

Future fit for purpose

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Dr Alex Granger shares invaluable advice on how to develop fit for purpose leaders, culture and people for a brave new world.



Alex Granger

It may be an understatement to say we are going through a period of change. But while there is so much negativity around us, there is also the opportunity to work on our future selves. Which is why SAICA invited Dr Alex Granger, one of Africa's top executive coaches, to speak at one of its *Leadership in a time of crisis* webinars to find out how we can best use the lockdown to develop fit-for-purpose leaders, culture and people, within our organisations.

FIT FOR PURPOSE LEADERS

Navigating change

Granger finds the Kubler-Ross change curve an interesting tool to work through during this time. "The curve takes us through the emotions of shock, denial, frustration and depression, and then into the phase of experimentation, decision-making and integration into the new," he says. "I find this useful, as we can't return to life how it was, we need to start experimenting and integrating into a new normal."

Alex Granger

For Granger, there are five key things that can help with various points along the change curve:

1. **Shock and denial:** The first thing leaders need to look at doing is understanding what the current situation is, and how we can align our strategy to that situation.
2. **Frustration:** Staff are anxious, worried and stressed, so we need to maximise our communication, and constantly tell our people where we are at as a business.
3. **Depression:** It's time to spark motivation. The only way you can do that is by constant interaction and communication.
4. **Experimentation:** This is the exciting phase where you develop capacity. Whether it's training or brainstorming, now is the time to start developing new capability, and the new way of work.
5. **Integration:** Share your knowledge and inspire your team by asking others to share what they have learnt.

Identifying and communicating what success looks like

Can you paint a picture of what success looks like in the next 12 months? It is extremely difficult to define, given the uncertainty around us, but if you have a strategy and can anticipate what success looks like, you can at least communicate this to your team.

Managing a remote team

Granger shares five key ideas to incorporate into your team culture:

1. **Structured daily check-ins.** This is important for creating a culture of discipline within your team. It's not a bad idea

to do this first thing in the morning, to keep everyone waking up and getting dressed as usual.

2. **Provide several different communication technology options.** You don't always have to have video calls. A mix of group chats, email, voice notes and even phone calls will make it easy for your team to collaborate and communicate.
3. **Establish the rules of engagement.** For example, check-ins at 9am, reports due by 12pm, Whatsapp used for this purpose, Zoom used for that purpose. Whatever you decide, make sure your team is all on the same page.
4. **Offer encouragement and emotional support.** We're living in unprecedented times and some of your staff are suffering extreme difficulty and anxiety. Having a one-on-one conversation can often alleviate some of that stress and pain.
5. **Add moments of fun.** Once a week, start off a Zoom call by asking staff to sing their favourite song, or wear a silly hat. Whatever it is, create moments that people can enjoy and relate to.

Don't make profit the only goal

I know this is very difficult to say when the income is simply not rolling in. However, it is important to think of what type of value you can provide during these down times. Profit is of course a goal, but other goals can be about providing value for customers and making sure your staff are cared for and feel that they are important.

FIT FOR PURPOSE CULTURE

Culture does more than just inform people about what attitudes and behaviours are expected of them. It reflects an organisation's soul, and is responsible for generating human energy. In fact, Granger believes it is the wisest investment any organisation can make.

So, how do we create and maintain corporate culture while we are working remotely?

"Think of culture as a garden," he explains. "It develops, whether or not you are designing it. If you ignore it, it will continue to grow, but maybe not in the way you expected it to."

That's why, for Granger, it is essential to cultivate the right culture. "Things like punctuality on calls, reporting on time and giving the right feedback may seem small and insignificant, but they are essential when it comes to creating a continuous, great culture," he says.

"Culture is inspired from the top," he adds, explaining that leaders are responsible for inculcating culture in an organisation, and that it's therefore important to be aware of the way you dress, talk and act.

"When you create this culture, it's something the competition can't imitate," says Granger. "And that is invaluable."

FIT FOR PURPOSE INDIVIDUALS

For Granger, there are five factors that people need to become fit for purpose individuals:

1. Grit

"Grit is the defining quality that bridges the gap between purpose and passion," says Granger. He believes individuals with grit have the following characteristics:

- Conscientiousness - meticulous, attention to detail
- Excellence instead of perfection
- Optimism, confidence and creativity
- Long-term goals and endurance
- Courage

2. Respect

You always hear people say, ‘You have to earn my respect’. That implies they didn’t have it to begin with. Granger believes respect is dispensed – you give it, and in return, you receive it, so be sure to respect others, regardless of their station.

3. Work ethic

“During this downtime, we cannot take our foot off the pedal,” says Granger, adding that our work ethic almost has to increase. “Wake up in the morning, shower as if you’re going to the office and get to work in an environment that is conducive to productivity.”

4. Authenticity

Be real, be vulnerable, share your anxieties and hopes with your team.

5. Collaboration and teamwork

“If you think you’re the only one with the answers, you’re wrong,” says Granger. “The wisdom is with your team, and together you can make the situation so much better.”

Granger believes that perseverance is what will make the difference between the organisations that strive and fail during this pandemic. “Your best today is the standard for tomorrow,” he says. “What will you do tomorrow to improve on today’s best?”

To help address the challenges faced by many, SAICA hosted a complimentary virtual leadership series called Leadership in a time of crisis. This series focused on various elements affecting individuals, businesses and the accountancy profession as a whole during the Covid-19 pandemic. Sessions in this series have been recorded and can be viewed on [SAICA’s events page](#).

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