



Dr Alan Watkins: company chiefs need to find smarter ways to deal with the increasing demands of the business world

Looking to the future of business

New skills could help business leaders access the previously untapped powers of the human mind, writes Gareth Naughton

The clever use of neuroscience in the boardroom could help business leaders to tap into their hidden potential, according to Dr Alan Watkins, author of *Brilliant Leadership*. As businesses become more complex and sophisticated than ever before, the pressures on those at the top have never been greater. Company chiefs need to find smarter ways to deal with the increased volatility, uncertainty and complexities presented by the modern business environment. "Despite what people say, human beings are capable of so much more than they re-

alise. The speed of the brain and the mind, and what the human mind is capable of doing, compared to the level that most are operating at, is dramatically different," said Watkins. "We try to bring that evidence to the boardroom and give them some straightforward techniques and things that they can do to unlock that untapped potential, because if you do not unlock that, you are just going to get overwhelmed by the pressure and the complexities." Watkins, who will be in Dublin this week to speak at a PricewaterhouseCoopers employee event, said that with the full scope of human knowledge doubling every 13

months, the pressure on executives was intensifying. "It is getting faster and faster and more and more complicated, so even these really smart guys who are generally very tough and resilient – because they have had to be to get themselves to the top of the tree – are, through no fault of their own, in over their heads," he said. Watkins said that without the skills to unlock their hidden potential, executives would be unequipped to deal with increasingly complex challenges. "What is really required now is an upgrade of the human operating system," he said. "Gone are the days where we can learn a few skills, go on a course and get a bit more knowledgeable. That is like adding a few more apps to help us cope, but that will not cut it anymore, it is not enough. "You have to upgrade the human operating system by unlocking all of that additional potential. It is something that we call vertical development, not just horizontal learning.

You have to upgrade the human operating system by unlocking all of that additional potential

Step change of human capability vertically." As adults, we tend to think of ourselves as fully developed, but Watkins maintains that we stopped developing at 14 when we learned to function in adult situations. That carries on into business. "An awful lot of what you see in the boardroom – tantrums and toys being thrown out of the pram and all that kind of stuff – is because these people may be 50 on the outside, but on the inside they are still 14," he said. There are a number of lines of vertical development, according to Watkins, but his Dublin talk will focus on value systems. There are eight value systems, starting with primitive – which is survival mode – and evolving from there. "A lot of the tensions that exist within any system, whether it is within an individual executive team or, frankly, between nations, are not clashes of personality, they are clashes of values systems. One executive's values differ significantly from another executive's and they mistakenly call this a personality clash," he said. The most common value system seen in business is the third level – or the red leader. This is the person who evolves from the second tribal stage – where people come together for collective survival without a leader – to grab the reins. "A lot of businesses are run by red leaders who tend to be autocratic, driven, charismatic, incredibly passionate individuals. Fantastic to go for a beer with, life and soul of the party, but on the downside, it is their way or the highway," said Watkins. "You are either with them or against them. They are polarising. The next level of evolution is that the collective gang together to curb the excesses of the red leader and start to put rules and regulations in place so a bureaucracy forms, that is how it evolves." The secret is to recognise which level you are at and work out an effective strategy for progressing to the next. For more information see coherence-book.com

Money stress sick leave costs Ireland €2.1bn

BY GARETH NAUGHTON



Liam Croke: founder, My-Money

Irish employees are spending up to 12 hours at work every month worrying about their personal finances and one-in-ten in financial distress are calling in sick as a result. The overall cost to Irish business is estimated at €2.1 billion, according to research carried out by consultants Amárach on behalf of My-Money, a new online resource for employers who want to help their staff manage their finances better. The key to my-money.ie is that it offers impartial advice designed to maximise the employee's financial health, rather than push products with commission in mind, according to founder Liam Croke. "If employers were going to provide a service like that and open it up to a salesperson, I would say to them not to bother because you are opening up your employee list to someone who is just going to get as much business for them as they can," said Croke. "We are regulated by the Central Bank, but how we earn our income is from the employer paying us, we do not transact any business. We tell people what they should be doing and we want people to take action. We didn't want to populate the site with fantastic information, but leaving the employee saying 'Okay, but how do I apply it to myself?'" Many employers take a hands-off approach when it comes to their employees' financial life, but Croke believes that My-Money's Amárach research makes a strong business case for taking a more active interest. The nationwide poll found that 91 per cent of employees are in financial stress and 68 per cent have debt that threatens to overwhelm them. Some 8 per cent reported losing sleep every night over their financial troubles and said that their difficulties were affecting their work greatly. In fact, 58 per cent of those with financial stress said that it was having an impact on their working life and 9 per cent had called in sick as a result. The research concluded that financially stressed ab-

senteism cost the economy €850,000 daily. In addition, employees spend an average of 37 minutes every day preoccupied with their own financial issues while at work. Companies are doing themselves a disservice by ignoring the financial health of their employees, according to Croke. "When we asked the employers: 'Who is teaching your employees about money?' a lot of them said, 'We don't know and why should we care?'. There is an impact in terms of loss of productivity, absenteeism rates, employee commitment to their place of work, turnover and HR distractions. The actual cost to a company, whether they know it or not, is enormous," he said. The aim of My-Money is to provide employees with bespoke, independent financial advice to help them to save money or improve their finances in the longer term. The service operates as a secure, confidential online portal. The only information the employer receives from My-Money is the number of staff using the service. There are various tools on the site designed to help users get a grip on their finances and they can also seek individual financial advice. It is not just for people in financial distress, the aim is to enable all employees to better manage their finances. According to Croke, My-Money's cost-saving impact can be immediate. He said he had recently been contacted by one My-Money user who had discovered, when using the service, that they were spending €115 a month on an unnecessarily expensive life assurance policy, when they need only be paying €10. For more information, visit my-money.ie

People Problems Relationship breakdown



Gerald Flynn

Most reasonably organised companies have an employee handbook that outlines the main policies and procedures affecting employees. This can be key to reinforcing the organisation's culture and standards, but some managers view it merely as a catch-all document for ensuring staff compliance. Unfortunately, as JH Heinz Frozen and Chilled Foods in

Dundalk found out recently, a company handbook can come back to bite you if you do not abide by its detailed procedures. Robert Martin, a machine maintenance cleaner with the company, fell onto a metal floor while at work in October 2008, injuring his back. He was unable to continue his night work which included stripping down, cleaning and reassembling production machines, and remained off work for seven months. Following repeated meetings with Heinz's human resources people, Martin returned to work in May 2009, undertaking light duties. In September, he became unwell again and produced a doctor's certificate when off work for

four weeks. When he returned, he sought day-time shifts but, two days later, opted to return to night-work. In May 2010, Hunt made a formal complaint alleging that he was being bullied. Heinz management investigated the claim, but in July, Martin went on sick leave again. When Heinz's HR manager sought medical reports from Martin's general practitioner, the request was refused. The company subsequently referred Martin to its own occupational physician. Around the same time, it became known that Martin was refereeing football matches and Heinz's production manager told him that "if he could referee football matches, he

could return to work". Management at the company also had a report on Martin's visit to their occupational health doctor. This is where things went array. Heinz's production manager was not really qualified to assess Martin's health status and the occupational health report had been written by Heinz's company nurse and not by the doctor who actually carried out the assessment. Martin was called to a meeting on September 24, 2010, and four days later received a letter telling him he was being sacked due to his continued absence, the absence of a return-to-work date, his refusal to provide medical reports, his continued paid refereeing and his unsubstantiated allegation

of bullying against a supervisor. At the Employment Appeals Tribunal, Heinz's company doctor said Martin was suffering from depression related to his bullying complaint and the doctor was unable to indicate when he would be fit to return to work. The management said it had fully investigated the bullying allegations, but could not substantiate them. Crucially, they admitted that there had not been a written conclusion to their investigation and that Martin had not been informed of the outcome. The tribunal found that Heinz had failed to observe the procedures detailed in its own company handbook and had failed to warn Martin that the meetings he had been

asked to attend were investigatory and could result in disciplinary sanctions. Martin's allegations against his supervisor were without malice, and so it was found that he should not be disciplined just because the management failed to find enough evidence to prove his complaints. His refereeing may or may not have assisted his recovery. Heinz was ordered to re-employ Martin from November 2013 as he had been fit enough to return to his job in the Dundalk plant since July 2012. Gerald Flynn is an employment specialist with Align Management Solutions in Dublin gfflynn@alignmanagement.net

Movers & Shakers

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Communicorp Group has appointed a new non-executive director. Ronan Harris has been vice-president of large customer sales for Google EMEA for the past 16 months. He has been on the board of Google Ireland since April 2009.



Ian Butler is Trilogy Technologies new technical services director. Butler joined the company four years ago in the role of technical services manager. He was formerly technical services manager with Datapac for nine years.

Working Week

Mark Reynolds is director of development, residential and asset management at estate agency Savills Ireland, and a member of the company's executive management board. Reynolds joined the company 15 years ago, and now manages a team of 65 people.

What are the main responsibilities of your job? I manage four business units. I am involved in business development for the company in its entirety, and I have been personally involved in some of our larger property transactions.

What motivates you in your job? I am passionate about the pitching process, winning new business and securing big deals. In recent years, I

have become more involved in management, and I derive a real sense of satisfaction from seeing the business move forward.

I also take a genuine interest in coaching and encouraging the people on my team.

How would you describe your working style? I have a direct, hands-on approach, and I am known for my tenacity and energy. I am also known for going "through the wall" sometimes, rather than around it, but I have tempered this somewhat in recent years.

What is the most valuable professional lesson you have learned? When I started in this business, the then managing director, Ian French, told me



Mark Reynolds of Savills Ireland Picture: Barry Cronin

that you should always hire people who are better than you and who can challenge you. He was right - I've seen

it time and again. **Whose career do you most admire?**

Cooley Distillery founder John Teeling has shown remarkable business acumen in finding new opportunities and turning various businesses around, both in Ireland and abroad.

I had the pleasure of his company at a dinner event two years ago, and he left a lasting impression on me.

What is the most valuable career advice you can offer others? Stay the course. Many times, over the years, I have been tasked with taking over the management of a team or a particular area, in order to turn performance around. Despite the long hours and effort involved, there's a great sense of achievement

in achieving your goal.

In terms of doing business in Ireland, what do you think is the biggest challenge we face?

Tight credit remains the biggest challenge we face in doing business. Lending to private households and non-financial corporations continues to contract, and this creates a challenging environment for all businesses and their customers. In terms of the real estate industry, a scarcity of development finance is curtailing much-needed new office construction.

What is your ultimate professional goal at this point? To become a better people manager, while also refining my communication skills.



Bartley McElroy has been promoted to sales director with enet. McElroy joined the company six-and-a-half years ago as director of corporate development. Before that, he spent four years as director of BT Group's wholesale business for Ireland and the Nordics.



John Boyle has taken up the role of general manager at DX Ireland. Boyle joins from Nightline, where he was Dublin depot manager for ten months. Before that, he was regional general manager with Target Express for six years.

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