



Summary Report: Dr Patricia Pryce¹, Cranfield School of Management

Nikki Owen – Charisma: the future of leadership and engagement²

Nikki's central premise is that charisma cannot be taught in any conventional way but that our ability to be charismatic resides within us and can be released by tapping into the unconscious mind. She cited an HBR journal article from 2012 which suggests that charismatic leaders are 68% more effective – they find it easier to attract and retain talent and to inspire others in different situations and are happier and healthier. She defined charisma, not as being loud and showy, but as having energy, engagement with others, confidence and empathy.

The unconscious mind

We receive millions of bits of information every day – these pass through filters within our brains/minds to enable us to make sense of them; therefore we engineer our sense of reality. In the west we prefer to work with our conscious (logical) mind rather than our unconscious mind. We very rarely tap into what our unconscious mind is telling us – these messages can often be recognised by the changes we experience in our bodies (e.g. physiological impact when we feel fear, anxiety etc.). As a result the decisions we make under pressure are often different to the decisions we make when we feel calm and resourceful.

From the age of 6/7 we become much more conscious of who we are in the world and our self-esteem and self-worth are formed. We then begin to build barriers as a result of our experiences in the world. From then on humans relate from a position of wall-wall barriers rather than with their 'real' selves and our innate power becomes blocked.

Our emotions affect our bodies – when we are stressed out or calm we operate on different frequencies – and our bodies determine how we behave. There is an important mind-body connection which was hard-wired into us from man's early development to enable us to survive (flight/fight). Depending upon our life experiences and our responses to them we develop either a **survival or growth mind-set**. The survival mind-set is often closed and lacks creativity whereas the growth mind-set is open to new ideas and is willing to take risks.

"You have to dare to lose to win" – i.e. be prepared to make mistakes.

¹ This is a summary of the day's events and does not necessarily represent Dr Pryce's views on the subjects under discussion

² The full content of Nikki's presentation was included in the Benchmark for Business brochure given out on the day

To become more charismatic we need to listen more to our emotions – when we feel bad our subconscious mind is telling us something and we should listen to it and explore it and operate from a growth mind-set.

Nikki's charisma model is based on developing awareness around five internal attributes:

- Self-esteem
- Self-awareness
- Vision
- Driving force
- Energy

Nikki then demonstrated through the 'big apple experiment' and through a dowsing exercise that our aura (the energy field around our bodies) can have a big impact on the quality of our interactions. She concluded by saying that, although we cannot change the world, we change the way in which we use our energy. This, she argued, suggests that as leaders we must be mindful of how we use the energy around us – it can be a force for good or it can be toxic – and the impact it has on our teams, other co-workers and ultimately the bottom line.

Dan Cable – Bringing the alive you to work

Dan posed the question *'Why do people resist change when humans (in comparison to other animals) are so good at it?'*

People and organisations need to be more change ready if they are to succeed in today's competitive and global environment, which means that we become increasingly accustomed to increased offerings and expect more (Hedonic treadmill). Dan argued that unless companies are able to keep up with the demands of consumers they will fail.

Using a similar analogy to the survival or growth mind-set that Nikki spoke about, Dan spoke about the concept of **'freedom' and 'the frame'**.

The frame is connected to policies, controls and regulations (they are about exploitation of resources) and were useful in the age of scientific management; **freedom** is connected to creativity, innovation and self-expression (to do with exploration) and is more of a necessity in today's world. Whilst there is still a place for the frame this should not be to the exclusion of all else as it stifles creativity.

Using examples from different corporations (KLM and Southwest Airlines), Dan was able to demonstrate how the use of 'freedom' enabled those businesses to not only survive but to thrive and highlighted the importance of social media for longer term business gain. He argued that leaders within business need to find ways to enable creativity to flourish at all levels which means being willing to take risks, allowing ideas to fail fast whilst keeping the wins. This means learning from mistakes rather than punishing them.

This also means tapping into the creative part of the brain ('freedom') and using this more frequently (rather than the rational, logical side of the brain that feeds 'the frame'). This will enable us to tap into human potential rather than crush it in our quest for perfection (80% there is good enough).

Dan explained that tapping into human potential (creativity) means activating positive emotions (such as curiosity, excitement and purpose). This is actioned by tapping into the seeking system (of emotion) rather than the fear system:

Fear System	Seeking System
Feelings: threatened, anxious, worried, rage	Feelings: curious, excited, enthusiastic
Bodily response: muscles tighten, eyes dilate, etc. (typical fight/flight responses)	Bodily response: the brain is stimulated to release dopamine & oxytocin (feel good hormones) and urges us to explore
Action response: we focus on the threat and see less of the periphery thus closing the self to other possibilities. If the threat comes from within our work group there is a tendency to want to confirm rather than resist as we want to be accepted rather than ejected.	Action response: play, explore, experiment and learn from our environment, take risks

However, in the workplace, we tend to access the seeking system less frequently as we fear getting things wrong – the suggestion is that creativity is being knocked out of us and we are moving towards a state of learned helplessness. Dan argued that this needs to change and used the example of WIPRO (an Indian call centre company) who recognised the importance of allowing an individual's personal identity to emerge in the workplace rather than forcing them to use a corporate identity. Allowing the former led to a significant increase in customer satisfaction and employee retention rates.

This points to the importance of the human need for purpose – studies (across countries) show that individuals who rate themselves as higher on purpose have greater life expectancy and a higher ability to fight disease than those who rate themselves as being lower on purpose.

"He who has a 'why' to live can bear almost any 'how'" (Nietzsche)

Purpose is life-giving for humans – this means that, in the workplace, employees need to understand 'why' change is happening and what their part is in it.

Summary of the day

Two very different speakers with a similarity of message – the need to tap into our hidden resources to release positive creative energy for both personal and business growth and development. This means working through some of the barriers we have created for ourselves and increasing our willingness to move away from systems of fear as these hold back untapped potential. We need to find ways of helping people move towards seeking systems to release their creativity and use their energy forces for good by finding purpose in our lives and helping them to find purpose in theirs.