



# Moments that move us

Dr Nick Udall



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by Dr Nick Udall, CEO nowhere

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Thinking we can continue to work harder and longer hours, and expect our people to do the same, is just stupid. A growing number of people are already working all hours of the day, most weekends and into their holidays. It is of course an unsustainable way of increasing productivity.

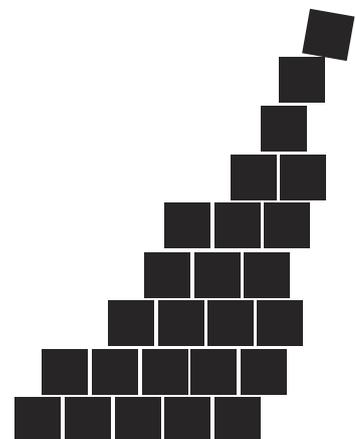
Unfortunately we find ourselves trapped in these 'achiever' cultures that relentlessly, obsessively and often unhealthily push for ever increasing levels of performance in lazy ways.

These cultures misunderstand how to unlock peak performance. Instead, they often 'rush to action', setting off project after project without taking time to think them through or to join the dots with other projects. This manifests in organisations that are buffeted by waves and waves of initiatives and projects, that all take up enormous amounts of valuable time. Working to an integrated strategy that simultaneously focuses attention and synchronises effort just doesn't seem to come into it.

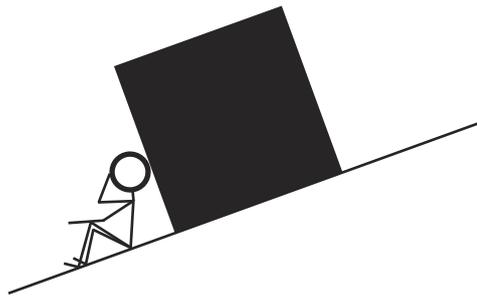
This then results in people getting busy, often doing the wrong thing. And, when things fail to work, even more projects get kicked off to fix them or try again.

This 'push, push, push' energy, along with an associated pressure to perform at all costs, creates cultures where busyness gets confused with productivity. Being busy then becomes the way in which people justify their own existence, and even promote their importance.

When organisations then try to drive performance by focusing on the 'individual', this not only kills any sense of shared accountability, but also fosters a culture which encourages (and rewards) everyone getting on with their own 'bit' – even if their own bit isn't the right bit, or has any chance of usefully joining up with anyone else's bit!



Tuning into and shaping the moment is a core skill of advanced organisational cultures.



Unfortunately, these cultures are becoming more common, and all in the name of high-performance, or, in reality, pseudo high performance.

In short, work, and the way we work, is becoming increasingly fragmented and disconnected. This separation creates unhealthy competition (for resources, attention, reward) and leads to incoherent action, thereby reducing overall productivity, undermining personal and collective creativity and sabotaging organisational innovation.

Other symptoms of these cultures include: a tendency to hide behind thousands of PowerPoint slides; a fear of sharing work-in-progress and of being challenged; a feeling that it is unsafe to speak up or give and receive candid feedback; and a disjointed approach to decision making that generates significant and unintended negative consequences. Then these cultures wonder why they are not engine rooms of innovation.

### **Moments that move us**

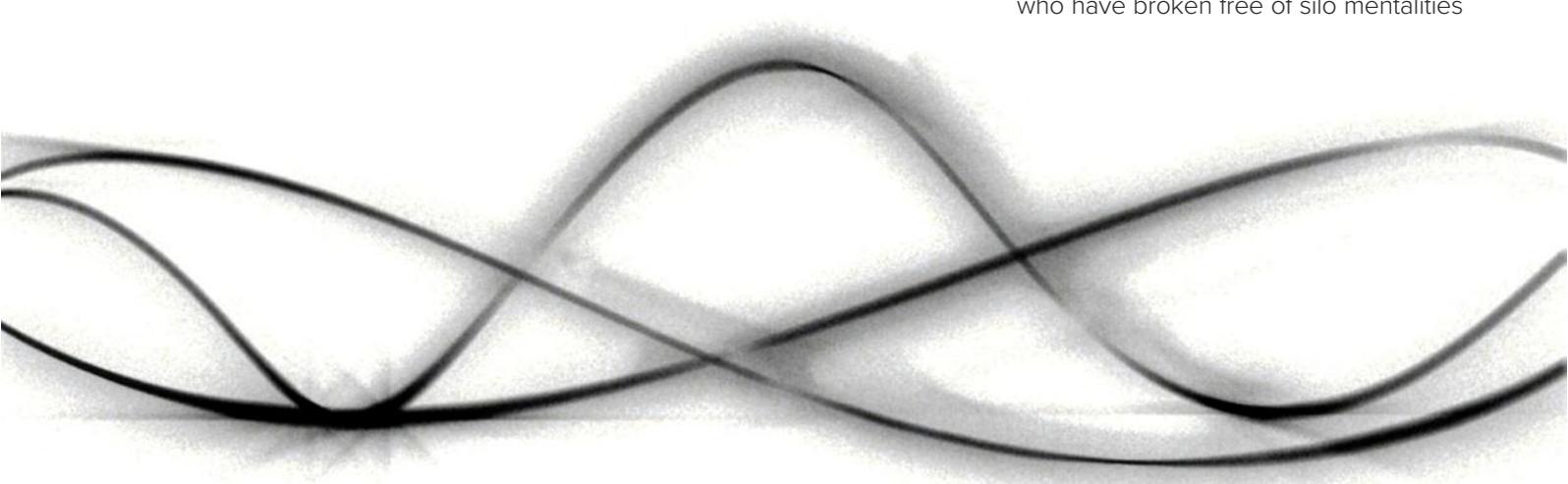
The ultimate tragedy here is how the push for high-performance undermines any chance of reaching peak-performance, and of unleashing new levels of productivity and creativity.

Peak performance is not about relentlessly pushing. Rather, it is about optimising the conditions for breakthrough – those sublime moments that irreversibly shift our thinking, move us forward, bind us collectively, and release the energy needed to create new movement – and then knowing how to recover and go again.

Tuning into and shaping the moment is a core skill of advanced organisational cultures, because in peak-performance the moment is always full of both power and danger.

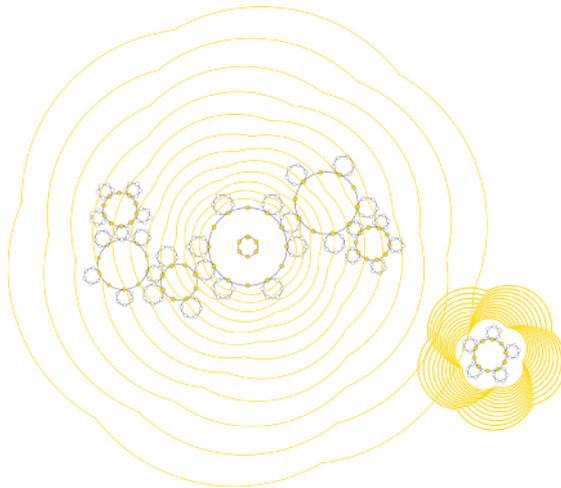
In these cultures, individuals and teams have honed the way they work and interact in the moment. They know that when they deepen their listening, use their voice, give candid feedback, disclose, appreciate others, value difference, step into the unknown, see pattern and catch the fragile glimpses of 'the new' – that these moments energetically move us and transform us, such that we change, the way we think changes, and we can only now move forward.

These skills, or more accurately micro-skills, are also essential for organisations who have broken free of silo mentalities



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and complex matrices, and are pioneering more eco-system approaches to work and innovation.



For leadership in these new organising forms is all about working at creative intersection, where there is no positional power to fall back on. So all you have is your ability to stand still, know who you are, and be fully present.

Being in the moment, from moment to moment is bloody difficult. It requires focus, skill, discipline and effort. It also requires us to work with congruence, authenticity and discipline, so we can manage our own and other people's energy, and in turn be able to embrace uncertainty and step into the unknown.

Of course, it is easier to be thinking about what next or what came before. It is easier to avoid difficult conversations. It is easier to hide our vulnerabilities. It is easier to withhold and not say something. It is easier to hold on tight to what we already know. It is easier to get 'busy' doing what we've always done before.

But the costs of taking the easy option, and of not working in the moment, are massive.

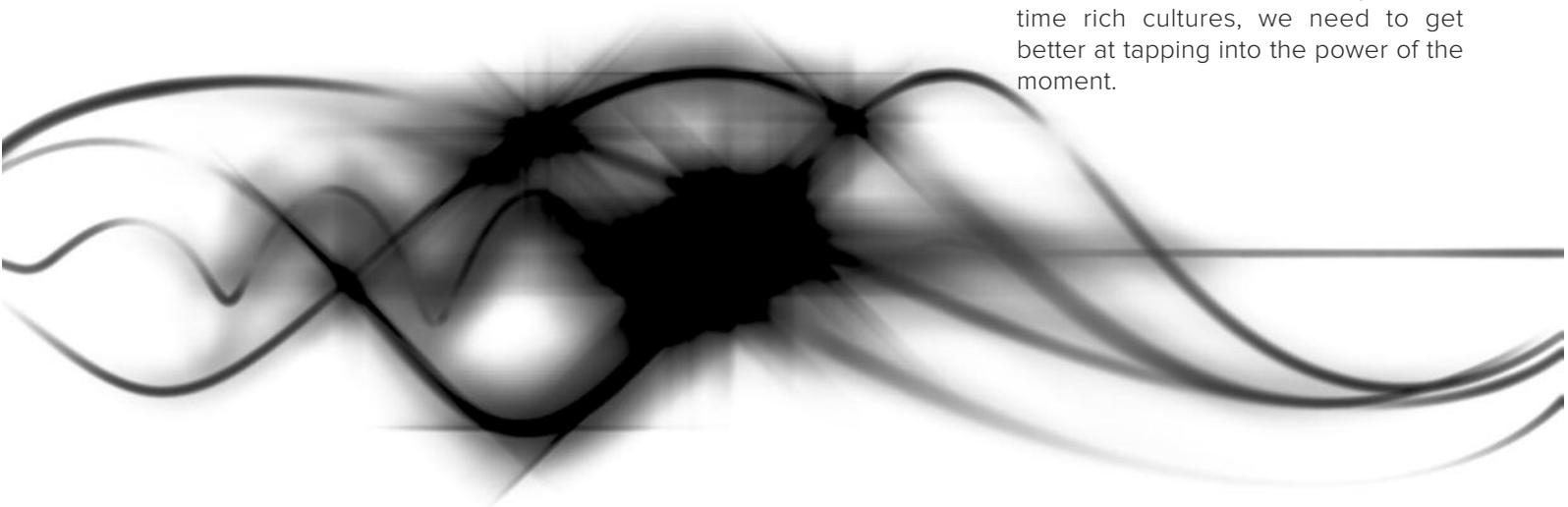
For example, in an organisational context, cultures quickly become ego-centric – with internal competition, not collaboration, the norm. Interactions become transactional, and relationships pseudo and inauthentic. Meetings become nothing more than the ping pong of opinion, and conversations circular. And, work becomes workman-like, and everyone time poor.

Ultimately the frequency at which we operate diminishes, and the 'hum' of peak performance and meaningful work drops away. We then somehow come to accept mediocrity as the norm, because we are unable to see another way.

### **Tapping into the power of the moment**

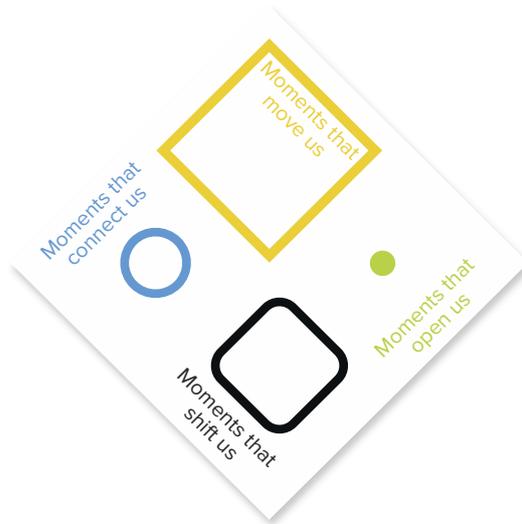
The secret to breaking free is to learn to work more effectively in the moment.

If we can't work any harder or longer, we need to learn to work differently. And, if we want to build more strategic, collaborative, authentic, elegant and time rich cultures, we need to get better at tapping into the power of the moment.



The secret to breaking free of these cultures is to learn to work more effectively in the moment.

To do this we need to introduce and embed micro-skills across our organisations that continuously open us to new possibilities, build creative relationships with others, hold us in the unknown long enough for new insights to emerge, and ultimately catalyse new patterns of collective thought that lead us to new patterns of collective, elegant action.



Micro-skills are beautifully simple and practical; but they also take a life-time to master.

When micro-skills are used with the right intent, energy and skill, and in different and creative combinations, they can significantly increase the frequency of breakthrough moments that move us, and that feed and fuel peak performance. When we scale these micro-skills across organisations, they enable them to move from ego to endeavour cultures, from transactional to relational cultures, from defensive to creative cultures, and from fragmented to integrating cultures.

This has to be one of the most highly geared ways of taking a culture to new and next levels of productivity and performance.

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This is the third of the hidden series of **nowhere** articles by Dr Nick Udall.

#### About nowhere

Since the mid nineties, **nowhere** has been working behind the scenes and at the highest levels, with multi-national companies all over the world, tuning the creative frequency at which their cultures operate.

Our 'practice' is born from a unique blend of insight traditions, creative and organisational disciplines and doctoral research, and has over twenty years of development and refinement with some of the biggest brands and inspiring leaders.

It enables us to work in creative partnership with our clients & partners to:

1. **design, catalyse and choreograph breakthroughs** – including breakthrough teams & meetings, strategies & innovations, cultures & journeys.
2. **transform the way they work** so they can breakthrough the cultural ceiling that many organisations all over the world are hitting up against ie. thinking that doing more of the same, but a little bit better, is good enough (it's not), or thinking you can work harder and longer hours (you can't). The challenge is to think, relate, learn and organise differently.

#### About Dr Nick Udall

Dr Nick Udall is a co-founder and the CEO of **nowhere**, and was a co-founder and the former Chair of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on New Models of Leadership.

Since the age of 23 Nick has been working with executive leaders of global corporations, choreographing transformation journeys, and designing and catalysing breakthrough strategies and innovations. He also gives evocative talks at different events around the world.