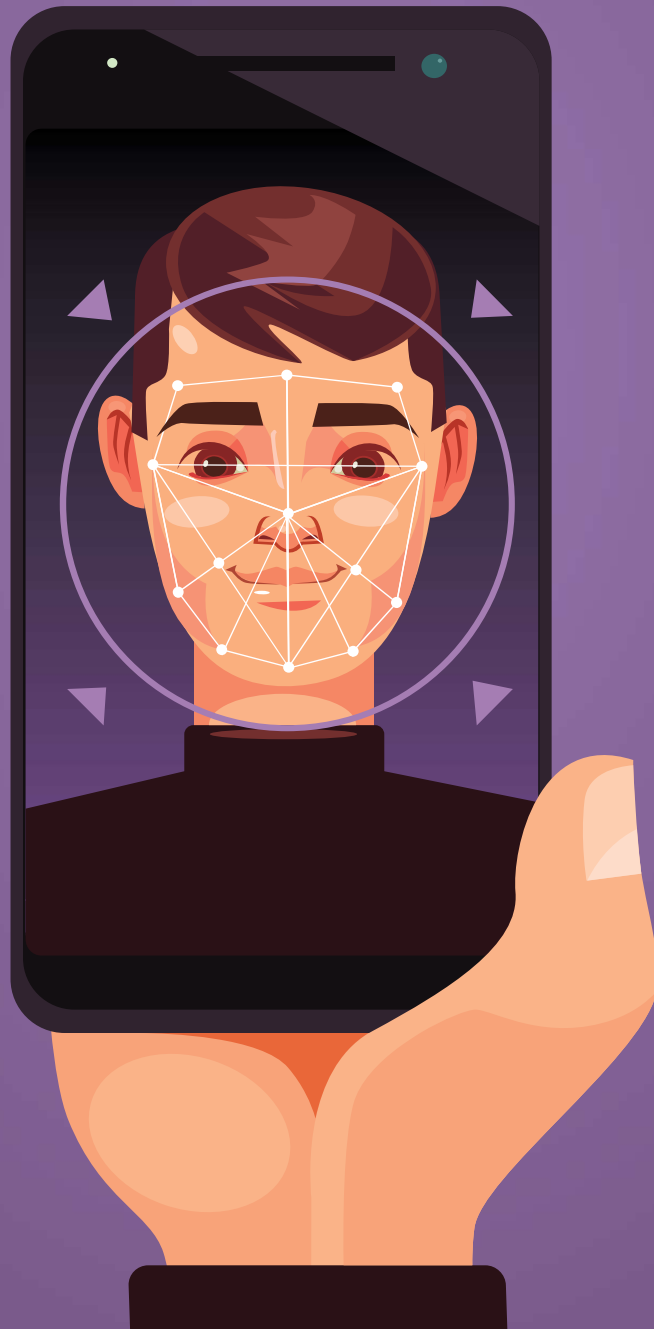


TECHNOLOGY CAN UNLOCK YOUR GREATEST ASSET



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The greatest asset in any business is its people - they're also almost the most underutilised asset. The key to unlocking the potential of your greatest asset lies in digital technology - and changing your leadership style.

MOST OF US WOULD AGREE that in any business today, the greatest asset is its people. We also recognise that getting the most out of our people is a CEO's most important job. Precisely how a CEO does that is where the agreement ends.

Unlocking the potential of people through shared decision-making and distributed leadership is one potentially valuable method. Many believe most successful businesses are built on cultures that encourage consensus, collaboration and teamwork. But there are those who disagree. There is still a class of traditional business leaders practising old school "command and control" leadership.

We've moved beyond the days of top-down leadership when the 'best' bosses saw their job as making all the most important decisions in the business every day.

In 2018 who would want to work for an organisation run by a person like that? Certainly not the most talented people in your industry. A CEO still running their business from the top should get ready to lose their most talented team members as they go looking for a workplace where they can make meaningful decisions for themselves.

Top-down leadership is a remnant of the industrial age when communication was slow, and information was transmitted via paper. Modern digital communication technology means that this style of leadership is no longer the most effective.

In the age of digital connectivity, companies have become networks where information can be shared instantly with every person, regardless of status or job title. There is no natural centre to these networks; all the nodes operate independently. If one is removed, the others continue, meaning that having a powerful command and control leader at the apex of a hierarchy is no longer so important. In fact, it is a negative. The productivity of a network is determined by the amount of information flowing between its nodes. If everything has to go through one apex point - the boss - it will cause an inevitable bottleneck and be a handbrake on productivity.

In a modern network, organisation knowledge is no longer power as it was in the old days. Power doesn't come from keeping knowledge tight to oneself; it comes from sharing knowledge.

The leader who is open and inclusive with information about performance and who is willing to listen to their team is far more powerful than the leader who thinks their power comes from keeping team members in the dark.

Technologies that enable organisations to operate with this new model of leadership have exploded in the past five years. In every case, they allow a continuous flow of feedback from all the team members in an organisation back to a lead-

ership team. Leadership teams use the insights gleaned from the feedback mechanism and act with their teams to improve performance based on their feedback.

New Zealand company Ask Your Team seeks continuous improvement systems based on a comprehensive and anonymous survey of attitudes and opinions about how the organisation operates, from every person who works for it.

The survey covers 13 different areas of business operation, from communication and operations, through to strategy, and collates a comprehensive dataset that provides an executive team with a to-do list for performance improvement. It provides data that allows an objective comparison between groups within an organisation, explains performance gaps and highlights pinpoint areas where executive attention will have the greatest impact on organisational performance.

Importantly, AskYourTeam democratises and distributes leadership. Senior leaders in organisations using Ask Your Team that share their results widely among their teams report that leadership becomes easier the more knowledge they give away.

Team members are empowered in direct proportion to the degree of sharing from their leaders. Sharing knowledge helps everyone understand the reasons behind decision making and helps people to begin making leadership decisions for themselves. This takes a huge load off the people in the traditional hierarchical leadership positions as consensus replaces command as the central factor in the organisation's culture.

And people love being asked what they think about the performance of their organisation. Participation rates in any survey can tell you a lot about its value.

Recently NZQA moved to using the AskYourTeam survey. They were pleasantly surprised to get a 91% completion rate from their first AskYourTeam survey, more than they'd had ever recorded in any staff survey before.

Now they are analysing the results of their first survey and preparing action plans based on what they've heard. Once they've implemented their action plan, they'll be able to rerun the survey with small workgroups or across the entire organisation and measure their progress.

The change in what they are asking has been instrumental in moving from an old model of top-down leadership and entered the new era of ongoing continuous improvement, through distributed leadership.

To find out more about how technology can unlock your greatest asset, visit www.askyourteam.com