



GETTING BACK TO REALITY

Message to senior managers from psychotherapist **Andrey Kurpatov**.



ANDREY KURPATOV

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Many of the so-called “programmes” of the human brain that helped people survive in the distant past have not only become outdated in the modern world but are also causing irrational behaviour and barriers to personal and organisational efficiency. Understanding brain laws and human behaviour is an important key to development, high-performance work, and managing processes and people. Neuroscience today gives insight into a whole range of challenges that need to be addressed if you want to build a robust business model.

Challenge 1. Lost thinking ability

Sweeping digitalisation gives rise to addiction, which, according to researchers, affects 15 to 35% of the world's population.

In 2017, Professor Hyung Suk Seo and researchers from Korea University in Seoul proved that biochemical changes in the brain of gadget-addicted people are identical to those of drug addicts. These changes induce organic brain disorders, which reduce neural connections between cortical cells by 10–20%, primarily affecting the frontal lobe, which is responsible for decision-making.

Digital addiction and its consequences are shaping a new way of thinking, where superficial knowledge primitivises intellectual processes and recommendation services hinder the ability to choose. There is no sense of future, which reduces motivation to engage in intellectual activities, and excessive distractions interfere with focusing on solving intellectual tasks.

Experiments prove that the mere presence of a smartphone reduces cognitive capacity.



Digital addiction shapes a new way of thinking.

Challenge 2. Values don't work

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As a rule, executives think that they can always get through to their teams inspiring them with a mission. However, social psychology proves that it is not special instructions one receives but the power of situation that determines a person's behaviour. Convictions do not influence decision-making for the most part, as was proven by experiments, including the one conducted by John Darley and Daniel Batson. It involved seminary students in a rush to teach on the parable of the Good Samaritan who came across a man falling during an epileptic seizure. Only 63% of the students stopped to help the man. And when the students were told in advance that they were running late, the number of those willing to help dropped to 10%. Psychologists are convinced that employees' behaviour is driven not by values or missions but rather by their working environment.

Challenge 3. Lost ability to communicate

Digitalisation of our lives is gradually reducing our need to socialise.

According to western scholars, people are becoming digitally autistic. In 1987, we spent 6 hours a day interacting with each other, and in 2007 this number dropped to just 2 hours.

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And 2007 was the year when iPhone was just released. Today, a person checks his/her smartphone on average 47–82 times a day.

Modern people no longer need other people as a source of knowledge. We are losing our ability to communicate, the ability to build complex relationships with other people. Information and its movement within a company is complicated by the fact that people do not know how to communicate it.

Challenge 4. Generation gap

A modern production process involves three generations of people with significant mental differences.

Generation X – people born in 1964–1984 – were brought up in a rigidly structured information environment. They saw the same values, priorities and meanings in their childhood, had a “social contract” between generations in place and respected the authorities created and cultivated by the society.



Today, business processes involve people of several generations with different values and priorities.

Generation Y – people born in 1984–2000 – are focused on freedom of self-expression and entertainment. They want to be immediately rewarded for their work, however they do not always know how to work to secure their future. Dreaming of simple living, they don't know how to be independent but are convinced of their own value. Is it possible to control them, the way Generation X used to, if they do not recognise authorities but look to the top thinking “Should it be me up there?”

MODERN PEOPLE NO LONGER NEED OTHER PEOPLE AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE.

Next comes Generation Z with the wide-scale digital addiction and almost complete absence of authorities. They don't know how to interact with people and behave aggressively, as this is one of the ways to communicate.

Management models for the new reality

In fact, there are only two business management models: top-down and bottom-up. The first involves management setting a specific goal, developing a plan, and controlling its implementation. The second one focuses on employees showing initiative which resonates with their colleagues and is supported by their leaders.

However, that is not as easy as it sounds. The thing is that management and employees see situations from different perspectives, and the feedback is distorted. This is a common problem of all large companies. Instead of the true picture of what is actually going on, management gets statistics and analytical reports. At the same time, people involved with production processes lose motivation and do not want any feedback, limiting themselves to reporting what needs to be reported.

THE MERE PRESENCE OF A SMARTPHONE REDUCES COGNITIVE CAPACITY.

To prevent this from happening, it is necessary to organise the process in such a way that real information rather than reports could move from the bottom upwards. However, this is where the current problems of digital autism come into play, with the inability to communicate and convey a message.

The most important thing in project and company management is to ensure minimum distortion of information. In this case, a manager is more like to make the right decision.

“When managing and delegating, it’s not the allocation of authority but information movement that brings life to a company,” said Andrey Kurpatov. “It is necessary to get back to reality and stimulate intellectual activity within companies.”

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