

4 THINGS I'VE LEARNED

THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

Rob Livingstone offers suggestions on how to thrive in a faster spinning world

The world is spinning much faster than it did 10 years ago, and this rate appears to be picking up. Adaptability is the key to being able to thrive, whether that is for you, your career or for organisations.

1. Earning that extra hour

You can always earn another dollar, but you can never get that hour back. Whether it's time spent working on that next major sale, solving a challenging technical problem, or taking the kids to soccer practice, the challenge is about making the right call on where to invest your efforts. The key factor to consider is the opportunity cost of the alternatives. It is this return on investment of our time that shapes your future state. Time does not always equal money.

2. SCRUM your IT career plan

Do you see your IT career as a systematic, sequential series of steps,

or an evolving, agile process? Given the volatility in careers and organisations, the analogy from the Agile application development methodology is more appropriate today than ever before. The key points here are that, in reality, your career is informal and incremental, and requires a multi-disciplinary approach — yet has an overall, well articulated plan. Just like Agile.

3. Reflect the stress

The impatience with which the business world operates filters through all facets of the organisation. This is even more relevant now, evidenced by the two-speed Australian economy, not helped by organisations and governments slashing costs wherever possible. All want a rapid ROI and austerity. This leads on to less time and fewer resources with which to do the work. In his book *Just Enough Anxiety — The Hidden*

Driver of Business Success, Robert H Rosen draws a direct line between organisational resilience and how stress and anxiety is proactively managed by their leaders. How this translates to you in your job is the key to your being able to flourish. Do you absorb or reflect the ambient stress in your environment? Getting the balance right is key. Reflect the stress that will give you the heart attack, and absorb the stress that will drive you to achieve positive outcomes, and know the difference.

4. There's always a bigger boat

Just bought a boat? Look around you — there's always going to be a bigger boat. If this was one of the reasons for you buying a certain boat, you'll be constantly disappointed. This metaphor is true in what we do in our careers. At any time, there will always be some who are rocketing ahead, others stagnating, and some falling off the perch, so to speak. Comparing yourself to others can be a valuable and necessary exercise in a competitive market from time to time, but be mindful of why you are doing the things you do in your IT career, and recognise what you can and cannot influence.

Baseline your career expectations and stress test any assumptions you have made about your employer, industry and/or environment to see which are incorrect. This will help you make the right call and guide you where and how to best invest your scarce time in areas that will provide the greatest return on investment. That's called adaptability.

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