What's New Summer 2026

Living in an AI World

The Tate Britain 1920 painting by Christopher Nevinson is entitled *Soul of a Soulless City*. Spellbound by New York City initially, the artist soon became disillusioned.

Heading into the unknown at helter-skelter speed invoked anxiety or excitement, or even both. What did an uncertain future hold for citizens in the metropolis and world too?

A century later, propelled at bewildering speed into a new era of AI, stark choices face us – pioneering use or passive recipient? AI is a game-changer – if we think strategically. Much like failed IT systems, beware pitfalls if seduced by the awesome power of AI, believing it is the holy grail.

"The first rule of any technology in business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency." Bill Gates adds a sting in the tail. "The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency."

Thinking in Three Dimensions

Valknut is a Norse symbol that features three interlocking triangles. In this depiction, the first triangle is concept design – the idea, plan and methodology. The second is a prototype, fleshing out the idea to make it workable. The third is the system itself – the triangular link between the enterprise, suppliers and customers. Much like a golden thread in business, all seamlessly interconnect.

On my MBA programme, case studies led by the course director were analysed to see why wheels had come off and to explore options, albeit in hindsight. In his absence on long term sick leave I happily facilitated discussion. An early question was: what business are we in? This is not always obvious. Take cycle manufacture that, excuse the pun, has experienced many revolutions.

So it is with separate careers heading up Social Services finance and then operations, before forming my own consultancy. The focus was organization development linked to business strategy – relative also to seismic changes in technology, lifestyles, and customer expectations. The common theme in all my roles was concept design. This meant creative and fresh ideas and being prepared to do things differently.

Morph to today. Care of elderly people in the community has changed little in a third of a century! Why? The answer is insular thinking. That is not a criticism, rather an opportunity to rethink from scratch. Yes, we need to harness digital technology and AI more – once a framework is clear. Micro social enterprise teams are an example, enriching jobs, careers, personal & team motivation – and quality of life for clients.

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Opportunity Value

Throughout business life I have struggled with the term opportunity cost rather than opportunity value. Harvard Business School define this as the value (not cost) of the next best alternative given up to make a particular choice.

Don't dwell on cost. Focus on value. In a coaching session the benefits were starkly outlined. Maximise time spent on creative design as this generates real value. The yield is greater and profitability by freeing up precious time. Routine tasks can be offloaded, using coaching to ensure quality standards permeate the enterprise.

Opportunity value means optimal use of time. Much like capacity fill in hotel room use, once that day or week has gone it has gone forever. Time is the most perishable of all commodities: can't be stored, recovered or recycled. Time ticks away whether we use it creatively and productively, waste it or, worse still, undervalue it.

Project Driven Metrics

The theme of a Harvard Business Review article earlier this year is transformative metrics in the context of organizational transformation. The emphasis is strategic change - from innovative digital products and AI to the redesign of supply chains. Value creation transforms outcomes is the mantra.

Traditional and Project-Driven KPIs

Traditional (Stability Focused)	Project-Driven (Future-Focused)
Productivity rate Are people maximally utliized & busy?	**Team Dedication Rate** Are key people focused on high impact work?
Cost efficiency Do we control costs and reduce spend?	**Benefit Realization Rate** Do we achieve value from design to delivery?
Operational throughput How much do we produce to compete?	**Time to impact** How fast do we deliver meaningful outcomes?
Budget adherence Do we stick to the financial plan?	**Strategic alignment index** How well does it contribute to strategic value?
Hours logged How much time & effort is recorded?	**Decision velocity** How fast are decisions made and acted upon?
Annual engagement score Are employees generally satisfied?	**Psychological safety score (real time)** Can teams raise red flags and innovate safely?

The author, Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez, suggests a scorecard to track 4 dimensions: value, speed, alignment and team health. It is a good start and makes sense.

enjoy summer – stay cool

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