It is a time for brave leadership - Interview with Jamil Qureshi, Psychologist

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We welcomed Jamil Qureshi, one of today's foremost practitioners of performance psychology and expert in high performance to speak at our Leading Growth Alumni event. Read his full interview which originally appeared in the Jersey Evening Post here.

Jamil Qureshi has delivered leadership programmes for businesses such as Coca Cola, Hewlett Packard, Emirates Airlines, and NASA . He's also led teams responsible for change management in Lloyds Banking Group, Marks and Spencer, and the Royal Mail. He was the first official psychologist to work with the European Ryder Cup team, and his sports clients have included three English Premiership football clubs as well as Formula 1 drivers and TV mind reading celebrity, Derren Brown. In other words, he knows his stuff. He came to Jersey to speak to the Leading Growth alumni, a Jersey Business initiative that aims to help business leaders and owners to accelerate to their next stage of growth. Jamil challenges business leaders to rethink how they view the world and, in

particular, for organisations to become more purposeful if they want to drive performance and motivate both their workforce and customers. He warns against 'mission statements' and urges people to live and embrace their purpose. 'The best organisations in regard to maximising their purpose are ones who don't treat customers as itemised consumers to be sold to but more like essential partners to be engaged with. Becoming purposeful isn't about what you can have but about what (value) you can be.'

> *'There's lots of legacy organisations that have been built on the tradition of hierarchy and bureaucracy and that's quite hard for them to be nimble and agile. The best organisations won't be those with targets and objectives, but more like a community with purpose.'*

After the challenges of the last few years, and amid continued uncertainty, he also urged Jersey businesses to take the opportunity to reinvent themselves. A lot of his advice is based on being more human and understanding that people think, feel, and then act. To achieve performance success, you need commitment rather than just compliance. That means you need to work on how the workforce and in turn the organisation as a whole thinks, not how they are acting. Change the way things are seen.

One thing performance and productivity isn't about is overtime. 'The rules have changed, and it's no longer about seeing productivity as putting in the hours. We saved 80 million of commuting hours last year in the UK, but I bet everyone worked all sorts of hours. It doesn't necessarily drive productivity, in fact, quite the opposite.'

Since the pandemic, flexibility in the workplace has also risen in prominence, but Jamil said he hasn't yet seen an organisation get it right. 'We call people remote workers, when remote as a word means detached. The problem that many businesses have is how do we treat people equally when there's more of a disparate way of working? People want different things.'

> *'We need to recruit not for cultural fit but for cultural contribution. We need to embrace the idea that the immigrant will always see things that the citizen is blind to. So, we need to get people in who can think differently and have the space, time, and permission to argue that.'*

To illustrate this, he argues that everything worth having on this planet has come from what he terms 'rogue monkey' thinking. Banks didn't invent Paypal. Skype wasn't invented by anyone in telecommunications. Spotify wasn't

invented by anyone in the music industry.

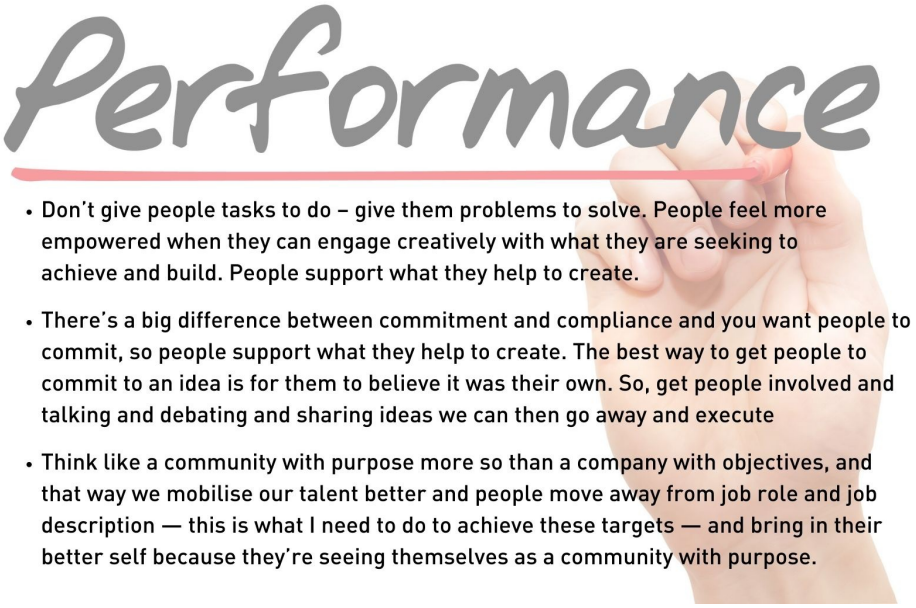
This approach is just as important when it comes to the skills gap. You might have experienced workers who aren't tech savvy, and young recruits who are but don't have the commercial knowledge. He argues, 'The future of high-performance teams is high diversity and high psychological safety. So, get people in who have different knowledge, different experience, different wisdom and different ways of thinking and being and provide a psychologically safe environment where they are free to talk and share and close the knowledge gap and become stronger by being different.'

In a world where recruitment is tough, he argues that organisations need to become more magnetic. 'It's not about going out and getting people, it's about people wanting to come and work with you. Organisations need talented people more than talented people need organisations. So how do you become magnetic? You become purposeful, you seek to create something which is worthwhile and meaningful to communities. You are reflective of what people want to be part of.'

> *'TOMS shoes is a really good example. It's a purpose driven organisation. There are kids all over the world queuing up to work for TOMS shoes because what they are is, buy one and give one to someone who can't afford a pair. People would rather go and work for TOMS shoes because the firm is creating a better world '*

In our technological world, as artificial intelligence and digital solutions become increasingly essential, can business leaders still maintain that human touch in order to create purpose? Mr Qureshi believes leaders have to double down on being human. 'Although the business can be more tech enabled, the leaders have to be more human led. Asking better questions, having better conversations, making time and space to co-author and co-create. Communities outperform bureaucracies and hierarchies. Story telling is a great way of connecting human beings and an essential part of the trust ladder. We give away a bit of ourselves when we tell a story. It allows us to make emotional connections and change a mood. Organisations or leaders need to tell more stories.'

Jamil's Top tips to improve people and organisation performance



The Jersey Business Leading Growth Programme has to date welcomed 85 Senior Leaders and business owners across 46 Jersey-based organisations. The Leading Growth Alumni is a continuation of the programme, providing senior leaders further development, collaboration and thought leadership opportunities.

If you are interested in joining the growing Jersey Business Senior Leader network? The next Leading Growth Programme is open for applicants.