

DISRUPT FOR GROWTH



*HOW TO IDENTIFY, CULTIVATE, AND
EMBRACE TOMORROW'S EMERGING
LEADERS BASED ON THEIR ABILITY
TO BE DISRUPTIVE*

PAULMcCARTHY
WITH SIMON HAIGH

WHAT'S IN THIS DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION	4
SECTION 1: WHAT IS A DISRUPTIVE LEADER?	6
SECTION 2: WHAT MYTHS DO WE HOLD ABOUT DISRUPTIVE LEADERS?	11
SECTION 3: WHY ORGANIZATIONS NEED DISRUPTIVE LEADERS?	17
SECTION 4: WHAT IS THE ROLE, IMPACT, AND VALUE OF DISRUPTIVE LEADERS?	24
SECTION 5: HOW TO IDENTIFY, CULTIVATE AND EMBRACE DISRUPTIVE LEADERS	35

INTRODUCTION

We will increasingly need a different kind of leader for the future. A new kind of leader who has the required leadership qualities to navigate ongoing disruption.

THE DISRUPTIVE LEADER.

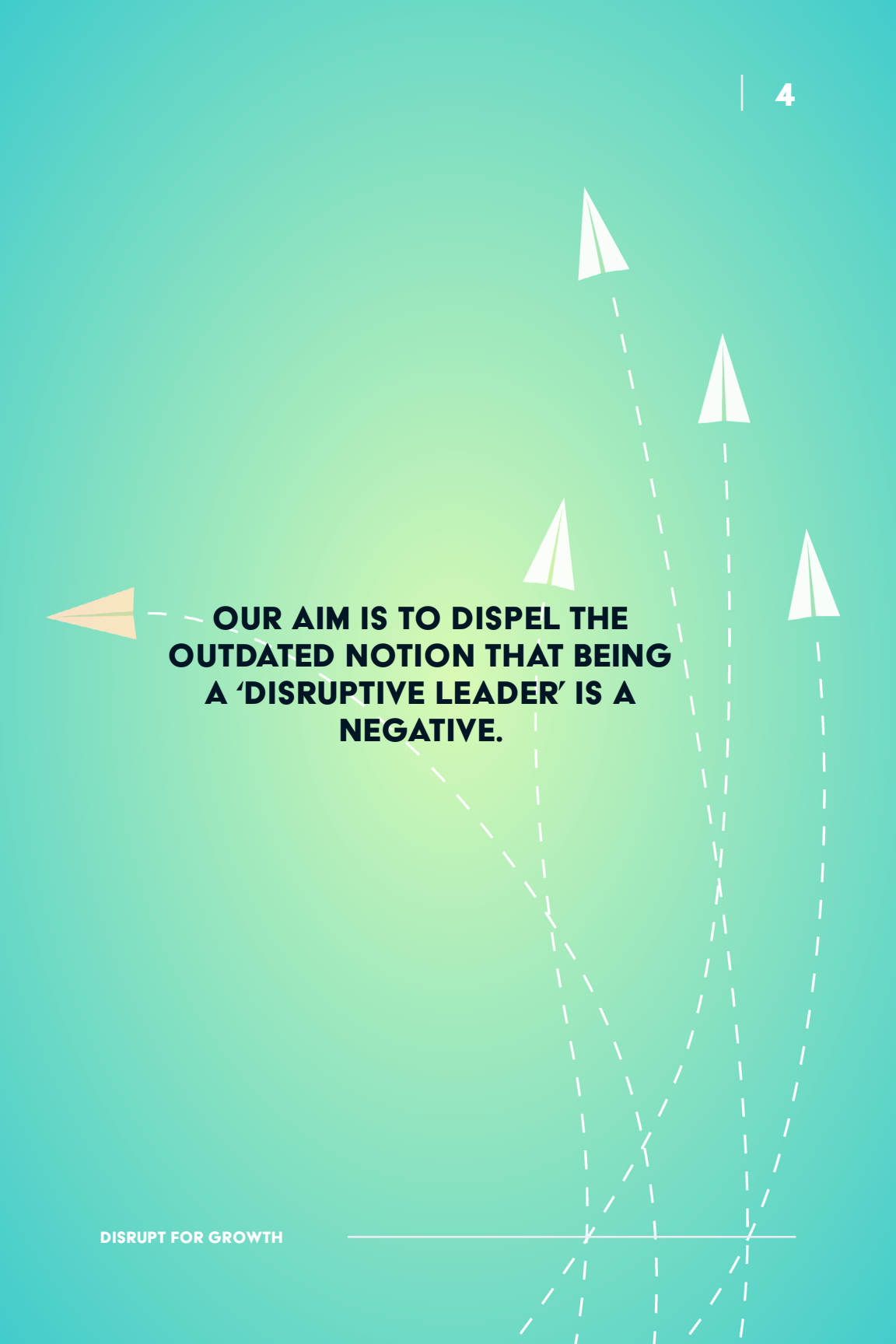
This eBook has been developed to support organizations interested in better understanding what a disruptive leader is as well as serve as a guide for those organizations as they begin to identify, recruit, onboard and develop current and future leaders with disruptive leadership capabilities.

In this eBook we will discuss:

- ✔ What a disruptive leader is and their capabilities
- ✔ Myths surrounding disruptive leaders
- ✔ Why organizations need disruptive leaders
- ✔ The role, impact and value disruptive leaders have in making organizations successful
- ✔ How to identify, cultivate and embrace disruptive leaders

Before we start, let's surface something uncomfortable for a moment, as it prevents us from seeing the true value, impact, and role that disruptive leaders can have on other leaders, peers, their organization, and the wider global economy.

We need to face the issue head on and that is our outdated and conditioned misunderstanding of what being a 'disruptive leader' really means.



**OUR AIM IS TO DISPEL THE
OUTDATED NOTION THAT BEING
A 'DISRUPTIVE LEADER' IS A
NEGATIVE.**

SECTION


01

WHAT IS A DISRUPTIVE LEADER?

People have started asking how to define a 'disruptive leader' and, like all attempts to define what a great leader is, a one size fits all definition is impossible.

From a selection of the global research referenced in this eBook, conversations with other thought leaders as well as observing these kinds of leaders in how they speak, act and how others perceive them, it's clear that disruptive leaders are characterised by several leadership capabilities.

DISRUPTIVE LEADERS:

1. Are purpose driven (not ego driven) and motivated by the bigger picture;
 2. Build trust quickly;
 3. Approach thinking and ideating about challenges in different ways;
 4. Have strategic and tactical drive;
 5. Enhance whatever they are involved in;
 6. Anticipate challenges and trends more often ahead of others;
 7. Can adapt quickly; and
 8. Are decisive.
- 

Leaders like this see opportunities to transform, which is mainly driven by the innate sense of curiosity/inquisitiveness they possess. And yet, often disruptive leaders are marginalized for thinking differently and for being honest (which is counter to the self-interest that drives many 'ego based' leaders in today's organizations).

Thinking differently is one of the core characteristics of disruptive leaders and disruptive leadership potential. It's a key aspect of their attitude. In having the courage to think and act differently, they embrace uncertainty with agility and resilience.

For those seeking an overarching way to define a disruptive leader, here's what being one really means.

“A disruptive leader is a big picture thinker, motivated by a higher purpose and driven to support those around them to guide others as they embrace ongoing transformation.

These kinds of leaders build trust quickly, quickly see opportunities to evolve and create the conditions for others to be heard. They can be easily misunderstood, yet remain focused on the bigger picture”

Imagine the following scene.

You're in a boardroom having a meeting with your leadership peers and your boss. He/She comes up with an idea they consider is flawless and ask for honest feedback from those in the meeting and whether the idea supports the organization with realizing its wider purpose.

Several people around the table do not think the idea is a good one, though publicly do not voice their dissenting perspectives. The disruptive leader does.

Why? They are driven by something bigger (the organization's purpose, not political game playing) and are honest.

Upon providing such requested feedback, the disruptive leader is marginalized by their peers and boss because they 'showed up', 'did what it says on the tin' and 'challenged the status quo' by going against the concept of leadership 'grouphink'.

Outside of the meeting, the disruptive leader's peers will provide their honest feedback, though not to their boss who requested it.

As you read this typical scenario (which we are confident you are nodding your head to as you read because this plagues every boardroom in every organization around the world), ask yourself why the disruptive leader is being marginalized for demonstrating honesty and a belief in the wider purpose.

LEADERS WITH DISRUPTIVE LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES WILL BE THE LEADERS NEEDED FOR CONTINUED INNOVATION AND ARE THE ANTITHESIS OF 'EGO BASED' APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP.



CONSIDER THIS

1. Just pause for a moment – are these the kinds of leaders you'd like to have in your organization?

SECTION

02

**WHAT MYTHS DO
WE HOLD ABOUT
DISRUPTIVE
LEADERS?**

What do you immediately think of when you think of a 'disruptive leader'? Chances are, your initial impression of what a disruptive leader is, is driven by your unconscious or conscious bias.

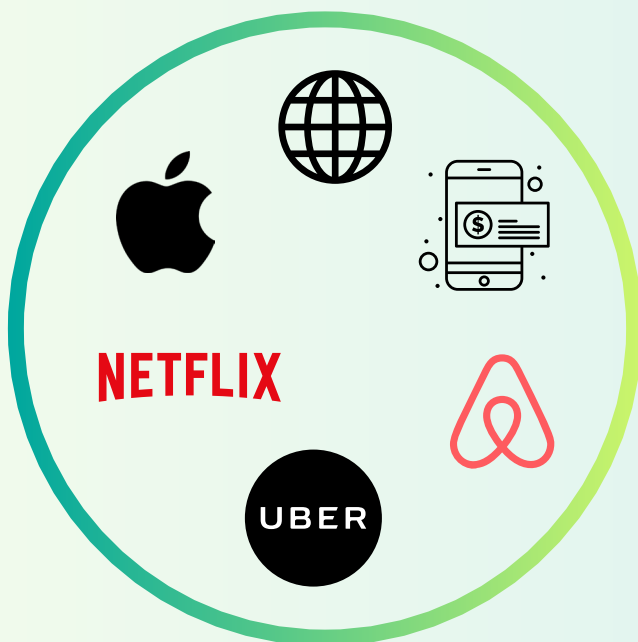


From the outset, if you review the way that 'disruption' is defined in modern day dictionaries or how it is used within conversation, what you'll find is an overwhelming connotation with:

- ➔ Something negative;
- ➔ A disturbance;
- ➔ An upheaval;
- ➔ A change to the 'normal'.

A quick google search will yield millions of similar words to describe the word in this manner.

And yet the irony of these inferred meanings is that major technological, societal, business, cultural innovations would not have occurred without such disruption. Many of these innovations we are now thankful for and can't imagine our lives without.



Simply stated, we initially resist such 'disruption' because it challenges and ultimately changes what we have been used to (the status quo).

Now think of leaders in your organization who do the same.

LEADERS WHO:

- Challenge the status quo by asking too many questions;
- Don't play the political game or refuse to engage in leadership 'groupthink';
- Dig deeper than accepting surface level answers;
- Are driven by an innate curiosity;
- Possess an unwavering courage and persistence to solve a challenge.

THESE KINDS OF LEADERS TEND TO BE SEEN AS:

- Irritating;
- Meddling;
- Nosy;
- Non team players;
- Rulebreakers;
- Overly challenging.

Yet it is these kinds of leaders who have been responsible for the innovations mentioned above.

It is these kinds of leadership capabilities that drive organizations forward, help them continue to grow, innovate, and evolve. And leaders who have capabilities like the ones outlined above (disruptive leadership capabilities) have the courage to articulate that the 'status quo' isn't working.

Instead of seeing these kinds of leaders as catalysts, being a leader who displays these capabilities means that they are misunderstood and often viewed as a troublemaker or agitator.

Rather than being seen as troublemakers and agitators, is it possible for organizations (and you, as you read this eBook) to reframe how you see these kinds of leaders and the value they bring? One of our intentions through this eBook is to reframe the narrative that exists at a macro level about what organizations tend to think of when they hear the term 'disruptive leader'. We feel that this is needed before organizations (and those responsible for identifying and recruiting leaders) start to see the real role, impact and value that these kinds of leaders bring.

How to do this is simple - we need to get out of our own way.

HOW WOULD THESE KINDS OF LEADERS BE TREATED IN YOUR CURRENT LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT EFFORTS? AND HOW WOULD THEY BE TREATED IF YOUR ORGANIZATION PERCEIVED THEM AS CATALYSTS, CHANGE MAKERS AND PURPOSE DRIVEN LEADERS WHO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

How would these kinds of leaders be perceived if, in fact, they were highlighting outdated systems and dysfunctional narratives, and their intention and focus was on moving the organization forward to be able to successfully navigate ongoing disruption by approaching things differently? Taken from this lens, disruptive leaders are indeed proactive catalysts for helping organizations to understand and see what's not working within the organization.

WOULD YOU THEN SEE THESE KINDS OF LEADERS DIFFERENTLY?



CONSIDER THIS

1. We invite you to explore how your organization can start reframing leaders that seem to annoy or irritate you on the surface – are you allowing your own biases to prevent you seeing the value that these kinds of leaders can bring?
2. Be open to challenging the assumptions you hold about leaders who display these leadership capabilities - as you'll see later in this eBook, it may surprise you what they can contribute to your organization
3. Be open to looking at these leaders and their impact and value differently (as part of the leader identification and recruitment process and leaders currently in your organization)
4. Ask yourself as you read through the contents of this eBook why do you allow your own biases to prevent yourself from seeing the value that these kinds of leaders can bring?

As we know, over 200+ types of bias exist which impact (consciously and unconsciously) how we identify and recruit leaders. Our ongoing evolution of the leadership industry is limited until we have honest conversations with ourselves about the biases we hold towards leaders who think differently from the leaders we are traditionally trained to recruit.

SECTION

03

**WHY
ORGANIZATIONS
NEED DISRUPTIVE
LEADERS?**

There are many reasons why organizations will increasingly need disruptive leadership capabilities. We have selected two reasons to discuss below in more detail.

01.

Ongoing innovation at country level will require an increased investment in leaders who can disrupt

02.

A new generation of leaders have different expectations around what being a leader means

Ongoing innovation at country level will require an increased investment in leaders who can disrupt

A report is published each year called the [Global Innovation Index Report](#) which provides an overview of the world's most and least innovative countries (including their capacity to innovate).

The report's authors have discovered that at an individual country level, each country's level of innovation (including capacity to innovate) heavily relies on the ability to cultivate disruptive leadership capabilities in the leaders within its organizations.

The data from reports like this show a clear link between disruptive leadership potential and the high performance and innovation of organizations.

This, in turn, is a direct contributor to the increased economic prosperity of every country.

It may be worth reminding readers at this point that from our research into disruptive leaders, they possess a growth mindset, are highly innovative and think differently than many other leaders.

Other research from consulting firm Korn Ferry provides further impetus for why it will be critical to embrace disruptive leaders.

[Korn Ferry](#) researched the skills needed by future business in an increasingly disruptive environment using opinion research from 795 investors and analysts to ‘model the gap between the current supply of leaders who have disruptive leader qualities and the market’s demand for them, to reveal just how wide leadership skills shortages in this area are’.

Through this study, Korn Ferry discovered a clear link between disruptive leaders and high performance. Even more shocking though is that globally, organizations will not be able to quickly adapt to changing business environments unless their leaders are future ready, which means having the ability to be ‘self disruptors’.

Some additional findings from this research show that:

- ➔ Only 15% of today’s leaders can be considered self-disruptors;
- ➔ Almost eight out of 10 of these investors insist the right leadership is critically important when deciding which companies to invest in;
- ➔ 67% believe that traditional and legacy leadership will not be fit for the future. This is especially so in parts of Asia, where 82% of investors in China and 80% in Japan believe this to be the case.

From research like Korn Ferry's, as well the Global Innovation Index Report, the question we will increasingly need to be asking of ourselves, organizations and approaches to the future of leadership is 'can we afford not to identify, cultivate and embrace leaders who have disruptive leadership capabilities?'

To then take this to its logical next step – the future growth of countries depends on an organization's ability and capability to identify, recruit, onboard, develop and retain disruptive leadership talent.

The next question we need to be thinking about is 'how do we begin educating our organization, evolving our leadership recruitment, onboarding and development programming and equipping our leaders to ensure disruptive leadership capabilities are embedded at all levels?'

For those who may know [Clayton Christensen's](#) work and the work he's done on disruption in the business field, his research revealed that if an established company pursues growth in a new market, the odds of success are six times greater. The revenue potential from that success is 20 times greater than incremental growth in an established market.

So basically, disruption is good for business and research like this begins to show why disruptive leaders can help you identify opportunities for growth in areas that you're trying to explore revenue generation.

A new generation of emerging leaders have different expectations around what being a leader means

A new kind of leader is emerging, and this generation of leader do not want to work with your organization if the outdated systems, approaches, processes, and structures remain the same.

Pre pandemic, according to [HBR](#), approx. 1 in 4 of an organization's 'high performers' was considering leaving that organization within the first 12 months of joining.

Other research from [EY](#) (again, pre pandemic) found that approx. 92% of respondents sampled in its 2022 Generation Survey would not join or stay at an organization if their individual purpose did not align with the wider organization's purpose. Again, we see this as an important component of a new generation of leaders, particularly disruptive leaders.

Much cited research from [Gallup](#) paints the picture much worse, so rather than rehash such research, we'd like to suggest you answer this question – *'are you ready for how the next generation of emerging leaders approaches leadership?'*

If you say yes (and many organizations are inclined to answer yes without fully knowing what's involved in by answering yes), the next question is 'how do you know'?

If organizations consciously choose to not address these two areas we have highlighted, it will significantly impact an organization's ability to attract and keep emerging and new leaders. We understand that many organizations (and their senior leaders in charge of leadership identification, recruitment, onboarding, and development) will shy away from 'rocking the boat' because it goes against the concept of organizational and leadership 'groupthink'.

There's a general tendency for many organizations to downplay or dismiss altogether the idea that they have any 'real' or 'significant' issues with their approaches to identifying, recruiting, and retaining their leaders. Until leaders begin to speak up and/or leave. But even then, most organizations we've supported will paper over the cracks.

How do we combat groupthink in the HR and leadership space – what we've done hasn't worked though few want to openly acknowledge or address that - and even fewer want to take their 'learning and development' investments and pathways down exploratory and 'different' paths because they are counterintuitive to 'the way we've always done it' (but the way we've always done it hasn't worked).



CONSIDER THIS

1. How is your organization attracting and retaining the next generation of leaders - many of whom are characterized by disruptive leadership capabilities?
2. How prepared do you think your organization is to identify, recruit, onboard and develop disruptive leaders?
3. Think about this for a moment – if an organization takes the risk on identifying, cultivating, and embracing disruptive leaders, they can generate new ideas and new revenue streams. Why wouldn't an organization want that?

SECTION

04

**WHAT IS THE ROLE,
IMPACT, AND VALUE
OF DISRUPTIVE
LEADERS?**

Some of the common challenges we hear from organizations centre around how leaders can effectively delegate, motivate others, build (and maintain) trust between leadership and other team members.

It may surprise readers that by accepting and developing disruptive leadership capabilities in leaders, this directly helps those leaders to better delegate, motivate and build trust with those they work with.

One of the drivers for this work is to 'normalize what being a disruptive leader means' in organizations. This means that organizations must begin to be open to embracing leaders who demonstrate 'disruptive thinking' (knowing that such disruptive thinking is anchored to those leaders being driven by a wider purpose).

For this to happen, those in organizations who are responsible for leadership recruitment and development (HR, L&D, Chief People Officers) need to create the conditions for why disruptive leadership qualities are important to the organizational and leadership culture. Only once this happens can an organization then 'normalize' what being a disruptive leader is and means.

Consider some research from global executive head-hunter, [Heidrick and Struggles](#). They found that the ability to 'disrupt and challenge has the strongest effect on leadership potential'.

Still not convinced that disruptive leaders are good for business?

How about research from [DDI](#) (the world's largest leadership development think tank that has collected data on leadership trends from over 15,000 people). DDI found that 'an organization which identifies disruptive leadership potential early, tends to outperform other organizations by up to 4.3 times more'.

Whilst recently delivering some introductory modules of the world's first series of learning programs on disruptive leadership (including more detail on each of the disruptive leadership capabilities these kinds of leaders possess) to a small cohort of leaders, a question from one cohort asked, 'aren't these the types of capabilities you'd expect every great leader to have?'

The question opened a bigger topic that needed to be discussed.

DISRUPTIVE LEADERS HAVE THE LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES THAT MAKE GREAT LEADERS AND YET THESE KINDS OF LEADERS ARE SO OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD.

Why is that?

The answer comes back to our general understanding and interpretation of the term 'disruptive'. The person who asked that question was right in one sense yet what he and others like him did not see is that it is our own conditioning that prevents us from recognizing the real role, impact and value leaders who have disruptive leadership capabilities can have on and in our organizations. It seems that we have some type of stigma around recognizing that we need these kinds of leaders.

There's something here about awareness and the adage comes to mind – 'you can lead a horse to water though you can't make it drink'. Disruptive leaders are the kinds of leaders that organizations will increasingly need to navigate ongoing disruption. They are the kinds of leaders who are emerging now, with more and more emerging leaders possessing disruptive leadership capabilities. It is these leaders who will serve as a key differentiator to and for your organization. Instead of demonizing them (because we won't allow ourselves to understand them due in part to our own biases), let's begin to normalize how we work with disruptive leaders, how we engage them on high profile engagements, how we position them as the future leaders of our organizations.

Right now, a number of high-profile companies are actively leveraging disruptive leaders because they recognise their role, impact and value. Let's take just two of these - Netflix and Square Root (now CDK Global).

The image shows the logos for Netflix and CDK Global. The Netflix logo is in red, and the CDK Global logo consists of three colored circles (black, black, green) followed by the text 'CDKGlobal' in black. Both logos are enclosed in a rounded rectangular frame with a green-to-blue gradient border.

NETFLIX ●●● CDKGlobal.

Netflix actively farms for dissent. Reed Hastings (one of the founders) has a Google Document accessible to everyone in the organization. He actively encourages people to share their ideas and then he takes it a step further by allowing anyone from any level to discuss and challenge anything in the document – our invitation to you is how can you create an organization-wide open document and encourage leaders to share their new ideas openly and regularly.

Square Root, an Austin based technology startup (acquired by CDK global) - whose Director of People and Culture states 'the company has taken the stigma out of troublemaking'. This was achieved through the company sending a letter to the entire team introducing the concept of a troublemaker. Square Root has embedded the need (and expectation) to be a troublemaker as part of every staff member (and leader) role. The feedback so far indicates an increase in both productivity and effectiveness.

From our research and the experiences these companies (and others like them) have had with leaders who are encouraged to be disruptive, one thing is clear – leaders with disruptive leadership capabilities are truth tellers.

They are motivated by being direct and transparent in their interactions with peers, direct reports, those they report to and to clients. Leaders who demonstrate (and are encouraged to) disruptive leadership capabilities are the antidote to outdated organizational systems, structures and processes. Look at all those corporate brochures, those Glassdoor reviews and you'll increasingly see a demand (and an advertisement of) for organizations to be more transparent based on what emerging leaders are expecting from their prospective employer.

It really is quite simple – if an organization prides itself on being open, honest and transparent and then isn't, leaders will leave and also let others know that the organization does not indeed 'walk its talk'. Congruence with what an organization says and does is critical to future leadership recruitment efforts and it's the leader with disruptive leadership capabilities who is uniquely positioned to be an organization's most useful ambassador in this way. So, think about how your organization can leverage them as part of how leaders are identified, recruited, and ultimately onboarded.

Disruptive leaders do not operate from a place of ego (this is again one of the common myths to dispel about these kinds of leaders). They are motivated by their and the organization's wider purpose. Which also means that they are not controlled by the typical fears that characterize many leaders and how they operate in organizations. Because disruptive leaders cut through the crap, they create the space and trust to have forthright conversations. And in turn, this helps to build levels of organizational trust at all levels.

Another example of an organization that encourages leaders to be disruptive is Ariel Investments – it's an investment management company with approx. \$15billion in assets under management. Melody Hobson would openly disagree with her co CEO - not out of disrespect, but out of a sense of pursuing the greater mission of the firm. As you are beginning to see, being motivated by a greater mission is one of the critical qualities that disruptive leaders possess and are motivated by.

You might be reading this thinking something like 'that would never work in my organization' or 'my organization really is different than other'.

We've heard these and other objections (what they really are is fear) in the organizations (and leaders) we've worked with during our career and one thing is clear – every organization thinks its unique, with its own unique set of challenges. Spoiler alert – whilst the exact details may differ, the 'unique' challenges are common to all organizations.

If you want to test this out some of the ideas presented by these case studies, we suggest you start with something simple (yet which many organizations over complicate).



Meetings.

For your next senior leadership team meeting, delegate a disruptive leader to manage it. Because of how they are motivated, you'll find they will improve meeting efficiency and drive a productive leadership level meeting cadence that automatically engenders a higher level of trust and enhanced quality of meeting outputs as well.

As previously mentioned, the research shows that disruptive leaders build trust quickly, and trust cannot be built without the ability to listen or possess a high degree of emotional intelligence. Disruptive leaders do this by creating the conditions to have conversations that matter. Meaningful connections and partnerships are formed by a disruptive leader's ability to understand people's motivations, their perspectives, and values.



“We know that innovation comes from disruption. Disruption comes from the ability to have disruptive thinking capability. Disruptive thinking comes from Fresh Thinking, which is the ability to dare to think and act differently. To embrace Fresh Thinking, you need a Growth Mindset. A Growth Mindset is characterised by amongst other things, curiosity”.

If you're thinking of how else to involve disruptive leaders in terms of the role they play in your organization, consider getting them involved in the following:

01.

Initiatives that focus on market differentiation and innovation – disruptive leaders are what we refer to as 'dot connectors', which means they easily see the bigger picture and can respond to change quicker.

02.

Situations in which your organization needs to problem solve and build something quickly, like a minimum viable product (MVP) or a prototype because disruptive leaders are a constant source of new ideas.

03.

Preparing for organization wide transformation initiatives that introduce significant change to roles, ways of working (internally and externally) – because disruptive leaders adapt quickly, they can actively leverage that philosophy to motivate others during change.

04.

Work with emerging leaders and leadership teams where trust building is needed - this will lead to increased morale, higher productivity levels and reduced leadership turnover.

Disruptive leaders are the kinds of leaders needed to support organizations in the planning, execution and sustainment of change and transformation. If an organization truly understands how to engage, motivate, and retain them, then they will become that organization's advocate, ambassador, and sponsor (both internally and externally). And because leaders with disruptive leadership capabilities build trust quickly, they will effortlessly keep people aligned (as well as feeling individually empowered) to the overall vision and direction that an organization's change and transformation initiative is aiming to realize.

One commonly asked question about disruptive leaders is whether we always need our leaders to be disruptive – and it's an important question to consider here. We have found that there is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to how an organization introduces disruptive leaders – every organization from every different sector will be different.

Organizations need to consider how to leverage disruptive leaders based on a range of factors that include – the organizational vision, its wider purpose, services, and focus, whether it is compliance driven vs non-compliance driven, values and ways of working, including organizational and leadership cultures.

Once these areas are reviewed, an organization can then determine how leaders with disruptive leadership capabilities fit into the existing organizational eco system. Ultimately, each organization must be open to finding its own balance between risk aversion, ways of thinking and its approach to innovation. Then it becomes clearer as to what role the disruptive leader can play within that environment.

One thing to remember though, is that the way disruptive leaders think are how future leaders will increasingly need to think, so we suggest every organization will need to find ways of integrating these kinds of leaders into how they conduct their business.

**RESEARCH AND CASE STUDIES
LIKE THE SMALL FRACTION
PRESENTED IN THIS SECTION
INDICATES THAT ORGANIZATIONS
CAN BENEFIT CONSIDERABLY
FROM UNDERSTANDING THE
ROLE, IMPACT AND VALUE THAT
DISRUPTIVE LEADERS CAN BRING
TO AN ORGANIZATION.**



CONSIDER THIS

1. How can you seek out opportunities to involve disruptive leaders in organizational wide initiatives?
2. Identify three activities that will help your organization specifically seek out a current (or future) leader's ability to disrupt – we suggest starting with one leader level in your organization

SECTION

05

**HOW TO IDENTIFY,
CULTIVATE
AND EMBRACE
DISRUPTIVE
LEADERS**

Let's begin this section by restating that our organizations will need a different kind of leader for the future, one with disruptive leadership capabilities.

And currently, our organizational systems and processes for identifying, cultivating, and embracing these kinds of leaders are not prepared.

If you're wondering whether your organization is ready to embrace a new kind of leader, take some time to ponder on these questions:

DO YOU WANT LEADERS WHO:

1. Think differently and from a place of curiosity?
2. Are purpose driven and see the bigger picture?
3. Can think strategically and tactically?
4. Build trust quickly?
5. Can anticipate challenges and identify opportunities to transform?
6. Adapt quickly and help others to adapt?
7. Innovate?
8. Are decisive?

If you're honest, then its highly likely you've answered yes to all these questions. And guess what?

Those areas you've answered yes to comprise what we refer to as the 'Individual Disruptive Leader Checklist'. This has been developed based on leading global research that reveals how disruptive leaders are characterized by the above qualities and capabilities.

If you're interested in how the 'Individual Disruptive Leader Checklist' can support organizations as they begin to identify, cultivate, and embrace leaders with disruptive leadership capabilities into their day-to-day leadership environments, reach out for more information.

The next question to ask yourself is 'who would not want a leader for the future in their organization like that?' Those of you who may still be insistent that being a 'disruptive leader' is bad for business, are not going to be able to attract and retain the kinds of leaders you'll increasingly need for the future to navigate ongoing disruption, thrive as an organization and be successful.

For organizations to grow, they need to continually innovate. To innovate, an organization needs diversity of thought. And if an organization is not open to having a growth mindset, then that organization will not innovate, and its growth will be limited. By anchoring leaders who have disruptive leadership capabilities into an organizational and leadership culture, the probability of ongoing organizational success is increased.



Now take this one step further – we showed earlier in this eBook that research has found a clear link between a leader’s ability and capability to disrupt and the performance of an organization.

Can you imagine a disruptive leader maturity model at an enterprise level that provides data to HR and leadership candidate recruiters, showing how disruptive (as well as their disruptive leadership potential) each leadership candidate is – we can.

That can’t or won’t happen unless or until an organization creates what Harvard Business School leadership scholar Amy Edmondson refers to as creating the ‘fertile soil’. In the context of disruptive leadership, what that basically means is our organizations must be open to embracing a different type of thinking within it and amongst its leaders – ‘fresh thinking’. Because once we have done this we can then design and create organizations and approaches to leadership and how leaders work together that openly talk about (and has normalized) disruption.

The current misperception in organizations is that being disruptive leads to conflict – what we have been advocating throughout this eBook is in fact the complete opposite. Its disruptive leaders who (as we've already seen) create the conditions for being purpose led. But did you know that because these kinds of leaders build trust quickly, they also reduce silo-based thinking and behaviour in organizations and within leadership teams. All this begins with self awareness of our own leadership style and approach, which then enables us to begin talking with our leadership peers about ineffective and dysfunctional leadership activities and behaviours. Also, key is to begin having conversations about the type of future leadership culture the organization wants to have in place.

To support organizations as they begin to shift their paradigms about how they identify, cultivate, and embrace future leaders, one of the most important things to do is to recognize how disruptive leaders and disruptive leadership capabilities can actually serve as the catalyst for embedding and sustaining such paradigms.

To cite some earlier research, global executive head-hunter Heidrick & Struggles estimated pre pandemic that a leader's ability to be disruptive had the biggest effect on their leadership potential. That was before what we refer to as the largest global capital experiment in history (Covid-19). The research clearly shows that the ability to attract and retain future leaders who have disruptive leadership capabilities will be critical to their leadership effectiveness. Added to this, as also stated, we will increasingly need this kind of leader to successfully support organizations as they continue to navigate ongoing disruption.

Considering this, the natural question we then need to be asking inside our organizations is how prepared they for are identifying, recruiting, onboarding, and developing these kinds of leaders. Are your organization's current approaches to identifying, recruiting, onboarding, and developing leaders prepared to embrace leaders with disruptive leadership capabilities = be honest here.

Because quite simply, if organizations don't invest in equipping their systems and processes for identifying, cultivating, and embracing leaders like this, those organizations will not thrive, the impact on their P&L balance sheets will show, they will be left behind by their competitors and mass redundancies will ensue.

Perhaps the next question to then ask is are organizations prepared to reframe their understanding of the impact that disruptive leaders can have. Until this occurs, organizations will never see the full value that these kinds of leaders bring.

Every organisation must look at its own level of readiness for identifying, cultivating, and embracing disruptive leaders. As we've mentioned, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to what being a disruptive leader is. Organizations will have different levels of capacity and competency for being positioned to be able to embrace disruptive leaders. Every organization and sector are going through some type of disruption right now and will continue to. One way to support these organizations is to plot levels of actual disruption (and its impact) and start using this data as the scale to prepare organizations to determine when (and where) they will need disruptive leaders in place.

If an organization has plotted the main disruptions in its industry, among its competitors, and inside its own organisation, then it now has a blueprint and roadmap of the initiatives that require support from leaders with disruptive leadership capabilities. This supports the organization in leveraging these kinds of leaders in the appropriate ways, as well as ensures their disruptive leadership capabilities directly support your organization to realize its wider purpose and strategic goals. Our recommendation to organizations is try this approach with a few organizational initiatives and some leaders that display disruptive leader capabilities. See what outcomes you get from this pilot lab experience.

We recognise that it will take an investment of time and resource to determine whether your organization is prepared for identifying, cultivating, and embracing disruptive leaders. Systemic reviews and audits like this do take time, though can be supported, and guided by some of the tools we have developed, including the 'Individual Disruptive Leader Checklist', the 'Disruptive Leader Enterprise Level Maturity Model', as well as a range of others. If interested in these tools and how we use them to support organizations, reach out for more information when you are ready.

From speaking with organizations about disruptive leadership, we're always pleasantly surprised to hear that these leadership capabilities already exist to some extent, yet the organization tends not to be leveraging these leaders in ways that they could be to further evolve the organization.

Because these kinds of leaders aren't being fully leveraged, this also leads to leaders being fired or voluntarily leaving. When an organization breaks down the costs incurred through a leader leaving (voluntarily or involuntarily), it is significant.

At a high level, the costs to replace an individual leader (who is marginalized or exited for displaying disruptive leadership capabilities) is approx. between 213-400% of that leader's base salary. In other articles and posts we explore this in more detail by effectively building the business case that reveals to organizations why it is more important (and costs less) to create the conditions and leadership culture in which leaders with disruptive leadership capabilities are proactively identified, cultivated, and embraced.

Organizations spend millions of pounds/dollars to attract leadership candidates to work with them. We are seeing increasing trends that advocate for how organizations are embracing different types of thinkers, different types of leaders, those who challenge the status quo etc. The one challenge with such false advertising is that these organizations have not created the conditions (vision, purpose, values, culture, ways of working) that then fully embrace these leaders into their working environment. There's a lot of talk, with a lot less follow through. For many of these organizations, its relatively easier to draft an impressive sounding organizational mission statement than be congruent between the mission statement's word and the resultant behaviour that is permitted and promoted within the organization.

Below we provide some tips when identifying, cultivating, and embracing disruptive leaders in your organization.



CONSIDER THIS

1. Before reviewing whether your organization has current leaders who have disruptive leadership capabilities, take some time to consider the following questions because the answers will help your organization to determine how it best identifies, cultivates, and embraces disruptive leaders:
 - ➔ What is your organisation's strategy for growth?
 - ➔ What leadership capability do you need in place to help accelerate that growth?
 - ➔ Are your organization's current systems and processes for identifying, cultivating, and embracing leaders equipped to support meet your strategy for growth?
2. How can you help your organization perceive disruptive leadership capabilities as critical for how leaders are identified in the future?
3. Review the disruptive leadership capabilities we have outlined in this eBook and ask (and document) who in your organization has some of these disruptive leadership capabilities
4. Clarify internally what role you consider leaders who have disruptive leadership capabilities can play to support your organization's strategy for growth

5. Follow up with these leaders through 1:1s and ask them about their experiences, perspectives, and interests in each of the disruptive leadership capabilities, with a focus on:
 - ➔ Asking them about their approach to thinking and acting differently – get them to outline their approach to problem solving and how they interact with others as part of this
 - ➔ Uncovering what motivates these leaders and their wider purpose
 - ➔ Gauging how they create an environment that anticipates and embraces disruption?
 - ➔ Understanding how they adapt their own approach to keep up with the demands of transformation?
 - ➔ Identifying how they push boundaries?
 - ➔ Determining how they make decisions and face ambiguity?
6. Leverage this sample of leaders and ask them what they want to learn as leaders about being a disruptive leader – how would they want to learn, what would they expect such learning to equip them with etc.

Be aware of your own biases and blind spots when it comes to identifying and recruiting leaders who don't fit the traditional mould of what being a leader in your organization means – leveraging the disruptive leadership capabilities outlined in this eBook will begin to help you and your organization perceive these kinds of leaders through a different lens.

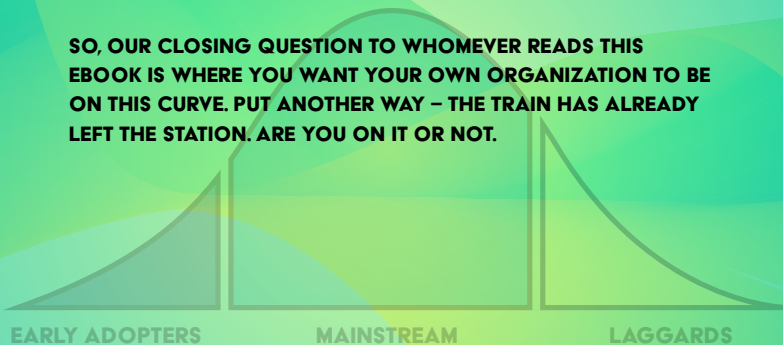
WRAP UP

You may still be thinking after reading this eBook that the way your organization has approached identifying, recruiting, onboarding, and developing its leaders has worked, still works and will work for the future.

We mean this in the kindest way possible – it doesn't and many organizations that we've supported lack the awareness or support mechanisms needed to prepare their systems, processes, and approaches for the future.

LOOKING AT THE TRAJECTORY OF A STARTUP - IT ALWAYS FOLLOWS THE SAME FLOW. BOTTOM LEFT, YOU HAVE THE EARLY ADOPTERS. IN THE MIDDLE YOU HAVE THE MAINSTREAM AND ON THE RIGHT YOU HAVE THE LAGGARDS. WE ALL KNOW THAT THE MAINSTREAM FOLLOWS THE EARLY ADOPTERS, AND WE ALL KNOW THAT THE LAGGARDS FOLLOW THE MAINSTREAM.

SO, OUR CLOSING QUESTION TO WHOMEVER READS THIS EBOOK IS WHERE YOU WANT YOUR OWN ORGANIZATION TO BE ON THIS CURVE. PUT ANOTHER WAY – THE TRAIN HAS ALREADY LEFT THE STATION. ARE YOU ON IT OR NOT.



WE'D LIKE TO LEAVE YOU WITH THREE KEY POINTS THAT HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED THROUGHOUT THIS EBOOK:

1. The future requires a different kind of leader, a leader that's future ready. The research clearly shows that these kinds of leaders are disruptive leaders
2. The research also clearly indicates that organizations that have leaders who are not future ready are less able to adapt to changing business environments and needs
3. If an organization chooses not to adapt to its changing business environment and needs, then that organization will no longer be competitive, it will not differentiate itself and will be unable to attract and retain the leaders needed to navigate ongoing disruption

Disruptive leaders want to be enablers, yet the systems and processes that they work within in an organisation are the blockers. We invite readers to reflect further on what they have read within this eBook – we'd love to hear from you in terms of whether you consider disruptive leaders to be a blocker or enabler to ongoing innovation and organizational success.

MEET THE AUTHORS

Paul Mac Leadership provides a range of tools, assessments, programs, and workshops to support organizations as they begin to identify, cultivate and embrace disruptive leaders. Reach out to us when you are ready to see how we can support your organization.



Paul is an emerging thought leader regenerating the future of leadership. Over a 25 year career, he has supported thousands of leaders globally to develop their future leadership capabilities. He was positioned as Deloitte's and KPMG's subject matter expert for Talent Management and Leadership Development. Organizations such as TD, IBM and Forbes School of Business have recently brought Paul into speak with C-suite leaders on trends, challenges, and opportunities in the future of work and leadership.

His first book, *The F.I.R.E.D. Leader: Reinventing the Future of Leadership* was published in November 2023 and endorsed by Marshall Goldsmith (New York Times bestselling author of *Triggers*), Whitney Johnson, John Spence (one of the top 100 business thought leaders in America), Professor Gary Hamel (ranked by *The Wall Street Journal* as the world's most influential business thinker) and former WD40 CEO, Garry Ridge.

Paul can be contacted at paul@paulmacleadership.com or via his website – www.paulmacleadership.com

Simon Haigh, founder and CEO of simonhaigh.com - The GCM Growth Group - is a highly acclaimed global business, leadership, brand & personal growth strategist & transformational thought leader. He is a globally acknowledged certified leadership, executive & life coach, consultant, CPD Accredited trainer, certified mediator, adjunct lecturer, keynote speaker, lawyer & 5 star Amazon author of three books including his most recent book - *How to Be a Better Deal closer* - with foreword by Marshall Goldsmith.

Simon has been featured on various global media outlets such as the BBC in the UK, Australia's ABC television, Ireland's Newstalk Radio, Dublin City FM & numerous global radio & podcast channels. Simon carries thought leadership accolades from the likes of Thinkers 360 and Global Gurus.

Simon can be contacted at simon@simonhaigh.com or via his website – www.simonhaigh.com