Unfear Newsletter:
Grow Beyond the Tribe - From Vertical to Horizontal Thinking

Dear Reader,

In the days of early humanity, fear kept us safe. The fear we felt heightened our awareness and taught us to avoid snakes and unidentified types of food. It also birthed our tendency to band together in tribes, often homogenous social groups which kept us safe. Now, we face far less danger on daily basis than our earliest ancestors, yet the tribal instinct impacts almost every part of our lives, including how we behave at work.

Unfear Organization Mindset Three: From Vertical to Horizontal Thinking

To be clear, having a tribe provides great benefits. It creates a sense of loyalty, community, and belonging. We feel that we're on a journey as part of a group, and know that our other tribe members will support us. Yet this instinct can easily tip into dysfunctional tribalism. Within organizations, tribalism manifests most often as competition between functions. We've all seen it. The sales team that hates the marketing team for bringing in bad leads. The marketing team that hates the sales team for not closing the leads. The sales and marketing teams that hate the bean counters for not approving enough ad spends. The… you get the idea.

These sorts of conflict occur because each group works to optimize for their own function, without considering the whole organization. Often, this results in fractured processes that fail to efficiently deliver maximum value. For example, one of our clients had a nasty internecine storm brewing because the sales team developed bespoke packages for each prospect, which the fulfillment team had to scramble to deliver. Fulfilment struggled, and their work quality slipped, but nobody ever had an honest conversation with sales. In our workshops, we realized that the sales team had been afraid that they couldn't close as many deals without the bespoke packages. When they realized the strain they caused fulfillment, the two teams got together to create a more standardized, yet customizable, set of packages that they could deliver with confidence. As soon as everyone stopped thinking vertically (what can I do to maximize my departments' performance?) to horizontally (how can I work across silos to optimize the organization's performance?), the entire value chain became streamlined.

Mitochondria

In humans, each cell gets the energy it needs from an organelle called the mitochondria. A while ago, scientists studying human biology made an interesting discovery: the DNA in mitochondria is not human DNA. To explain this anomaly, researchers have theorized that the mitochondria initially started as a bacterium that lived inside animal cells. After thousands of generations, it became integrated into our bodies. Now, it exists as almost a separate organism that we could not possibly live without. The logical endpoint of horizontal thinking is to recognize that organizations are like mitochondria. They're unique from society, they help to power society, but they cannot exist without society. It encourages us to optimize not just for internal value, but for external value, and to seek ways to collaborate with other stakeholders and keep the whole, ie society healthy.

Worth thinking about

Think horizontally about the chain of relationships you exist in. Who do you work with, on a cross functional basis, to deliver something to a customer? How do you think about those people? Do you feel like you have to suffer them, or are you curious about what drives them? What do they seek to maximize? How can you work together to achieve both of your goals more efficiently?

Take it to go

Identify someone you work with cross functionally whom you do not understand what drives them. It's even better if you have some conflict with them. Invite them to lunch. Get to know them as a person. Ask what they're seeking to create, and how that adds value to the organization. Seek to understand, and from that understanding, what new ideas for collaboration can you come up with?

Questions?

Please contact us and schedule a call if you are interested in applying Unfear to improve your team and organizational culture and effectiveness. We'd love to hear from you.

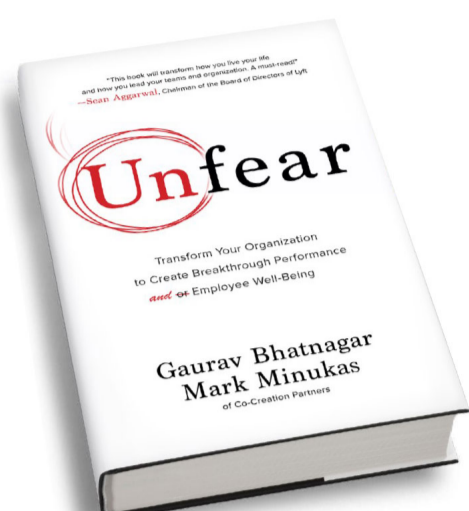**CONTACT US**

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