muscle power. Now we're at the dawn of a second machine age, which is augmenting our brains, our mental capacity.”

So where the steam engine doubled in power about every 70 years, or four times as much efficiency in 140 years. We all know that according to Moore's Law computer power doubles about every 18 to 24 months. On top of that digital technologies have some weird and wonderful economics. The good news is that we're getting a lot more bounty.

One of Brynjolfsson's favourite quotes is from a science fiction author William Gibson... “the future's already here, it's just not evenly distributed yet”.

Productivity is at an all-time high, wealth in the United States is at a record high. However, at the same time, a lot of people aren't participating in it. Median income, that's the income of the person at the 50th percentile, is actually lower now than it was in the 1990s... So although the overall pie is getting a lot bigger, many people aren't sharing it. In fact, the majority of Americans aren't sharing in it.

According to Brynjolfsson what we are going to need to do is rethink our social contract and try to create more broad-shared prosperity. But he is worried that governments are not understanding the scope of the problems that we're facing, let alone coming up with the right sets of solutions.

“That's why Andy and I wrote this book, to help educate people about what the forces are at work. In the United States, there are angry people in the Tea Party, and Occupy Wall Street, that see that the median worker isn't getting a growing share. Now, some of them point to corruption in Washington, or evil-doers on Wall Street. We don't think that those kinds of villains are really the main drivers of these changes.”

yBC has already interviewed Brynjolfsson's co-author Andrew McAfee in London earlier in the year.

“Look at learning those kinds of skills machines don't do particularly well.”

“The most important challenge to keep our eyes on, have to do with the ability of people to earn a living in a world where digital technologies and digital labour can do so much” McAfee explains.

“We've seen a sea-change in terms of the ability of a small group of people to leverage technology to disrupt entire industries, because of the power that technology puts in the hands of very small groups of people. “

One of Brynjolfsson's favourite quotes is from a science fiction author William Gibson... “the future's already here, it's just not evenly distributed yet”. So what Brynjolfsson and McAfee did in writing their book, was to go and look at some of the places where the technology is having some of the biggest impacts. And naturally you see them in some of the high tech companies in Silicon Valley.

We end the interview by asking him what career advice he can give to business people who want to surf these changes.

“Look at learning those kinds of skills that machines can't do particularly well. And those involve creativity and interpersonal skills and dexterity. But don't just get educated - have a plan for continuous learning.”

A selection of clips featuring Erik and his co-author Andrew McAfee are found on a [dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

3

Hanging out with the rock stars of business - Dickinson, Branson, Smit

The frontman of Iron Maiden, the founder of the Virgin Brand, and the man who built the impossible in deepest, darkest Cornwall. Welcome to our Rock Star collection.

It's mid morning, and the audience in Georgian lecture theatre at the Royal Institution breaks for tea, served in bone china from elegant silver teapots. We're in the heart of Mayfair, London. So it's apt that the gentle clink of spoons on china, and the polite, very British murmur of mid-conference chat fills the portrait lined halls.

I'm interviewing a rock star. No, not just a clever guy. A genuine "I've sold 100 million albums" rock star, although he doesn't really say it like that. "You'll have to ask my manager. I'm not really a great one for statistics. We have 15-20 albums that we've done over the years, and we're still growing in terms of live work. So every year, we do about three months touring - and I suppose we play to between two and five million people."

Iron Maiden's frontman Bruce Dickinson is not what you'd expect. Aside from his obvious on-stage talents, he's a jet pilot and an entrepreneurial pioneer. We talk jet maintenance, airships, funding rounds, and of course music.

"Unfortunately when the whole pack of cards came tumbling down with the internet they kind of threw the baby out with the bath water," he explains, talking about how the

industry was upended by the internet. “Because not only did the fat, dumb and lazy record companies get a good kicking by the general public, but the artists did as well.”

I’ll admit, I’m not a heavy metal fan, but I’m impressed with this man. He really is a rock star.

—

Two weeks later, I’m in a boutique hotel interviewing Richard Branson. He’s calm, confident and smiles his way through most of the interview.

“Just chill, man. You’re good. There’s no need to be tense.” Sir Richard Branson.

We’re there to film some material for an upcoming event and the promoter, a young Indian entrepreneur, is visibly nervous. He’s stumbling to find words, and clearly in awe of Branson. They are getting along, but he obviously idolises the billionaire.

In what seems like one smooth movement, Branson picks up a heavy white jug full of water, holds it over the entrepreneur’s head, and pours the entire contents on him. Nobody says anything. We continue to roll the cameras.

“Just chill, man. You’re good. There’s no need to be tense.”

Genius.

—

I find myself standing on the edge of a huge china clay pit in Cornwall. The man in front of me is gentle, understated and yet has achieved the impossible.

Tim Smit, co-founder of the Eden Project, defied all the odds to deliver something the world had not seen before, thereby proving almost everyone wrong. Behind him, in the distance, deep in the clay pit, stand two massive biomes. And in those biomes tropical and exotic plants which would never otherwise survive in Cornwall's harsh coastal environment. Year-round tropical and sub-tropical climates in Cornwall, which can be bleak at the best of times.

“What do you want to put on your tombstone?”

Tim Smit

I ask him how he persuades sane people to leave their jobs to come and build biomes in a clay pit in Cornwall.

“It's easy. it's very easy. You just look at them and say, what do you want to put on your tombstone? Simple as that. You're better than that. What, all you've done in your life is make money? What a dipstick. Money is nothing, it is just embodied energy. And if you think, if you think you're a success because you've made lots of money but the world isn't any the better really for you having been on this mortal coil. Yeah. What a waste. What a waste.”

“And most people feel that deep inside, they actually want to do something that if they snuff it, they've actually made a real contribution. And the world is richer for their being there. Richer in the fullest sense of the meaning.”

Smit then tells me that he believes - very deeply - in serendipity. “I get lots of invitations to attend events, open schools, speak at conferences. The thing is, you

never know who you'll meet there, and where that will lead." He says that some of his best connections have come from cutting ribbons to open buildings.

So what's his secret? "I call it the Power of Three. It's simple. I accept every third invitation which comes my way - without exception, and without question. And it works."

Inspirational. Brilliant. Another true rock star.

A selection of clips featuring Bruce Dickinson, Richard Branson and Tim Smit are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

4

Cooking up a storm with the Digital Chef

He arguably has the best job a Welsh lad could dream of – travelling the world, playing with gadgets for a living. But there is definitely method to the techno-tinkering frenzy.

It is not everyday you get to hire out a central London movie cinema, build a green screen Virtual Reality (VR) cave and cover the whole thing with a bunch of cool toys including a crane, numerous go pros, steady cams and even virtual cameras.

Tech giant DXC's Lewis Richards is the “The Digital Chef” and it is the best job you can think of. He travels around corporates running what he calls Xperience Lab programmes to help spark tech innovation.

Now DXC wants to open up elements of these labs – which provide opportunities for haptic, hands-on learning with new technologies – to a wider audience.

And so the idea for Digital Chef TV emerged.

yBC's brief is to produce a series of Jamie Oliver style TV shows - but involving consumer technology rather than pukka tukka. Each show will demonstrate, in under five minutes, something impressive, achievable, and potentially applicable to business.

“The Digital Chef is all about what tech recipes”, Lewis explains. “Of course everyone knows about emerging technologies like VR, AR and AI, or hardware like 3D scanners or Hololens. But the tech can seem really out of reach or lacking practical application for

most businesses. What managers don't realise is that you can take a lot of this tech straight off the shelf and combine things together in surprising ways".

“Experimentation is key” Lewis Richards

Teleporter (Reloaded) is Lewis's most ambitious recipe yet, demonstrating how you can “teleport” remote workers into the field to support onsite technicians - using only tech you can buy in store.

yBC has been up early building a greenscreen Virtual Reality cave so we can film Lewis and his assistant Anneclaire in the real world but also switch to a VR environment. The location is awesome. A central london movie theatre that has been converted for massive eSports tournaments by another yBC client. Not only do we have a huge studio, but the massive projection system we can put background film onto.

It's a long and stressful day, but also a memorable day out. But why does this all matter? Lewis explains why “ordinary” business people need to get hands on with tech.

“So the key with this really is to help people experiment with new technology. Experimentation is key. If people are actually touching, feeling, and immersing themselves in the technology they can begin to reimagine how their business may look in the future using some of this technology, which is actually available off the shelf in a PC World or a Best Buy.”

A selection of clips featuring Lewis Richards aka the Digital Chef are found on a [dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

5

If I clip the wrong wire, it will vapourise me

Filed under “interviews that left me feeling like I lead a boring life”, meet a man who has saved countless lives, including his own.

“Walking up to a bomb, it's one of those experiences where everything else in your mind is suddenly dispelled. You go from if you like a feeling of you know, being relaxed, chilled, taking it easy, full off ... to the switch suddenly being violently switched to full on. And at that point you just go into absolute complete focus.”

It's a bleak day in central London. I'm in a brand new office block near Kings Cross station, in a pristine meeting room with shiny white walls. The man in front of me could be a company director - even an accountant. He is well dressed, in a dark suit, crisp white shirt and a deep maroon tie.

But he's not. He's the closest thing to a movie star I've ever met. A full on, high octane, edge-of-the-seat action movie star. Or a stunt man. Or James Bond. Because - he - diffuses - bombs. Real bombs. For a living.

He continues: “It's effectively like using a Hollywood high concept, 'man vs. man', 'man vs. machine'. You're actually putting your wits against the bomb maker, and trying to work out why this bomb's there, what it's designed to do? Is it designed to kill civilians? Innocents? Members of the security forces? Is it something more sinister to lure me in and kill me.”

OK Chris. You've got me. I'm right there with you.

“But there's also this man vs. machine. The fact that once you physically get up to it, you've got to go through a very comprehensive decision making process. Analysis to work out how you can deal with this very deadly device. And it's like the moment of which the drawbridge goes up behind you, the visor comes down and it's called; the 'long walk'.”

“... you know that actually if it detonates, you're going to be vaporised.” Chris Hunter.

Let me be clear at this point. I am enjoying this interview. But there is no way I'm doing the long walk. Count me out.

Chris continues: “The long walk is where a walk of two hundred meters can feel like two hundred miles. And as you take each laboured step towards that device, you've made a plan, but there are so many variables, so many unknowns.”

Right about now, I'm having trouble breathing. I'm wonder whether we can take the long walk back, in the opposite direction?

“As you're taking each step, you're refining that plan continually. Constantly updating it. You're trying to dispel any thoughts of fear or danger - as those are the sorts of things which will curtail your ultimate success.”

OK, Chris. I'm with you. Dispelling those things. Let's get this over with. By the way, I realise “your ultimate success” means that you get to live.

“And then once you get to it, when you’re hunched over that device, when you know that actually if it detonates, you’re going to be vaporised. That’s it - just a pair of smoking boots left.”

“That’s it - just a pair of smoking boots left.”

Chris Hunter

Did he just paint that picture? Chris, I just asked what it’s like to detonate bombs. Can we not go there?

Luckily he spares me.

“So you’ve got to overcome lots and lots of unknowns. Lots and lots of extreme pressure. Just to actually get to the device itself. And then you’ve got to go through all those processes again to neutralise it. And at the end of the day, it’s only neutralised when you make that final snip of the wire and the bomb’s dead.”

I breathe an audible sigh of relief. Chris doesn’t seem phased - I guess he’s taken people through this journey before.

Chris talks about how his bomb disposal days have helped him to look at the physiology of the human body. The psychology of decision making. Breaking complex problems into bite sized chunks. He now helps people in the board room, drawing from his days on the battle field. “The processes are all the same” he says.

Then he mentions that he was in the intelligence services, and also in hostage rescue in the special forces. I think that's about when I realise that I've been wrapped in cotton wool my whole life.

A selection of clips featuring Chris Hunter are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

6

Psychopaths I've known - starting with my Dad

Dr Kevin Dutton knows psychopaths like the back of his hand. He also knows psychopaths - he's met most of the notorious ones. The most charismatic academic we've ever met.

Ten year old Kevin Dutton has just finished a day's work with his dad. It's a Saturday night. It's been a long, hard day at the market. Deals to be done, a bit like Dell Boy. "He was selling all kinds of, you know, crap to anybody." They're both famished.

Kevin's dad takes him for a Indian meal in a local restaurant. With a belly full of curry and naan bread, they are sitting - just about to pay the bill. His dad picks up a spoon and tinks it against his glass. The restaurant is packed, and the beer fuelled hubbub quietyens to a silence. You could hear a pin drop.

Kevin's dad is one of the most persuasive men he's ever ever met, and Kevin recalls in his east London accent, with a smirk of admiration: "He could sell shaving cream to the Taliban, this guy is really, really good. Ruthless, fearless but charming."

His dad gets to his feet. "Thank you, folks, for coming," he says in his heavy cockney accent, nodding at the other patrons in the room gratefully. Kevin's draw drops, and he sinks further into his chair, trying to hide behind empty pint glasses, as his dad continues "I'd just like to let you know that you're all equally welcome here and it's nice

to see you. I know some of you have come a long way away and some of you came from just around the corner but wonderful to see you all.”

Kevin is thinking: what next? His dad continues: “Oh, and there's a little party occurring in the Kings Arms Pub just across the road.” He points beyond the window to the other side of the street. “It'd be great to see you there”, he says, at which point he starts to clap.

Kevin can categorically confirm that his dad was a psychopath.

The entire restaurant starts to clap. A great round of appreciative, warm applause. Kevin's father nods in appreciation, and sits down, taking another gulp of his pint. Kevin smirks, knowing that nobody in the restaurant has ever met his dad.

They pay the bill. Outside the restaurant, Kevin tugs at his dad shirt sleeve. “Dad, we're not really going to the pub are we?”. His dad looks at him with a wry smile.

“No, no, no, Kev,” he says. “Of course we're not son. But let me tell you something, that lot in the restaurant are. You see, my mate Malcolm has just taken over as landlord at the Kings Arms. He might just make a few quid tonight.”

Years later, standing at Twickenham during a break in an event attended by 300 CEOs, Kevin tells me that his Dad was one of the most persuasive people he's ever met. “So what we got here, we've got a restaurant that haven't seen us before, diners who haven't seen each other before all applauding wildly, because they didn't want to be seen as the gatecrashers to the party. That was the genius behind it.”

After years of study, including hours sitting with cold blooded killers, Kevin can categorically confirm that his dad was a psychopath. Not a cold blooded killer - but what he calls “a good psychopath” - he should know, he’s writing a book about them.

“That Indian restaurant stunt is the kind of thing my old man would do without batting an eye, without flinching. Can you imagine how much money I would have to pay you to even think about getting up and doing that?”

Kevin breaks into a nostalgic smile. “That really was one of the reasons once I started psychology. I started getting into studying forensically because I always had suspicions about my dad. He never got into anything too criminal. But I often wondered what made him tick, what was his personality, and I have no doubt whatsoever now that he would have been very high on the psychopathic spectrum. God bless him.”

A selection of clips featuring Dr Kevin Dutton are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

7

Formula 1 Babies

Sometimes you find the perfect combination of brilliance, humility, storytelling and superb outcome. We think this is probably it.

Professor Martin Elliott has just completed a complex heart operation on a small baby after being up all night doing a heart transplant. Operating on a heart the size of a kidney bean takes its toll, especially when you are already tired, your work requires incredible concentration, and what you do is the difference between life and death for a newborn. Martin's body and his mind both need a proper reset, so what better than a bit of TV - specifically the Formula 1 Grand Prix.

It's mid race. Team McLaren enters the pits at high speed, slams to a halt. Within seconds a dozen teammates remove and replace the tyres, and the car is fuelled before it speeds off again to rejoin the race. A magnificently choreographed piece, lasting only a few seconds, carried out under huge time pressure, with millions of people watching.

Martin turns to his intensive care colleague, Allan Goldman. "That was absolutely magnificent," he says. "The sheer professionalism from a multidisciplinary team is enviable." Martin and Allan chat through what they've just witnessed: the car arriving at high speed, the disconnection and reconnection of vital components, an exchange of information, crucial data uploaded, and a hasty departure.

"That's what we need to get better at," says Martin. He's not wrong. Despite significant medical advancement over 30 years, there is significant concern about the transition required to get babies from operating theatre to intensive care. In each case,

the baby has been in surgery for half a day, and each child is different in so many ways. Transfer and handover procedures have been falling short of the mark, leading to complications or even bad outcomes. But Martin had just seen light at the end of a worrisome tunnel.

Formula 1's Nigel Stepney was not impressed.
"There's a lot of work to do," he said.

It helps when you are working with the son of a senior Formula 1 doctor. A quick phone call, and Martin is in touch with McLaren. Within days, McLaren's Dave Ryan comes to Great Ormond Street Hospital to discuss pit stops with Martin's team.

Over time, this leads to Martin's research team being invited to the home of Ferrari to work together closely with Nigel Stepney, another great of Formula 1. Stepney analyses every step of the process in Martin's operating theatre, applying Formula 1 precision to his analysis. Stepney is not impressed: "There's a lot of work to do."

Connections and comparisons are made, and differences identified. Stepney treats Martin's world like a Formula 1 pit stop. "At last, a clear structure is developed, we choreograph standard operating procedures and there is plenty of rehearsal."

The result? Errors of every kind are reduced by "a factor of 4" and there is a clear improvement in how the team works together. The work is published, Martin goes on to speak about this at hundreds of medical events and conferences. The new processes are formalised and in use in operating theatres throughout the world. This is now

regarded as “core business”. The application of Formula 1 in operating theatres is saving lives.

“They’re in New Zealand holding an iPad in a plastic bag over the operating room and I’m saying, up a bit, down a bit, left a bit, right a bit.”

Prof. Martin Elliot

Martin is one of the most humble men I’ve ever interviewed. We are standing in a darkened hallway in the hospitality suite at Stamford Bridge, home of the Chelsea Football Club. He oozes kindness and calm.

As if his Formula 1 experience is not enough for one professional lifetime, he tells me about the time he performs a heart operation on someone in New Zealand, from London. “They’re in New Zealand holding an iPad in a plastic bag over the operating room and I’m saying, up a bit, down a bit, left a bit, right a bit.”

With the next breath he’s telling me about a project he does in his “spare time”, although I doubt he has any. “I was asked by a member of the public what it felt like to hold a baby's heart in your hand, but I didn't really have an answer to that. I thought I'd ask my colleagues around the world and to create that answer, to tell that story, I felt I needed some sort of narrative.” So he asks fellow heart surgeons around the world questions they had never been asked before - what it feels like to operate on a baby, with life in the balance - how it feels when things go wrong - how they deal with the responsibility. He gets incredible responses - candid and emotional. “It was an amazing experience for all of us.”

He's only just delivered another "first" for his field. Clever? Superman springs to mind.

A selection of clips featuring Professor Martin Elliot are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

“Spooks” – The dawn of the AI revolution

In the wake of 9/11, and in the early years of AI, we work closely with a small team of exceptional people using technology to do what the human brain cannot.

Dr Manny Aparicio eases the Humvee on to the freeway on a cold but sunny North Carolina day. “The truck is a gift from my wife” he explains laughing. Looking like he could easily be cast as a CIA agent in an 80s spy film, the neuroscientist and AI inventor’s Hummer is on the one hand incongruous. But as we cruise towards Saffron’s offices in the Research Triangle, it feels completely appropriate given the military flavour of yBC’s next assignment. I am in Raleigh, North Carolina in my new role as Saffron’s outsourced CMO, and there is a lot of jargon and techie knowledge to get my head around fast.

“Iraq was all about getting left of boom”, Manny is explaining. That military talk means using Saffron’s Artificial Intelligence capabilities to help find “bad guys” before they can plant and detonate roadside IEDs. Since Iraq, Saffron was riding the crest of the wave, signing the dream contract with Wachovia only for the bank to go bankrupt just weeks later in the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. Over the last 4 years Manny has been rebuilding Saffron with CEO Gayle Sheppard. Now yBC has been brought in to tell that story to corporate America.

Manny halts the Humvee outside the giant Saffron office building. Gayle got a great deal on the lease, and snapped up the premises in a show of ambition, even though Saffron currently has less than 20 staff. A corporate warrior in the classic US tradition,

this successful business woman has made it her mission to build a significant AI business. (Intel will acquire Saffron just 3 years later... Mission Accomplished).

“It’s like a human brain, but 100,000 times faster and it never forgets.” Dr Manny Aparicio

The cast of characters is intimidating. Manny is one of two creative geniuses behind Saffron, pioneering the field when AI still seemed the stuff of sci-fi films. Admiral Poindexter, former aircraft carrier captain and National Security Adviser to Ronald Reagan is on the company board. Clients include Boeing, the US Navy and Delta Force Colonel Jim Reese of Tiger Swan who uses Saffron for corporate security. Everyone calls each other Sir and Ma’am. But in some ways the main character is Saffron itself. A powerful AI, long before the days of Siri or Alexa.

“The old approach to analytics was to create complicated models based on what happened in the past”, explains Manny as we cross the vast developers’ floor. “Saffron is like a gigantic brain that remembers everything and can make instant connections. You can combine any kind of data from your customer information, news feeds, social media, sensor streams and so on - all in real time. Saffron’s associative memory approach is like a human brain, but 100,000 times faster and it never forgets. That helps you predict the future when you have to prepare for anything”.

SAP Lab’s Dr Paul Hofmann is a big evangelist, and will soon quit SAP to join Saffron as Chief Strategy Officer. From his office in San Francisco he explains how all this military grade AI will soon revolutionise the consumer world. “We have this unique opportunity to collect all the data that’s coming from sensors, the pictures we take, the

shop floor, from the factories. And the question is how can we make sense of this data? AI is coming to our rescue and it will be consumerised - just like TV in the 60s - that was a big revolution. This is AI for everyone”

Back in 2012, years before self driving Teslas, Siri, and Alexa, it sounds far fetched.

And yet ...

So many things Manny predicted would happen have already happened.

The future comes at you fast!

A selection of clips featuring Manny, Gayle and others involved with Saffron are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

9

From chancer to player - mapping strategic gameplay to win

Once you see Simon Wardley's mapping methodology in action, it seems madness to plan your next key business moves any other way.

Simon Wardley is an extremely rare man amongst tech consultants. He won't help you develop a shiny new strategy document for your business. In fact he is dismissive of the traditional approach to corporate strategy which he claims is dominated by the 67% factor.

“They make a move because the analysts said it works for 67% of companies. They make the same move as their competitors, even though they can't see the board clearly. A player, like famous ice hockey player Wayne Gretzky, uses technology to change the rules of the game, skating to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been.’

Simon has pioneered an approach called “Wardley Mapping” which helps companies to understand their competitive environment. In short - to map their industry, and plan their next move with enhanced confidence.

“What our research shows is that strategic play is now more important than traditional strategy execution. Generals don't normally bomb a hill because 67% of other successful Generals bomb a hill, therefore we'll find a hill and bomb it. What Generals tend to do is they have a map of the environment, the map tells them where

they can attack, why here, over there, then you're into the action and the how, what and when.”

Wardley has made his mapping technique public commons and published the whole thing online so anyone can learn how to do it.

Wardley’s maps are centred on customer need. In simple terms the value chain map shows all the components of the business needed to serve the customer. Elements are placed on the X, Y axis according to value to the customer and commodification. As industries and technologies mature, components tend to become commodified - creating opportunities for gameplay.

According to Wardley, traditional value chain maps are useless unless you have the context of how your environment is changing. No one has a crystal ball but disruption is actually much more predictable than you might think. It is this situational awareness that maps bring.

Sitting with Simon Wardley in 2015, mapping is already being used by the UK Government Digital Service and the UK Government’s massive HS2 rail project. By 2019 Simon will be holding “Map Camp” in London attended by hundreds of tech enthusiasts.

And here is the other unusual thing about how he operates. Wardley has made his mapping technique public commons and published the whole thing online so anyone can learn how to do it.

Why do that when you could make money with mapping as a proprietary technique?
“No consultant can map your business for you” explains Wardely.

But he can show you how to do it so you can create your own maps.

You can't get fairer than that!

A selection of clips featuring Simon Wardley are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

When your heart's not in it (hint: this doesn't end well)

In which we quickly discover that most corporate sponsored health screening programmes will completely miss the mark, and that many more lives could be saved.

“You’ve only got one heart and if it stops you have got about three to five minutes to start it again and if you don’t then you know, a premature demise occurs really so it is the number one organ in the body in terms of making sure you are alive and well.” This interviewee has just got my full, undivided attention for the next 45 minutes.

“You know without your heart you haven’t got anything really and so looking after that makes a huge difference but all of the systems in the body are important and the heart really is at the centre point of all of them. It is not just physical performance, it is emotional health and resilience and the heart has a huge role to play in that. In fact we know the heart sends 80% more messages back to the brain than the other way around and so it really is a decider of a lot of things in your life that really make a difference.”

Dr Dorian Dugmore is talking to me about his passion: cardiovascular medicine. “The whole speciality just exploded on me,” he says, with a calm enthusiasm.

Well it would, wouldn't it? He developed a programme which saw many thousands of heart patients - those who had had heart attacks and bypass surgery - get rehabilitated back to normal, after being told their lives were over. He studied the area intensively, did groundbreaking research, and won awards. He is internationally

recognised for his superb work in preventative medicine and wellness. He is hugely in demand.

Word got around. “I now look after all of the managers in the football league exclusively for the premiership, I am on the leadership board of the LMA which led to me working with corporate leaders in the world of football. From there many corporates have approached me to put wellness programmes into their businesses and so that is what I do as well.”

“Up to 80% of problems with the heart don’t get discovered until you push yourself beyond 80% of your capacity.” Dr Dorian Dugmore

Dorian explains the steps he takes with everyone he works with. The first step is to assess the heart under physical pressure, something which most corporate wellness health checks don’t do. “It is interesting, up to 80% of problems with the heart don’t get discovered until you push yourself beyond 80% of your capacity and so that is quite interesting so if you forever just take things sub maximally and easily you are very often don’t find out where the problems lie but then pushing yourself beyond those points can really illuminate problems that are there.”

He explains that you need to be tested in the right way, but also you need to learn techniques to “emotionally safeguard your heart”. He talks about yoga, deep breathing, visualisation and mindfulness. “These things can make a dramatic difference.”

He has plenty of examples. “There is one very famous case, a guy called Patrick Mulvainy, Irishman, who had heart problems in his early 50’s and believe it or not he ended up running a London Marathon four or five times under three and half hours in his 50’s. I had another gentleman who is quite famous and was voted one of the runners of the year by running magazine who had been told by his GP that he would never work again, he should move his bed downstairs and on a good day maybe he could have a walk in the back garden.” Dorian smiles: ‘He ran five consecutive London marathons under four hours in his 60’s.’”

Dorian recounts stories of people whose lives he know he has saved. Most of them had no idea that they were even at risk. He shares his stories with modesty and humility.

His message to businesses is clear. “It makes absolutely perfect sense to look after probably your most important asset which is your people.” But he knows that just making that statement is not enough. He has to provide a business case. He doesn’t disappoint. “You can back that by a lot of the latest research that now really shows you that probably for every pound invested there is a four to five pound saving in delivering corporate wellness programmes to the corporate world.” He then goes on to explain this, in more detail.

Corporate wellness is now very high on the agenda, and is only increasing in importance. Dorian’s work is at the heart of all of this. Pun absolutely intended.

A selection of clips featuring Dr Dorian Dugmore are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

Meet the Roger Federer of the internet (but don't join him for a shower)

Scobelizer is a blog that has given meaning to many of the highs and lows coming out of Silicon Valley for the last 17 years. Its author, Robert Scoble, has become a tech geek celebrity.

Robert Scoble has been a big deal in Silicon Valley for over a decade. As we sit down to interview him at a London Hotel in 2014, the tech blogger has recently gone viral on Twitter for posing with Google Glass whilst taking a shower. Today he is here to talk about his new book “The Age of Context”. As a tech evangelist, Scoble has a pretty cool job, travelling around Silicon Valley meeting hot startups as well as the big players like Google, finding out about the latest trends before everything else does.

He's like the Roger Federer of the internet, but what makes him so much fun in person is his larger than life style, clowning around with Oakley ski goggles for the camera, leaping up and down as he tells stories about the power of tech.

“There's going to be a new kind of digital divide, people who buy into this new world and people who don't. If you don't I'm going to kick your arse over and over and over at the digital game of life.”

In a wide ranging interview, he details how the combination of big data from our personal information, social media, sensors and cameras, combined with machine learning to crunch it is changing the world.

“I’m going to kick your arse over and over and over at the digital game of life.”

Robert Scoble

“This is a new era where we know who you’re with, where you are, what your intent is and what’s on your calendar and what have you bought.”

Looking back from the viewpoint of 2020 it is amazing how on point Scoble was.

“If you want to understand what’s going to happen to your business you’d better understand the innovators who are changing your business.... Andy Grove at Intel said ‘only the paranoid survive’,” he says, pausing thoughtfully with a wry smile.

“You’d better be paranoid.”

A selection of clips featuring Robert Scobel are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

12

Go the f*ck to sleep

*The London Sleep School does what is says on the tin.
According to recent research, most of us could do with
spending some time there.*

I first meet Dr Guy Meadows on a grey day in Farringdon, London. We're filming some clips for a friend who is building a website for parents who have lost a baby mid-pregnancy. An important project which will ultimately help hundreds if not thousands of would-be parents in their darkest hour.

There's a knock at the door. "That'll be Guy", Sasha says. Sure enough, it is - although I've not met him before.

He bounds into the room, full of energy, smiling from ear to ear. He's an impressive man who you instantly want to like. "Well this is exciting" he says. I think he means it.

Guy is clever. Super clever. He's the clinical director of the Sleep School, based in London, which does pretty much what it says on the tin. He's a co-founder of this business which has helped people in the NHS, Unilever, Nestle, McKinsey & Co and another two dozen household names ... to sleep.

Sounds simple. But we all know plenty of people who could do with help.

"The UK's currently going through a sleepless epidemic," he says. This is a few years before the Covid-19 crisis, which no doubt has compounded the problem. His smile

reduces a little and he gets more serious looking. “One reason why we know this is we performed the largest sleep study of working adults ever. We surveyed around 13,000 individuals and what we found is that 46% reported that they only slept five to six hours a night on average.” He looks away thoughtfully. “Which is woefully short of the seven to eight we all need. So sleeplessness is a major problem that we're experiencing.”

“We just don't seem to make sleep a priority anymore.” Dr Guy Meadows

I don't doubt him. Quite apart from the fact that he's one of the most believable people I've ever met, I see it all around me. “Why is this happening?” I ask.

He adjusts his tie. “Sleeplessness seems to be on the rise because of many factors. The first one is we just don't seem to make it a priority in our life anymore, we've got so much else to distract us.” At a construction site down the street, a rubbish skip is emptied, creating a cacophony of sound. It's as if the coincidence engineers have waited for the precise moment to push that button. It seems apt.

“And the other reason is mobile technology,” he says. My phone twitches in my pocket. I feel guilty. “Use of mobiles is massively on the rise and so we are constantly connected 24 hours a day. They stimulate us not only cognitively but the light stimulation as well means that our circadian rhythms are sort of getting knocked out of sync, which means that we're finding it harder and harder not only to get enough sleep but also to get good quality sleep.”

OK, that's me stuffed, I think.

We roll the cameras, and the interview begins. He provides a dozen clips for my friend's website - all of them brilliant, practical and concise. His advice seems so

bleeding obvious that it makes sense the moment he reveals it. Yet sleep is something so many of us struggle with.

Two years later, we meet again. This time, at an event hosted by my good friend Harvey Thorneycroft. Guy has just stepped off the stage, and I whisk him off for an interview away from the crowd of suited CEOs and company directors - all of whom look a touch weary.

Guy's smile hasn't changed. Nor has his ability to answer questions succinctly. The interview is over in 15 minutes. Good job.

As I thank Guy and move on to the next interviewee, I think to myself that I must follow some of his advice. But somehow, there are not enough hours in the day.

A selection of clips featuring Dr Guy Meadows are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

13

The art of storytelling – 100 stories up

Two of America’s (and the world’s) most influential “ad men” talk about the power of digital media as social media begins to ramp up a decade ago.

It’s August 2010 and the yBC team is in Chicago on assignment for Alterian plc.

The expansive view from one of Chicago’s tallest towers seems the perfect location to discuss the future of marketing with two legends of the industry: Don Peppers and Stan Rapp.

In 2020, where digital media and platforms like Facebook and YouTube are part of the furniture it’s easy to forget just how much the first era of social media changed everything. Consumers could now use social media to talk back to brands, and discuss products and experiences amongst themselves. Brands became part of a two way conversation in which they must engage their customers.

Don Peppers, working alongside Martha Rogers, is a leading authority in customer experience who made his fame and fortune in the traditional world of advertising before pivoting to what he calls 1:1 marketing. As I sat with him a decade ago, he accurately predicted how the content revolution would unfold.

“It’s human nature, we’re naturally social, we’re social animals,” says Peppers excitedly. You can tell he lives for this stuff. “Well now technology has taken that human nature and injected it with steroids. We are way more social than before! You are not

going to be able to keep doing business the old fashioned way. You have to take part in these conversations.”

Working with Alterian’s Head of Corporate Marketing, Bob Barker we will be walking the engagement talk. yBC’s concept is to produce video of all the keynote speakers at the Engaging Times Conference, including multiple clients, to create Engaging Times TV. This will be a series of clips structured into thematic playlists designed to engage clients in conversations about the new marketing.

“It’s human nature, we’re naturally social, we’re social animals.” Don Peppers

Peppers continues in his animated style. “I think B to B has a lot to benefit from engagement. You have an expertise, but you're not trying to control things.. you're moving a bunch of prospective customers up the hill a little bit in terms of the likelihood that eventually one or more of them will buy from you. In every industry, that's what B to B is about. So it's always been about engaging prospects.”

He shuffles on the stool he’s seated on. “Maybe we’ll keep calling it engagement for 20 years. Maybe we’ll call it something else. I don’t know what we’ll call it. Getting customers actively involved in conversation with you before the sale, during the sale, that level of back and forth with the customer that’s the future of all commerce.”

For us, the creation of this content channel around marketing celebrities like Peppers will be defining and lead directly to much larger channels like the multi-year

Hospitality TV featuring a who's who of hotel brands and industry names, to the seven year long (and still running) Brilliant Minds TV.

In 2010, there are still problems with video online, especially to do with quality. This is long before anyone can stream Netflix on their phone. Nevertheless, Peppers sees how video will become dominant.

“I think, in terms of engagement, video has taught marketers that it's not so much the production value that is engaging. It's the story. It's the story that engages and I think video allows companies and brands to tell more interesting stories.”

Now in a world where you can casually watch HD films on your mobile, you no longer have an excuse for lower quality. But the point about stories stayed with us.

Everyone is a highly sophisticated media consumer in their private life. So you better make sure your stories are engaging enough to take them another step up the hill!

A selection of clips featuring Don Peppers and Stan Rapp are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

I can smell the petrol on your breath

One of Britain's first female Tornado Jet pilots talks about her career behind the controls of a high performance jet. The room is awash with speed, energy and high octane fuel.

I've never met a British fighter jet pilot before. Nor a Tornado pilot. But that all changes today. I'm interviewing Mandy Hickson. We're in Harvey and Alice Thorneycroft's magnificent house in Thames Ditton, the sun streaming in through the partially-open wooden shutters.

"... knowing that you have got people's lives literally in your hands and you'll be making really high powered decisions under huge amount of pressure and you've got to make those decisions quickly."

I'll say so. Mandy is the second British woman to fly Tornado jets on the front line. It wasn't just others' lives on the line, but hers also, every day.

"What's it like flying those things," I ask. I've been lucky enough to do a few hundred hours in small planes, but I imagine flying a jet is another world altogether. Mandy doesn't disappoint with her answer.

"It's incredibly exciting, flying along at five hundred knots in a fifty million pound aircraft you're often going at about two hundred and fifty feet, so that's the height of one of the big pylons." OK Mandy, now you have my attention.

“You’ll be going around the corner of a valley in Wales and as you come around that corner you look up and you see someone walking on the hill side and you think, oh you know what I can’t resist, and your hand just goes to the throttles and you have to ram it into full reheat.”

“It’s incredibly exciting, flying along at five hundred knots in a fifty million pound aircraft.”

Mandy Hickson

“These huge flames come out the back of your aircraft and you can be accelerated through a 2G of lateral acceleration sometimes to just short of about six hundred and fifty knots.”

It makes my mountain bike rides look pedestrian.

She continues: “I think at that point it’s always important to turn the aircraft on it’s side, think of a jaunty little wave as you go past, often it’s a photographer and you can see yourself on the internet quite soon afterwards. But it’s the biggest thrill and it’s just an absolute passion and something I’ve been really lucky to experience in my life.”

And there you have it. Life at the speed of sound.

A selection of clips featuring Mandy Hickson are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

15

Business teachings from rugby's greats

We recall some of the most memorable of numerous interviews we've completed with Britain's most celebrated rugby players and coaches.

Unlike New Zealand, Rugby is not the national game in England, despite well over two million registered players in the country. Traditionally a niche public school game, with a reputation for stale leadership, Rugby has been making inroads into the national consciousness since the 2003 World Cup Win and peaking recently with the near miss excitement of RWC 2019 in Japan.

As fans first and foremost, it has been a real privilege for the yBC team to meet so many famous faces and stars of the game, via our work with former Pro Harvey Thorneycroft.

In the past, sports have borrowed a lot of ideas from corporate life, but now the flow is very much in reverse as business seeks to create an elite performance culture. This is why our Brilliant Minds channel has been covering a who's who of the rugby world from top coaches like Sir Clive Woodward, to leading players like Laurence Dallaglio, Matt Dawson, Will Greenwood and former All Black Ben Franks.

It begins with interviewing five times British and Irish Lions Coach, Sir Ian McGeechan, in the hallowed Long Room at Lords Cricket Ground.

“I use the term 'sofa talk' -- that you'll have a coffee or a beer with them, you like their company, the chemistry's natural, and you'll just talk about where things are at,” Sir Ian says as he delves into his keys to management. “And what you want is somebody to come back to you and say 'look I think that could be better, or we need to change this, or this has become a priority'. So in your mind you've already got what the next stage looks like; what the next day looks like. And then if you're doing that constantly, you're actually then just pushing the thing forward...”

Sir Clive Woodward is a very different character, famous for innovating and in particular for his theory of marginal gains where you try to do 100 things just 1% better.

“There's a lot of things that are said but people don't deliver.” Laurence Dellaglio

“My favourite saying bar none is, is 'talent alone is not enough.' If you want to be the best in the world, what are you doing? So you know you've got talented people, you're now saying 'we're going to compete with these people sitting in the next room'...individually and, collectively. You become a student of whatever you do. And you're not just relying on me to give you information, you will start to improve yourself, there's no excuse for that person not improving their knowledge about what they do.”

Unsurprisingly Laurence Dellaglio echoes Sir Clive's thoughts from the player side as we settle in to chat about his experience of leadership within a group.

“It's quite cliché about action and words: there's a lot of things that are said but people don't deliver. I think respect is a big word in my world, in terms of what you expect of others, and what you expect to receive back. It's something that you don't necessarily get straight away from people in the business world. Yes, you have very

talented people in your team, but you've got to be prepared to continually improve, continually learn. Continually invest in yourself and your team around you - in everyone - to try and grow as a group. And that for me is something that I don't always see in the workplace.”

For me the big loose forward’s words strike a cord. Businesses talk a lot about high performance. But seldom do they deliver, because they don’t walk the talk.

In the environment of elite rugby, the margins are tiny.

Yet in business where in reality few people adopt high performance approaches, the opportunities for gains are much larger - if you follow through.

A selection of clips featuring some of these interviewees are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

Take a jump into the Matrix – pop culture meets tech giant

What happens when a US\$11 billion company decides to let its guard down with key communications and mirror one of the most recognisable sci-fi movies of all time?

As a card carrying member of Generation X, this is the briefing email you dream of. Our client, the LEF (research arm of tech giant DXC) wants to create an animated video reimagining the Wachowski Brothers 1999 classic “The Matrix” to explain the current Digital Revolution.

Normally serious business content tends to take a serious approach. Especially when your subject matter is Silicon Valley disruption – affecting the very existence of firms and by extension, the careers of management.

However as Tim Washer of Comedy Central fame (and now Cisco) explained to yBC a few years ago, such approaches may not always be the best for video. Tim famously convinced IBM to make funny videos about multi-million dollar IT purchasing decisions for his iconic Mainframe series. Taking a different approach resulted in huge engagement within the hard to impress world of CTOs.

Yet while most corporates understandably turn away from the risks of trying to be funny, it is still worth considering how to make your videos fun. After all, we are dealing with sophisticated media consumers for whom being entertained is second nature. We don’t want to be bored, lectured or told what to think.

Emotions and stories are what film has always been about. We want to be intrigued, thrilled, inspired, scared... we want to be grabbed in some way. We don't need to be told the story with powerpoint bullets. A lifetime of TV means we can follow the action by ourselves, provided there is a powerful story being told.

**We remember the Nokia phone. Keanu Reeves.
Bullet time!**

And today's audience, increasingly armed with smartphones and iPads will invest that 2, 3, or 5 minutes even on the go as long as you give them a compelling reason to watch. So it's always worth exploring creative ways to tell your story in a way that will better connect with your audience.

Our client, LEF, saw that "fun" opportunity in the 1999 Sci-Fi classic, The Matrix. It's a film almost everyone of my generation (Gen X – aged 35-50) knows.

We remember the Nokia phone. Keanu Reeves. Bullet time!

LEF noticed how our new digital infrastructure also reflects some of the predictions of the film. Not the idea of us all living in an computer simulation, thank goodness! But rather that the digital world is becoming pervasive, ever-smarter and even self-aware. Machine intelligences automatically work with each other without human involvement.

As the film we created explains: "In the 20th century businesses relied on a physical infrastructure of transportation, lighting, cooling, stores and offices. But today there is a second and even more powerful virtual infrastructure emerging. History suggests major shifts in our economic foundations often result in new business dynamics and new

industry leaders. Not all firms will make the transition ... and the societal effects will be even greater.”

“This ever-richer set of digital services is becoming the economic foundation of our time. We call this emerging new digital foundation, The Matrix, with a nod to the famous 1999 film.”

Our film culminated in the classic digital jump between skyscrapers.

So that was the opportunity. But how to re-imagine “The Matrix” – a film famous for A list actors and ground breaking (and expensive) special effects? The Matrix was still a huge investment for Warner Bros, which had to sink \$60 million to create a movie with deep philosophical ideas and difficult special effects.

What we needed to do was create a tie-in to the film, helping to tell a story from familiar reference points, without being too cheesy. To do that we decided to use modern animation power to tell a similar story, on a corporate video style budget.

The key idea was to replicate some key scenes/themes. The setting. The phones. The data screens. In particular we could recreate a “noir city” in which the action could take place. Our film culminated in the classic digital jump between skyscrapers.

Just as it would have been unwise for the business leaders of the 1920s to ignore the technology revolutions of that time, so today’s business leaders must not ignore the digital infrastructure that is expanding all around us. C-suite leaders need to understand they are no longer bound by the physical world with its old architectures.

They need to take a jump – into the world of the Matrix.

A selection of clips relating to this chapter are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

A face for TV: Haven't I met you somewhere before?

*TV personalities larger than life with audiences of millions
of people hanging off their every word share their thoughts
with us in private.*

Jason Bradbury is a self proclaimed geek, of the highest order. A computer games journalist who then went on to host Channel 5's "The Gadget Show", he just loves tinkering with gadgets.

"I built some crazy stuff over the years, working hoverboards using leaf-blowers, not electromagnetism, and mind-control computer interfaces. The world's first phone-glove -- I did that, head-up display from my girlfriend's car ..." The list goes on.

I also feel like I already know him - but I know that it's just because I've seen him on the telly.

We're sitting at Lords cricket ground in London, in ornate surroundings with more stunning gilt framed portraits that I've seen in a lifetime of gallery visits. Yet he pulled up outside in his Delorean, which he has retrofitted with a dashboard the same as Marty from Back to the Future. Mad, mad, mad.

Moments later, he had appeared on stage for his 30 minute presentation. But unlike other speakers, he appeared at first as a robot, holding an ipad, with him livestreaming to the ipad from behind a curtain. Next, he motors in from stage left on an electric board, whizzing backwards and forwards across the stage as he delivers the introduction to his talk.

Further into his presentation, he uses minecraft to explain the concept of singularity. He has us all flying up a parabolic curve.

But all this fun is not without meaning. Far from it.

“There are some really interesting sort of philosophical games that technology offers us.”
Jason Bradbury

“While it might seem trivial - my face on an iPad, you know, gliding into the room here at Lords, in the long room, it is meant to be fun and a bit of a joke. But, that very same technology - telepresent robotic technology - could deliver a highly qualified consultant doctor to a village in the middle of nowhere, to give a prognosis or a diagnosis that would otherwise be impossible for the local doctor to give. Or it could be that machine that brings a brilliant mind into a classroom in a far flung country that doesn't have access to those sorts of teaching resources.” He speaks with energy and oodles of passion, like a schoolboy who has just invented something. “So you can see that there are some really interesting sort of philosophical games that technology offers us - practical, practical games as well.”

We chat for another half hour about disruption, new technologies and the future. His enthusiasm for geekery is infectious.

In the same room some 12 months later, I interview another TV personality. But this man is far from geeky.

John Inverdale is a household name - a household face - for anyone in the UK who loves sport. He has been a broadcaster for the BBC and ITV for many years. The Olympic Games, the Grand National, Wimbledon, the FIFA World Cup and of course the Rugby World Cup.

“It’s the closest I’ve come to swearing not once but repeatedly on TV.” John Inverdale

Sitting with him, I imagine him to be the life and soul of many dinner parties over the years. The stories he can probably tell. I ask him about his most incredible memory.

“The most amazing thing I've ever seen on a sports field was actually an aircraft flying over the grandstand at Ellis park in the 1995 rugby world cup between South Africa and New Zealand.” I can almost picture the scene, and I’m fascinated to hear more.

He smiles as he remembers the moment. “Totally unexpected, nobody had been warned about it. I mean, you could never ever do it in this country, but it was a, it was a show of bravado from South Africa as the new rainbow nation.” He describes the massive machine flying low over the stadium.

“I was on air and it was as close as I've ever come on air to swearing not once but repeatedly. I genuinely thought that the plane was going to crash into the grandstand and we were going to have the calamity of all calamities in front of us - I really, really did.”

John recalls how everyone in the studio then broke into uncontrollable laughter. “We we hysterical as it sailed off into the sunset.” He says the game was pretty exceptional too.

What strikes me about these two men - Jason and John - is that on screen, they are larger than life, as are the many other TV personalities I interview as part of Brilliant Minds. Celebrity chefs Michel Roux Jnr and Gregg Wallace, correspondents Gavin Hewitt and James Pearce. They are also just normal people who are very passionate about their subject areas - and that passion comes across in spades on TV.

I feel richer for having interviewed them.

A selection of clips featuring some of these familiar TV faces are found on a [dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

Turning age-old investment thinking on its head - for the future good

*On how a key part of the financial services sector is changing
its thinking around the type of investments they'll make.*

It's 2018 and yBC has been deeply embedded in the asset management world for some years, producing content for fund groups to help them explain their products with much more clarity and engagement to the people most likely to buy them. Obviously the world of finance draws some flak, especially since the global finance crisis of 2008. But lately, clever people have been looking at what the industry can do to be "more human".

Originally called SRI (Socially Responsible Investing) many Asset Managers have paid lip service to it as part of their strategy. But now something called ESG Investing is emerging as a specific discipline, with a focus on the Environment, Sustainability and Governance. But how real is it?

We're sitting in a state of the art boardroom across the road from St Paul's Cathedral. On the flat screen taking up most of the end wall are colleagues in Tokyo. We're discussing ESG with the Nikko team.

One of our clients runs through Nikko's investment philosophy, Future Quality. "The detail of how we integrate ESG into everything we do is governed by Future Quality," she says. One of the participants in New York pitches in: "This is our belief that we will create value if we find companies that can attain and sustain some of the highest

returns in the world.” And with this philosophy, it means stepping away from some old-world ideals.

“Increasingly investors don’t want to invest into funds which don’t meet their philosophical viewpoints on environment, climate, politics, diversity and other key factors.” Yu-Ming Wang

Only two weeks later, we are interviewing Yu-Ming Wang in Tokyo. He beams a friendly smile as he talks about Nikko Asset Management’s investment teams. He’s responsible for 200 investment analysts in Tokyo, Singapore, Hong Kong, Sydney, Auckland, London and New York.

“The analogy I draw is ESG will be just like air and water. It will be part of the environment. It's part of the basic fabric of what good investing is all about” he explains. “We don't have an ESG department to drive ESG. It's all part of investing responsibility starting with me as the CIO all the way down to our investment fund managers and research.”

Future Quality sounds fancy, but in simple terms it means they believe they will create more value where they invest in companies that are focussed on environmental, social and governance issues. So for example, a company involved in unethical practices may run afoul of a scandal which erodes the value of the investment. That’s precisely the sort of company they will avoid.

“Consumers want their brands to uphold their own values.” Johnny Russell

“That’s obvious,” says Yu-Ming Wang, “but this is also customer driven. Increasingly investors don’t want to invest into funds which don’t meet their philosophical viewpoints on environment, climate, politics, diversity and other key factors.”

Back in the UK we fly up to its second financial centre, Edinburgh where we are interviewing Johnny Russell. The straight talking Scotsman handles Global Equity and explains that clients increasingly want to know how their investments are made.

“Consumers today want their brands to uphold their own values. As employees they want their chief executives to stand up against discrimination, against inequality. They want their companies to take a stand against environmental issues. Millennials increasingly expect ESG to be part of their investment decisions. They're not just worried about increasing their wealth, they actually want to know how that wealth positively impacts society.”

This is all about a much longer term, holistic view. Sitting with Johnny, we review part of the interview with Yu-Ming Wang. “Without ESG I don't think you have a responsible, honest management team that not only care about the next quarterly earnings announcement but what the consequence of their management position 10, 20 or 100 years from now. Those are important decisions and I want a management that is running the company I invest in to care about those things.”

Having worked with the industry for some time, it’s easy to be cynical. But having spent time with Russell, Yu-Ming and dozens of others of their peers in the industry

talking about ESG, I wonder: could meaningful change to corporate behavior be driven from the investment community up?

We will soon find out ...

A video featuring a focus on ESG is found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

The frailty of human bias

As the world gets more complex, those people charged with driving the investment strategies for multi-billion dollar funds are getting much more scientific in their thinking.

It's a clear day, and I can count close to 80 ships. They are moored all the way out to the horizon, and from this distance they look like the plastic pieces from the game Battleships. In the foreground, Singapore's iconic Marina Bay Sands hotel sporting three 57 storey towers supporting Skypark Infinity Pool - the highest in the world.

My vista-gazing daydream from 30-something floors up to office tower I am in is interrupted as my interviewee arrives.

Virginie Maisonneuve is an impressive character in the Asset Management world. Highly capable, she has forged an incredible career in what is largely a male-dominated industry. She is now CIO of Eastspring Investments, and I can see why. Her strategic thinking is impressive.

"Where would you like me to sit?" she asks, getting straight to business. I've met Virginie before, so we exchange small talk, and then straight into the interview.

Today, we are interviewing her for a series of values videos for internal use. She steams through the answers to each set of questions, no re-takes necessary. But we also have another project on the go, and soon we are talking about that.

Virginie has asked us to help pull together high-end visuals around four key themes for an upcoming presentation. She has been asked to present to the board of

Eastspring's parent company. It will be one of the key presentations of her lifetime. She'll have about 30 minutes.

We talk through the topics, and I ask her to dig deeper into some areas. I'm already starting to think through the visuals and how we can push them way, way beyond the "PowerPoint" standard.

“Innovation, agility and sustainability will be at the core.” Virginie Maisonneuve

Virginie has four key topics which she wants to focus on. The impact of AI and robotics. Human impact on the environment, and our response to this. The massive changes in global demographics. And the impending dominance of China in global commerce.

In each of these areas, Virginie has obviously read deeply, thought deeply and spent a great deal of time researching specific lines of thought. She talks about vertical farming innovations, the surge in solar energy capture, the rise of the middle classes in Asia, the impact of aging populations around the world and of course millennials. On each topic, she has an impressive recall of facts, figures, references and commentators. All of these factors - and more - create a complex matrix of factors which will influence her investment decisions in the coming months and years.

“Innovation, agility and sustainability will be at the core for winning asset managers of the future,” she says. And I believe her. I have no doubt that she will be up front.

The next day, in the very same room, I interview one of Virginia's colleagues. Michael Woolley is way further down the all important "org chart", but he is no less part of Eastspring's innovative investment team.

Michael is a behavioural scientist, and he's focussed on how we invest. "We are all human. We make errors in everything we do, and investing is not immune to that. And that's what we are all about is exploiting those behavioural errors that we observe every single day."

"Decisions are based on biases all the time."

Michael Woolley

He explains that there is a large body of science behind all of this, but that the industry hasn't really factored this into investment decisions across the board.

"Decisions are based on biases all the time. We form strong preferences, and when we do that we tend to ignore a whole range of other potential outcomes. A whole range of other pieces of information. Those strong preferences quite often cloud our judgment and lead us to make really clear conclusions but without thinking about other opportunities. When that happens quite often it's observable in the market, quite often driven through big price movement." Michael explains that if we understand these biases, we can "get ahead of them".

I ask him how the team applies this to making even better decisions. "What we need to do is find a way to mitigate those potential errors. What we've done is we've set up a very disciplined approach - a valuation driven approach - to anchor our own decisions in a way that brings out the best potential opportunities."

As we dig into bias further, Michael brings in the concept of herding. “Our unwillingness to stand out from the pack quite often leads us to feel more comfort when we are standing next to each other.” Guilty as charged. He then moves on to overconfidence, which is equally fascinating.

Thirty minutes later, the interview is over. It has been intriguing. It’s great to know that a company like Eastspring is thinking long and hard about inherent bias in investment decision making, so that they make the right decisions for their clients. After all, humans aren’t perfect.

As Michael says, “That is the human condition, and it's something that we have to live with.” Wise words indeed. Time for all of us to think deeply about our context and our biases, methinks.

A selection of clips featuring Virginie are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

After the hype has died down: seeking innovative edges

Are all of these new technologies really all they are cracked up to be, or is there another way to navigate the ever-changing world around us?

In recent years everyone has been talking about sci-fi style tech such as virtual reality, self driving cars and AI... but what are business leaders really talking about today - now the hype of these innovations has died down?

During our seven year Brilliant Minds collaboration working with Harvey Thorneycroft, yBC has interviewed dozens of experts in tech disruption including numerous Silicon Valley heavyweights. And in his own role as adviser to senior UK business leaders at companies like Countrywide, Harvey gets to hear how those in the hot seat are approaching it.

In a video link connecting with NZ's beautiful mountain lake town of Wanaka, Harvey shares his insights from his London offices at the top of the hill in Wimbledon.

“Lots of leaders recognise the importance of looking outside of their industry. Let me give you an example: we work with a heart surgeon called Martin Elliot who looked at Formula 1, the Royal Ballet School and the aviation industry to improve how he's operating on children's hearts the size of a grain of rice. Those individuals, those people with a growth mindset have the ability to look outside to improve what they are doing inside.”

This “outside-in” theme was a core part of an animated video series yBC had worked on for tech giant DXC some years ago. Traditionally, business used to innovate by looking internally at its own products and services - a true navel gazing exercise.

Now innovation happens too quickly for that, with disruptions happening all around you. So the outside-in approach is to look at other industries to find what is changing, or best in class from faster moving industries. Get hold of that tech, play around with it like a Digital Chef, and see what could work for you.

It doesn't matter if you work in a slow, conservative industry.

It's time to get your hands dirty!

A selection of clips and the original briefing featuring Harvey and Mark are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

Time to change up a gear – VR first for Asset Management

*A corporate in a conservative industry takes a leap of faith,
and we end up creating a first for the industry – high in the
Austrian Alps.*

No one likes to consume boring fare. So why would you serve it up to the people who are important to your business?

These days, with their consumer hat on, all business people are sophisticated consumers of digital content. The data shows that all of us are spending huge amounts of time online, and especially watching video content. Indeed online video is the most popular digital content - whether on websites, social media, BBC iPlayer, Netflix, Disney Plus, YouTube or on the move on our smartphones.

In 2016 yBC entered the traditional Asset Management with a simple proposition. Bringing the best content and media practice from outside the industry. It began with a series of five BBC business style documentaries about Standard Life Investments Global Equities team. Using “reality tv style” production techniques, we created a real fly on the wall feel as we criss-crossed the globe for the story. The result was exactly the kind of content investors love watching on financial tv channels, but which they had not seen before from corporate content. It went down a storm.

But the bar keeps on being raised.

“It’s time to do something never seen before in this industry” urges a team member as we prepare our pitch.

That means crossing the Virtual Reality Rubicon.

An experienced mountaineer ascends the face with the specialist 360 camera mounted precariously on his helmet.

Our concept is to hold a VR event in central London with a special film about managing risk for Natixis Investment Managers.

We will need to shoot the film with a special 360 degree camera. Then guests will be able to enjoy an immersive experience with virtual reality headsets at the event.

The shoot begins very early in the morning in the Alps in Austria. The team ascends tracks to a preselected rockface we want to use for the shoot. An experienced mountaineer ascends the face with the specialist 360 camera mounted precariously on his helmet. This means that viewers with VR headsets will be able to experience the ascent as if they were themselves climbing the face - panning up at the sheer rockface above, or focussing on his hands - or the drop below.

For the next sequences we are in a taxi in London crossing the Thames (views can spin around and look in any direction), before the final location - a rooftop balcony at a high profile restaurant in London with a sweeping panorama of the City - the financial heart of London.

Inside this virtual reality space the audience has a guide to lead them through the environment and tell the story - Laurence Olivier Award winning Dylan Emery, who seamlessly steps from one scene to the next.

Whether it is VR, 3D, podcasts or the next set of emerging technology, as consumer tech continues to race forward, business needs to make sure it is staying relevant in terms of the content we all love to view.

[See the 360 degree video here.](#)

An obsession with the “top of the world”

This man has been to a place most of us will never go, and so hostile that most of us will never want to be there. But he can't stop going back.

Alan Chambers is a man on a mission. A mission to spend as much time at the “top of the world” as possible. But it’s not what you think.

An extreme adventurer, he wanted to reach the North Pole - the northern axis of planet earth, unaided, on foot. “It’s a fair way across the ice from Northern Canada,” he says. “A thousand kilometers, in fact.” He tells the spellbound audience that he spent five years planning the trip, building the team, and planning every hour of every day. Of course, we know he made it, because he’s standing at the front of the room telling the story.

The tale of his journey is incredible, and he’s a legendary storyteller. Everyone is on the edge of their seat. He’s sharing a few photos, but it’s the narrative which is amazing.

An hour later, sitting beneath a dozen portraits of famous British cricketers at Lords, I ask him what it’s like. “What,” he says. “Standing on the North Pole?” I say yes, that’s exactly what I want to know.

“Pure magic” he says. “I love the fact that we're going to the top of a planet. I find that really cool,” he recounts excitedly.

“So our planet’s sat in the solar system, we're now going to be stood right on the top of it. So if you jumped up, you're in space, that’s the way I look at it.” He’s got such a great way of explaining things, and you can see almost boyish wonder in his eyes.

He chuckles to himself, obviously calling up incredible mental imagery which only he can see right now. “We quite often put a ski pole at ninety degrees north and we can run around the world in three seconds.”

He continues: “But when you get to the North Pole, it’s really hard to pinpoint when you are exactly there. There’s nothing marking it. And your GPS is changing so fast the closer you get, that it’s hard to be super accurate.”

“So every year ...” (he’s been there many, many times now) “... we know that we’re basically within an inch of the top of planet earth. That’s where the fun begins - you get moved off, so you can literally stand at the top of the world with one foot in the east, one foot in the west.”

He chuckles to himself, obviously calling up incredible mental imagery which only he can see right now. “We quite often put a ski pole at ninety degrees north and we can run round the world in three seconds. And because all the lines are longitude, you can pick any time zone you want when you're at the North Pole.”

He’s now almost in a dream state. “It’s a very special place on the planet, and it is in the centre of a frozen ocean, which boggles the mind a little bit.”

I’m not sure I understand just how special the North Pole is, but I believe him.

A selection of clips featuring explorer Alan Chambers are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

Putting the only body you've got on the line, and nearly losing it

Two men who have literally been shot to bits in the line of duty for their country share their stories of recovery, reinvention and reinvigoration.

Steve McCully is in command of a British company, deep within enemy territory in Afghanistan. Their mission - to neutralise the insurgent threat. Yes, that's the Taliban.

Unfortunately, the Taliban was one step ahead. They had already identified Steve, working out that he was the commander. He was a marked man.

“They detonated what's called a directional fragmentation charge. So as I walked past a certain point, they pressed a button and it detonated this charge, which kind of blew me into an irrigation ditch, tore my chest apart, right arm, right leg.”

“The guys did an incredible job keeping me alive there and then in the battlefield. Thankfully the medical emergency response team, the big helicopter that comes in to extract casualties in the battlefield was on site within 15 or 20 minutes, and I was back in Camp Bastion where the military hospital was 10 minutes later.”

Steve undergoes a series of operations and is transferred many thousands of miles to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, where he fights for his life, then spends three weeks in hospital recovering and is moved elsewhere to spend nearly three years in rehabilitation.

Steve's story is not too dissimilar from a similarly impressive and positive man I interviewed just a few months prior, no more than three meters from where I'm now talking to Steve.

“I woke up in a coma [...] and my military career was done.” Martin Hewitt

Martin Hewitt is a similar build to Steve, but has a cheeky northern accent. I interviewed him a few months earlier, no more than three meters from where I'm now talking to Steve.

Martin is leading his men on an attack on an enemy position, and is shot in the chest by a heavy machine gun.

“Obviously, that completely changed my career,” he says. “I woke up from a coma in Selly Oak hospital in Birmingham and my military career was done because the damage that had been sustained had paralysed my right arm. I was 100% reliant on others for even my most basic needs.”

What is clear as I interview each of these men is that in the face of adversity - and a solid dose of bad luck - they both do everything possible to take as much positivity from their journey as possible. They both start thinking about what they can do next to make a difference.

Steve runs a successful business and races fast cars. He gets immense satisfaction from helping others.

Martin set up a business with other retired, disabled vets and now leads the Adaptive Grand Slam. Recently he stood at the summit of Mount Everest, and plans to do the same on the highest peak of every continent on earth, plus reach both the north and south poles.

He and his team will do this unsupported, and they're all disabled. Along the way, he'll help dozens if not hundreds of others who are similarly disabled.

Kudos.

A selection of clips featuring these two men are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

Four years of training for six minutes of glory

We've interviewed many Olympians over the last few years, and James Cracknell typifies them all. Competitive, compelling and completely obsessed with doing his best.

It takes a certain kind of person to want to train for four years for a six minute race. But that person is sitting in front of me.

Rowing champion, double Olympic gold medalist, 2,500 mile trans-Atlantic rower and OBE recipient. James Cracknell is definitely that person. It also helps that he's a giant.

“Our race was two thousand meters, took about six minutes, and for that six minutes is the only six minutes that matters. You can win every other race over those four years, but lose that one and you've failed.” Blimey, no pressure then?

He tells me that when you only race five times a year, winning the big race is your sole focus, and everything hangs off it. So you need to be sure you're going to win.

“You don't want to turn up to the finals at the Olympics wanting to break a world record,” he says. “We had actually already broken it in training. You just want to make sure you get your performance adequate and if your adequate is better than everyone else's best, then you're in a good place.”

Cracknell exudes Olympic confidence in his interview. We turn to rowing the Atlantic.

One small boat, two men, 4,000 kilometers. “Are you barking mad?” I ask him.

“We hadn’t trained together in our boat ahead of this race. So we were forming a new relationship in the middle of an ocean and it took us a long time to really get to trust each other, to be able to motivate each other. Not only the experience of spending time on a boat together, but actually problem solving together. It was the ability to problem solve that means you actually get there in the end.”

“They weren’t sure I was going to live.”

James Cracknell

As my mind boggles at the thought of crossing the Atlantic in a small rowing boat (honestly, my worst nightmare), James reveals that this was not the most challenging moment of his life. I snap out of my self induced nightmare, and ask for more detail.

“I had an accident in America, cycling across America, I got smacked by a fuel truck and was placed in a medically induced coma.” Now he’s got my attention.

James reveals that during this time his wife found out she was pregnant with their third child. “They weren't sure I was going to live, and then the neurologist saying 'he may not recognise you'.” It was a very dark time for the family, and one which James tells me he thinks about every day.

James not only survived the experience, but has used it as a springboard. “I was determined as soon as I came out the other side, that my life was not going to be

determined by the accident.” He then goes on to share his learnings from the accident and his rehabilitation.

As I reflect on the interview, I realise that it is precisely the “James Cracknell traits” which I’ve seen in so many other Olympic medallists we’ve interviewed. Insanely sharp focus, complete self belief, a punishing training schedule over four years culminating in one race, one final and a well earned place on the podium.

These people are exceptional. They are giants (some of them, literally). It’s been a privilege to spend time with them.

A selection of clips featuring James and other incredible Olympians we have interviewed are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

It's all in the (biased) mind - so get your rose tinted glasses out

When we race through life at the speed of sound, it takes a couple of very talented scientists to gently tell us we're getting it all wrong.

It's early summer, usually a time when most executives in the UK are putting in the hard yards before a summer break. So it's unusual to see 300 senior people get together for a full day conference. But they do - and stay there for the duration.

A day in the hospitality suite at Twickenham certainly helps. But it's the dozen incredible speakers - half of them talking about how the mind works - that keep people there. No wonder the room is packed.

Tara Swart takes the stage after incredible presentations from author Matthew Syed and psychopath expert Dr Kevin Dutton. By contrast she is calm, composed and measured. Unlike the previous two, she doesn't pace up and down the stage. She is also impressive from the first sentence. She starts by running through just how harmful stress can be on your body. And then she reveals that stress is contagious.

"You've heard of emotional contagion and we know that sometimes you walk into a room and it just feels like everybody in there is so stressed," she says, scanning the room as she speaks. "We also know that if you even see a video of somebody else suffering, your cortisol levels actually increase. [...] and steroids hormones like cortisol,

oestrogen, progesterone, leak out of our sweat source like pheromones, and actually have a physiological effect on the people around us.”

She’s talking to business leaders. You could hear a pin drop. She knows their brain like the back of her hand.

“Mental health is a huge issue right now.”

Prof. Elaine Fox

“We now think it matters where you are in the hierarchy of an organisation so that the leader’s stress level is more likely to affect other people than people who are peers to each other.” Some audience members squirm uncomfortably, probably realising the impact they have on their subordinates. Others take notes.

Tara goes on to talk about various aspects of Neuroscience, as well as covering what she calls “neuro-myths”. The audience is spell-bound.

Next up is Professor Elaine Fox. Based at Oxford University, she is a psychologist and neuroscientist researching the science of emotions. She has featured in New Scientist, The Economist, The Guardian and the New York Times as well as ABC and BBC documentaries. She has given hundreds of talks, and features in numerous videos about mental wellbeing.

She describes mental health as “a huge issue right now”. “So a lot of people in society now are just getting by really, and they’re not really flourishing.” It all rings true with what we intuitively know, but to hear the science behind it is gripping.

You instantly warm to Elaine. She has a glowing smile and a delightful Irish accent, and spends time talking about an “optimism gene” - all great reasons to like someone from the outset. She is incredibly smart, but she’s not flashy with it.

“Learn to be a detective with your own thoughts.
[...] Is there another way of looking at that? Have I
really understood this in the only possible way?”

Prof. Elaine Fox

Today, she spends much of her presentation talking through the science of cognitive bias, which is equally fascinating, as she leads us to the realisation that yes, we’re all biased, and as Elaine says “These cognitive processes are really biased and that really does determine our experience of the world. Because if we are constantly interpreting things in a very negative way, or selectively remembering more negative things that have happened to us than more positive things, that will give us the impression of a much more threatening world than perhaps it actually is.”

She explains that all the research shows that these fundamental biases - the way people view the world - are key to peoples’ mental health. “Positive people really do look at their past with rose tinted glasses. And if people do that, you know, obviously, you're then going to have a much more positive world view and you really have a genuine sense that the world is not a very threatening place. Where somebody who's experienced exactly the same situations but has just interpreted them in a different way, or remembered them in a different way, they will actually have a very different impression and have an impression of a much more threatening type of world.”

Some of what Elaine has to say is so blindingly obvious, that it's brilliant. But only once she has revealed the science - before which it alludes us.

She encourages the audience to “be a detective” about our own thoughts. “If you have a negative interpretation of something, if you think somebody was very critical of you, for example, really look at what they've said and really say, is there any other interpretation? Is there another way of looking at that? Have I really understood this in the only possible way?” She explains that when people start to do that they realise that often there are lots of interpretations you can make.

“It can make a real difference if they start challenging their own thoughts.”

Prof. Elaine Fox

“This is particularly important, actually, for children.” You can see the parents and grandparents in the audience - which is most of us - sit up. “You know, sometimes children tend to be a little bit rigid in how they interpret things. They might say, this is the only way to understand this particular thought, whereas actually, if they start challenging those thoughts and really looking at different thoughts, and really saying, well, is there any other way of understanding this?”

Like most sitting in the room, I hadn't expected to be gripped by every speaker on stage. I hadn't expected to find out about some of the science around mental health. I hadn't expected to be thinking of conversations with my kids, and how that might affect their mental wellbeing. I hadn't expected to analyse just how rose tinted my own metaphorical spectacles are.

It's only half way through the day, and I don't know it yet, but I'll be just as gripped by every other session until the end of the showcase. And my brain will hurt. Luckily, I'm not alone, and we all get to have a drink together before heading home ...

A selection of clips featuring these talented scientists are found on [a dedicated ReThink channel page here](#).

Brilliant Minds Labs - unlocking the essence of performance leadership

It's a little embarrassing that it took a year for Paul Stanley to convince us that we were sitting on some of the most unique and incredible performance leadership data in the world.

It's March 10, 2020 and I am sitting in the Long Room at Lords, about to watch the Brilliant Minds team deliver unique and ground breaking research to an audience of over 100 top business executives. The audience is restless.

Within 2 weeks the Coronavirus outbreak will see London locked down and today, worried executives keep one eye on their phones. There has been a tense undercurrent all day with the crisis competing for attention. I've been sitting next to a CIO from a top european publisher who has been doing emergency video conferences between the sessions. We all make nervous jokes about elbow bumps. Some still insist on handshakes in a fearless sort of way.

Maybe even more significantly the next speaker is the fantastically gruff Premier League manager Sean Dyche who we've all been waiting to see. I check my watch nervously. Showtime. Seven years of work will now be condensed into a 10 minute presentation. What will the reception be?

The genesis of this moment lies back in 2019, or maybe even 2014.

The “science” of leadership is a pillar of pop culture. Numerous studies, airport shelves bursting with thick business books and a plethora of intensive courses all offer their theories about what makes great leaders tick. CEO’s themselves have become celebrities.

They are amongst the highest achievers in their respective fields.

It’s no wonder – the people in leadership positions are the ones who can create a boom or drive the business into the ground. The belief that leadership can be a significant factor in the performance of organisations has spawned a global industry of academic research trying to “crack the code”. But as the yBC team had seen from their work in high performance sports, performance leadership is more than just hiring the right people or pasting motivational posters on the wall.

Since 2014, Harvey Thorneycroft Ltd and digital partners yBC has been building up a body of content about leadership over hundreds of probing interviews with leaders in sport, business, academia, military and politics.

These were not just average leaders doing a fairly good job. They are amongst the highest achievers in their respective fields. Olympians, World Cup winners, high-octane Formula 1 executives, surgeons, jet pilots, bestselling authors, acclaimed academics, celebrated politicians and many more.

Via Brilliant Minds, we've been sharing their perspectives with an audience of thousands of executives throughout Europe for seven years. From that series came an exciting idea ...

The close analysis of over 100 hours of metadata from some of the most successful leaders of our time.

“I don't think you realise the significance of the data you have gathered from some of the most successful leaders of our time,” announced Paul Stanley over a pot of tea in 2018.

Paul Stanley is an experienced CEO of global technology firms, but in his “spare time” he conducts postgraduate research at York Business School. Having been on the receiving end of a Brilliant Minds interview himself, he had a hunch that the Brilliant Minds series would be a rich and unique source of leadership data.

Fast-forward 12 months, and the teams at Harvey Thorneycroft Limited and yBC formed Brilliant Minds Labs and began working closely with Paul to unlock the essence of performance leadership.

The team reached out to approximately 130 interviewees, after which consent forms were completed by 91 of them. Of these, 86 were deemed relevant for the research, and were included in the study. Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analytics Software (CADQAS) was used to identify and gather themes, codes and nodes, with further

processing of results to follow behind that. This resulted in the close analysis of over 100 hours of metadata from some of the most successful leaders of our time.

A draft research paper has now been written and, ahead of the keynote speaker, Paul is about to tell the audience what we learned.

“The research considered leadership phenomena from three perspectives” Paul explains. “First, leadership that is common to all situations and sectors (“generic leadership”). Secondly, leadership that is specific to the situational context (“context specific leadership”). Thirdly, leadership that is specific to one of the sectors (“sector specific leadership”).”

| “It’s clear that we’ve struck a chord.”

Paul turns to the big screen where the model is displayed. In just one screen, it explains the steps successful leaders go through to create a high performance culture, based on over a hundred hours of metadata.

As the room contains many highly successful people, the purpose of the presentation is not to push our view as some kind of success formula (indeed many in the audience were part of the research). Rather we want feedback from this “power audience”. How much do they recognise from their own experience? The research will be made public so they can download it and give feedback.

I scan the audience and the reaction is positive. It’s clear that we’ve struck a chord.

Then a real buzz and heads turning. Someone has entered at the back of the room. Alice Thorneycroft is announcing the main speaker. Sean Dyche walks out on to stage to join her, every inch the sports rockstar.

“Hello!” he says, easing into his chair. “I am a football manager so I can fucking swear if I want!”

The supposedly conservative business audience erupts in laughter and applause.

At the social event afterwards a high flyer from an investment company is laughing about it. “I loved it” he explains. “We get so many of these “rah rah” motivational presentations with the usual safe corporate talk”.

He’s got a point, I think. How many supposed high performance business leaders communicate with impenetrable corporate BS?

Of course when you are a rockstar leader like Sean Dyche you can get away with breaking the rules... but isn’t that the point?

Find out more at:

<https://brilliantmindslabs.com/brilliant-minds-on-performance-leadership/>

Index of interviewees in this book

In alphabetical order by surname - titles correct at the time of each individual interview.

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- **Jason Bradbury**, TV gadget presenter, Chapter 17
- **Sir Richard Branson**, founder Virgin Group, Chapter 3
- **Prof. Erik Brynjolfsson**, director of MIT's Initiative on the Digital Economy, Chapter 2
- **Graeme Codrington**, futurist, Chapter 1
- **James Cracknell**, double olympic gold medallist, Chapter 24
- **Alan Chambers**, adventurer, Chapter 22
- **Laurence Dellaglio**, former Rugby World Cup winner, Chapter 15
- **Bruce Dickinson**, frontman of Iron Maiden Chapter 3
- **Dr Dorian Dugmore**, Director of Corporate Wellbeing, Perform at St George's Park, Chapter 10
- **Dr Kevin Dutton**, expert in psychopathy, Oxford University, Chapter 6
- **Prof. Martin Elliot**, Professor of Paediatric Cardiothoracic Surgery at University College London, Chapter 7
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