

Focus On What You Can Control

Careless talk can polarise and carless talk can spark a recession. And careless talk can convince you that nothing is going right, when in fact, if you dismiss carless talk and focus on what you can control, you can engender positivity and not fear, writes Kate Ashley-Norman.



The presumption of innocence until guilt is proven has taken a massive back seat in recent times, writes Kate Ashley-Norman.

We live in an age of trial by media where truth no longer matters so long as 'the right people' are cancelled and a thousand TV pundits are paid their fee to rant their opinions – which are then spread by others. People are polarised into a for or against position.

Talking into a recession

OK, so here I am referencing the Russel Brand saga but I could choose a dozen others to provide me with a slightly askew, newsjacking segue into how incessant chatter can drive the direction of opinion.

Can we talk ourselves into a recession? Is one business' failure contagious across the industry as a whole? These are the questions people ask when things get tricky in commerce. I think the answer is yes.

The butterfly effect

The butterfly effect was a phrase first coined by meteorologist Edward Lorenz in the 1960s when trying to predict the weather by tracking changes to patterns. It has since become adopted into general parlance as the idea that a seemingly tiny and insignificant action can lead to something much larger even

though there seems to be no connection between them.

Our confidence in ourselves, in our businesses, is not a fixed and immutable state – rather it can fluctuate depending on how much (or how little) you feel influenced by the noise that surrounds you.

Maybe you feel the slight movement of air created by a faraway conversation that slightly unnerves you, then you become more aware of other negative conversations, which makes you more sensitive to any downturns in your own business.

The danger at this point is that the barely discernible flap of a butterfly's wing has, in your mind, turned itself into a business on the brink of collapse. Had you brushed away that initial flapping and ignored the prodding of other negative energies, would it have had a similar effect on your business?

Don't let others affect your thinking

There is a fine balance between keeping yourself informed of the influences and trends that affect your business. How well are your competitors doing? Who's flourishing and who is failing? Are there changing government policies that could have an impact?

Letting others' successes and failures and allowing the unpredictability of external forces

affect your thinking about your business on a heightened emotional level will affect your decision making. One company failing may be that company's truth but it doesn't have to be yours.

External vs internal focus

In psychology there is a thing called your focus of control. Having an external focus of control means that you are affected by things outside of yourself, things over which you have no control. An internal focus of control means that you focus only on those factors which you can control and don't get affected by those factors which are outside of your control.

Cultivating an internal focus of control means that the only truth you need to worry about is your own truth. That whatever is going on in other areas of the industry and outside in the wider world, you have the emotional resilience and intelligence to process it in a positive, proactive manner for the good of your business.

The good news is an internal focus of control can be learned and strengthened through knowledge and practice – try it and see how powerful it can be in chipping away negative thoughts. [i](#)

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