

Inner  Compass

EYE OF THE STORM

How leaders and teams stay centred in
times of volatile change

Zoë Routh

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OPPORTUNITY ABOUNDS - DO YOU WANT TO CAPITALISE ON IT?

There is nothing more exciting in business than opportunity, except perhaps leveraging it for outstanding results.

There's one small problem. Opportunity means change, and change can energise. Or it can freak people out.

There are three major forces at work that create change resistance:

FORCE 1. DENIAL AND THE OSTRICH.

Either the leader and/or their team deny there is a need for change. Everything has been going swimmingly, why fix what ain't broke, and other maxims keep heads in the sand and derrieres quite exposed.

The fear of change is so great that all sorts of excuses and stories are invented to defend the status quo. Until it's too late. Then the blame game starts.

FORCE 2. ERUPTION OF TURF WARS.

Change is often viewed as a threat. Subtle and gripping fears seize the wary: 'what will happen to my project? Will there be a job for me in this brave new world? How will I fit in to the new structure? Will I like my new boss/team members? Will I lose seniority or status or title or pay?' And so the teeth get bared, the growling starts, and the battle to maintain relevance begins.

FORCE 3. CHANGE FATIGUE.

'Been there, done that. We tried it last year. That won't work because...' Crossed arms, glazed stares. It's enough to make you want to gag them with a sandwich and slap them with a halibut.

Critics are often just worn out. They know the energy required to initiate something new, and after trying, and trying again. frankly they don't give a damn.



**THE TRUTH IS MOST OF US
ENJOY CHANGE,
*IF IT'S DONE WELL.***

THERE'S THE RUB.
LET'S GET THE 'DONE WELL' PART ON THE TABLE.



Figure 1: Highlights impact of change response over time on business resilience - survivability, sustainability, and profitability

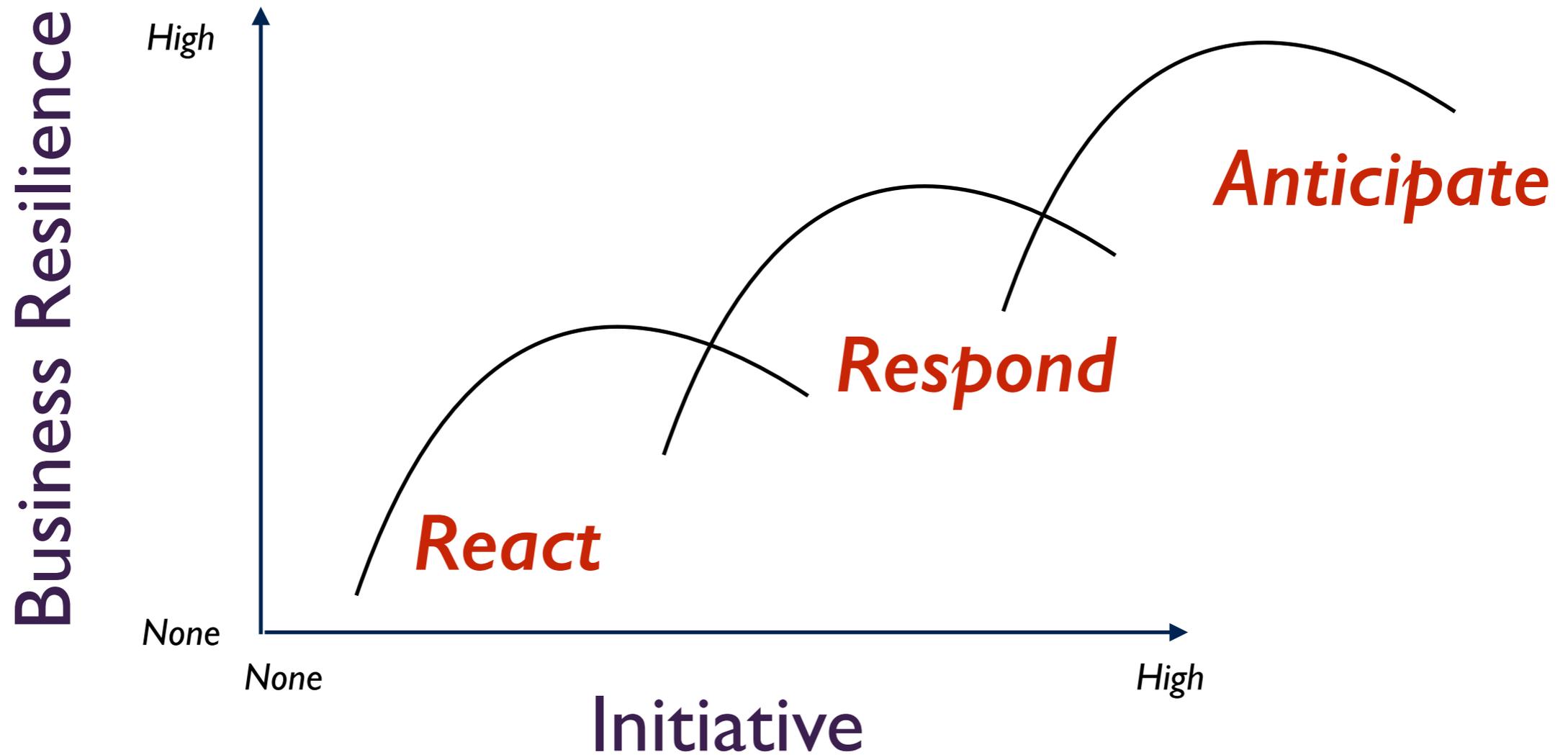
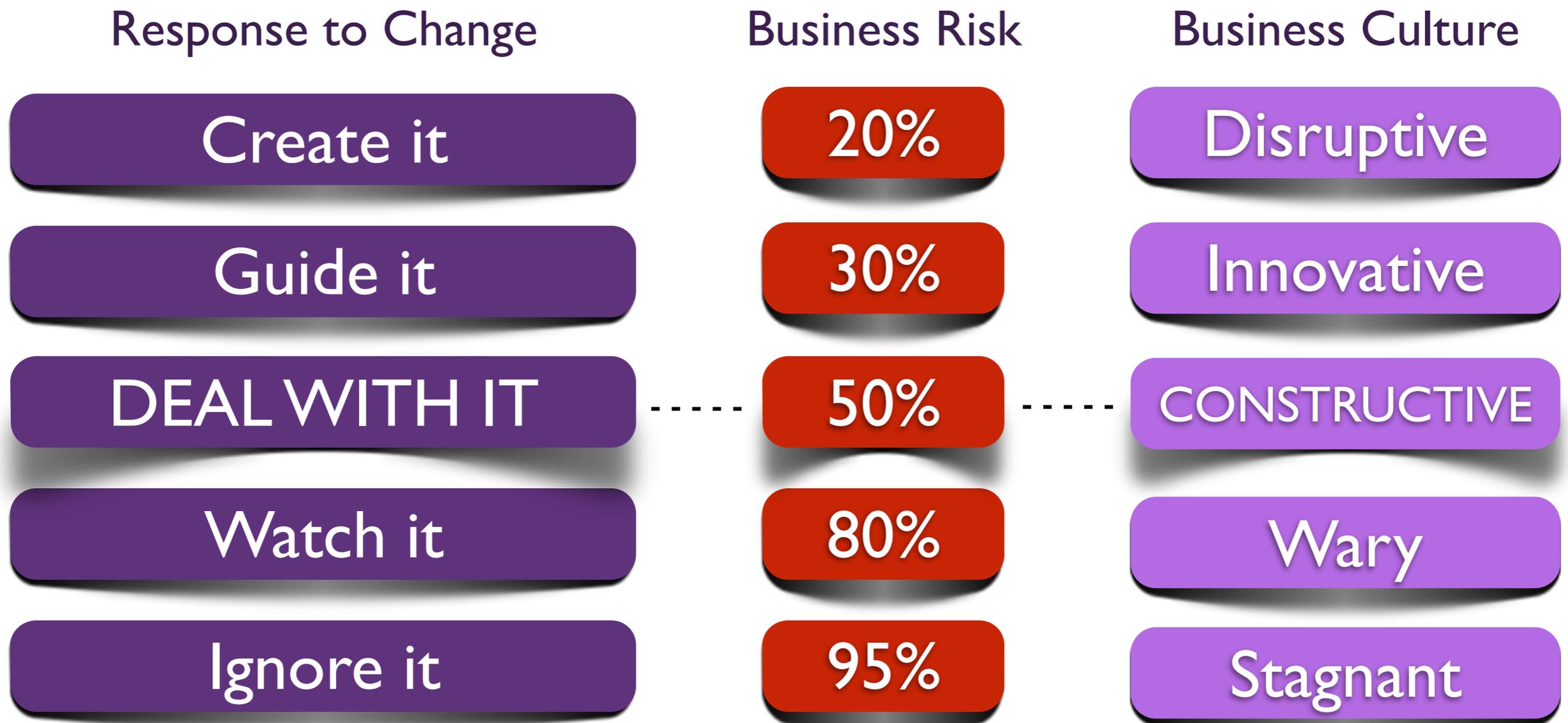




Figure 2: These are the key responses to change, the business culture that it reflects, and impact on business risk.





Being able to create significant change - the kind that changes the world forever - is a rare bird. The advent of the mobile phone was one such huge impact. It has literally transformed the way we work, engage, and connect across the entire planet. And it's a dicey game to play on that leading edge. However, the payoff is huge, as Apple might report. Most businesses would be happy with a 50% reduction on business risk by dealing with change as it occurs. However it is possible to guide change and reap even more benefits.

**Change is like a river all around us - ever flowing and constant.
Responses to change are much like how we might engage with that river.**

Some sit on a rock in the river and wonder how they might get to the bank. Some sit on a rock and just watch the water flow past. Others get in the current and go with the flow, dealing with whatever comes up. Some grab a boat, and steer their way through the current, avoiding big ledges and holes, and enjoying the ride through the rapids. Those who create the change in the river are either engineers or God.

Let's look at each of the stages to see where we're placed.

STAGE 1: IGNORE IT.

Spencer Johnson wrote of this phenomenon in the fable "Who Moved My Cheese?" In the story there is one lone soul who tries gallantly to enlighten the others about the need for change. In a stagnant work culture, where momentum for anything is like a slug anchored to an anvil, efforts can be wasted and risk to the business is enormous.

STAGE 2: WATCH IT.

This is the wait and see crowd, the laggards, the ones who think that every new innovation is 'just a fad.' The good news is that there is some awareness of the need for change, and that change is indeed happening. Reacting to change is common, and the effect is unsettling for all.



STAGE 3: DEAL WITH IT.

These are the business cultures that buckle down and get on with it. They don't waste too much time bemoaning the past, lamenting the lost cause. Folks are largely constructive in their approach, solution-oriented, and robust in their discussions about what to do.

This kind of organisation is a bit more nimble, however there is still an enormous amount of energy required to turn the boat mid-stream. It can be exhausting.

STAGE 4: GUIDE IT.

In these types of organisations, a fair amount of work is done to be mindful of trends, to be on the forefoot looking for opportunities and threats in the environment, and proactively seeking solutions or new directions before they are foisted on the business due to circumstances.

These are the organisations that have the diligence to get their heads above water, out of the reeds, and take a look at what is happening beyond the end of their collective noses. It takes discipline and rigour to do this kind of work. These are the truly centred leaders and teams. They can stay in the eye of the storm, and move with it. There is a sense of momentum and drive in these kinds of businesses.

STAGE 5: CREATE IT.

These are the disruptors, the game changers. They turn business models and industries on their head. They eat change for breakfast. They're not in the eye of the storm, they cause the storm. There is a different kind of energy at play here: creative and destructive, volatile and emergent. Definitely no drag though!

There's a great article on disruptors here: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/carolinehoward/2013/03/27/you-say-innovator-i-say-disruptor-whats-the-difference/>

*** SO HOW DO YOU MOVE FROM DRAG TO DRIVE? HOW DO YOU DEVELOP CHANGE AGILITY? ***



THERE ARE THREE INFLECTION POINTS FOR CHANGE AGILITY:

1. FOREFOOT LEADERSHIP
2. NIMBLE TEAMS
3. PROJECTS THAT MATTER

How Teams And Leaders Stay Centred



To stay centred in times of volatile change, leaders and teams need agility, foresight and projects that matter. This creates growth, innovation and expansion - the stuff that keeps leaders and teams centred, moving with the eye of the storm rather than getting uprooted by it.

	Self	Others	Landscape
Projects	7. Meaningful	8. Collaborative	9. Needed
Teams	4. Portfolio Skills	5. Dynamics Diagnostics	6. Change Literacy
Leader	1. Presence	2. Truth Telling	3. Foresight



Let's look at each of these inflection points in turn.

	Self	Others	Landscape
Leader	1. Presence	2. Truth Telling	3. Foresight

1. PRESENCE

How the leader shows up and engages creates the atmosphere for team engagement and performance. Centred leaders make their own self management, their own mindset, their values and perspective key parts of their personal discipline and responsibility. The leader is not everything in team performance, but they are something, and something influential.

2. TRUTH TELLING

Truth telling takes two forms: Centred leaders own the truth, and are considered when sharing their own personal truth.

Owning the truth: They take responsibility for their mistakes and openly discuss them with their colleagues - to reassure others that it is ok to fail - as long as the team learns from it.

Sharing personal truths: Centred leaders know that their truth - their perspective - is one of many. They seek out other perspectives before synthesising and expressing one better truth, for that time, for that context.

3. FORESIGHT

This is not crystal-ball gazing. This is being on the forefoot by knowing trends in the industry, market, and environment that affect the business landscape, on a local to global scale. It's not just knowing the trends, but having the centred presence to reflect on it and ask, "how does this affect us and what might we do about it?"



Blessed art thou, the nimble and synergistic team! It does not happen in isolation, in a spontaneous emergence. It takes cultivation. Here are some of the elements of creating synergistic, nimble teams.

	Self	Others	Landscape
Teams	4. Portfolio Skills	5. Dynamics Diagnostics	6. Change Literacy

4. PORTFOLIO SKILLS

Gone are the days of the mono-focused expert in times of volatile change. However, expertise is still incredibly important. Even more so is the ability to work across expertise areas. It's not quite the Renaissance Man's mastery of all arts, but more like the 'a few strings to the bow'. This will allow for teams to dance across projects and priorities without being stuck with a skills deficit.

5. DYNAMICS DIAGNOSTICS

Team dynamics will make or break a project or organisation. Sadly, many leaders leave this to chance. It's not enough to say, "We've got a good group of people." Even good groups of people can run afoul of one another if they are not managed well, relationships nurtured, culture developed. This needs deliberate and focused attention. As Peter Drucker says, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." At the epicentre of culture is team dynamics. When teams understand their own dynamics and can manage this proactively, issues are cut by half.

6. CHANGE LITERACY

When teams and individuals move beyond worrying about their own place and position, stewardship of the organisation's mission is possible. They will hold fast to the mast of purpose through any wild storm. They need to be prepared for it however. Sailors on the tide of change need to know what to expect: the emotions of change, how to deal with patterns of resistance, and how to communicate change initiatives. These are the change navigator's skills in staying centred in the eye of the storm.



Blessed art thou, the nimble and synergistic team! It does not happen in isolation, in a spontaneous emergence. It takes cultivation. Here are some of the elements of creating synergistic, nimble teams.

	Self	Others	Landscape
Projects	7. Meaningful	8. Collaborative	9. Needed

7. MEANINGFUL

In his book, “The New Rules of Management”, Peter Cook says, “Implementing projects that matter is the best way to do good work, to have the team engaged and fulfilled, and to achieve best results. And this is the management imperative of the 21st century.” A project-based approach to work will keep everyone energised and focused for shorter lengths of time. It is much easier to get enthusiastic about a 90-day project than a five year plod. A project-based approach will also keep an organisation responsive and flexible as the landscape and conditions shift.

8. COLLABORATIVE

There is no wild ‘eureka’ moment alone. Discoveries in this connected environment are going to be from a collaborative space. As Janine Garner says, author of “From Me to We”, “Commercial collaboration means we are smarter together, we move quicker together and given the increasing complexity of the world we are all living and working within, the inherent diversity that does exist needs more than one of us to find the solution. In fact, the new competitive advantage is the difference of opinion, the collective intelligence this creates, and the ideation that results.”

9. NEEDED

How many brilliant ideas flopped because they failed to hit the right note? Were they needed? Were they practical? Here's one of my favourites:



A face mask designed for use in snow storms



Leader	Teams	Projects
<p>Personal agenda overrides organisational agenda</p> <p>Rear view mirror vision keeps leader blind from opportunities and dangers</p> <p>Leader is landscape illiterate: they cannot see trends, dangers or opportunities</p> <p>They are ego-driven and collaboratively impaired</p> <p>The leader has a saviour complex and self-sacrifices, leading to burnout</p> <p>The leader has an uninspiring presence and broadcasts anxiety, stress, despair, angst</p>	<p>Lone wolves abound - it's every hound for themselves</p> <p>Tall poppies are routinely guillotined</p> <p>Experts are so entrenched in their worldview and so certain they are right they have meter-wide tunnel vision</p> <p>Teams are hamstrung and bogged down by bureaucracy, hierarchy, and tradition</p> <p>Below the line culture: there is no imperative for honesty</p> <p>No sense of progress</p> <p>No sense of meaning and contribution</p>	<p>Progress is not visible</p> <p>Project is not linked to organisation vision, values, or mission</p> <p>Project is broad, vague, and too aspirational in scope, or not aspirational enough</p> <p>Stakeholders have not been consulted</p> <p>Customers have not been consulted</p> <p>The brochure has been designed at great expense before trialling the project with potential/actual clients</p> <p>The value proposition is not clear</p>



**HOW CENTRED IS YOUR TEAM,
LEADER AND ORGANISATION?
ARE YOU IN THE EYE OF THE
STORM, OR BEING FLUNG TO
THE SIDE?**

AND WHAT WILL YOU CHOOSE INSTEAD?

About Zoë Routh

CENTRED LEADERSHIP EXPERT AND CORPORATE ADVENTURIST

Zoë Routh is a leadership expert who has worked with individuals and teams internationally and in Australia since 1987. She is passionate about helping leaders and teams thrive together, especially through times of volatile change. She believes that connectivity in teams, combined with change literacy, will create business resilience.

Zoë hails from Canada and began her career working with people by leading canoe trips in Northwest Ontario. She moved to Australia in 1996 to work with Outward Bound - facilitating personal and leadership development programs in the outdoors. As Program Manager at the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, she designed, developed and delivered national leadership programs for various industry sectors facing significant change - wine, rice, and mining communities. Her past leadership roles include Chair of the Outdoor Council of Australia and President of the Chamber of Women in Business.

Zoë is an outdoor adventurer and enjoys telemark skiing, has run 6 marathons, is a one-time belly-dancer, and loves hiking in the high country. She is married to a gorgeous Aussie and is mother to 6 garden-wrecking chooks.

Zoë has a number of different programs to support leaders and teams with their change agility. Contact us here for more information:



Zoë Routh

M: 0416 177 073

P: +61 6162 0554

E: zoe@innercompass.com.au

PO Box 5194 Lyneham

ACT 2602 AUSTRALIA

Connect with Zoë on:



A Word From Clients

TESTIMONIALS

“The Change and Corporate Culture Workshop was right on the mark: fun, engaging and gave our staff specific tips on how to approach and deal with change. I would highly recommend Zoë as a presenter and facilitator.”

- *Juliette Ford, Director, Farrar Gesini Dunn*

"I have worked with Zoë first at the TRAILblazers course at the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and then as a coach. I have found both her coaching and resources, which have a whole of person approach, extremely helpful.”

- *Professor Andy Vann, Vice Chancellor, Charles Sturt University*

“Zoë is my 'go to' person whenever I need some leadership direction. Zoë has coached and guided me through personal and business challenges. She uses her caring nature to guide with intuition and understanding in a non judgmental way. I always feel totally safe confiding in Zoë, as I trust her. Her leadership skills have really assisted my confidence and my ability to lead my own team.”

- *Claire Connelly, Owner of Papercut Pty Ltd*

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