

## Meaningful Mindset – A Banking Tale by Faisal Hussain

I've never really done something like this before. ..  
I've never really told a story about what I do...  
I've never even thought about it in that way...  
I guess I've always just done things through feeling it, instinct if you will, not thinking it too much...and put it on my CV in a few formal bullet points.

But through the journey of developing Meaningful Mindset, I've learnt a few things...

Things about perception, things about revealing, learning and changing. ..things like clarity, patterns and sky...Even mysterious things about the witness and the wind. ..but that's a different story. ..perhaps one for another time.  
So let me share this story. ..

The one of the Cell and the words I want to use to tell it..

*This is a story about creating a Visionary Mindset in order to transform the future. It's about a fundamental belief that in order to create real breakthroughs and drive change forward, you have to Be the change, lead from the front and keep trying until you succeed. You need to turn Mindset, collaboration, exploration and experimentation, into sold execution.  
This is the story of how you do it, and we have done it...*

So let's start with where this journey began. In a Bank, in the heart of the city of London. Just another sector in crisis, just another company trying to regain customer trust and confidence. Just another company drowning in red tape. Sounds tough right? A little hard to change anything where it's all gone a bit wrong. The pressure, the disengagement, the brow beaten mentality. . But it also sounds like just the right place for an experiment, something a little bit different, something positive, constructive, maybe even a leap...a leap across 500m dollars of strategy and new capability to meet the needs of the future...maybe even 58m dollars worth of savings and iconic artefacts that describe a new technology architecture...well let's not get to the leaps just yet...that comes later.

It didn't begin with a grand ambition. It began with a series of questions....where are we going, why can't we do things quickly. ..why have we lost confidence and trust....i guess they are big questions when I look back on it now.  
So my response to this? Simple really. ..

I told the Managing Director if you want to change this, you have to create the space for it...allow it to be different, put your good ideas into it, trust it, empower it and let it grow...  
And he said 'show me'...and step 1 began. It began with a bit of research in order to open the mind, by having a look at Out there, the ether, the world, organisations. My first insight, my first thoughts, my first words?

Well organisations are evolving...from Control based to Self Manage based operating models...my research told me this...

*Change is inevitable. Our response to it is a choice. Real leaders don't just adapt to change, they actually lead it. Imagine the impact of great leaders we all recognise on your own organisations. They would work in new ways, have new models and new definitions of success. They are self managers, they achieve through bigger Visions, new Skills, a different Mindset and they create new Cultures.*

And I believe they do all this in parallel.

The way to a new way of being and doing is a journey and a leap that changes your mindset...

So my 2nd step was to put a case together for changing things. The first question I was asked to answer was Where are we going with everything?

I proposed a team of individuals, 9 people from different disciplines across the group, I asked that we look at all the change the organisation was trying to deliver in terms of over 500m dollars worth of projects, I asked that we look at whatever strategy was out there on paper, and understand where it was leading us..be it growth drivers or innovation. I also took on board what the industry and the increasing regulation agenda coming through the government, was directing us to do, and brought that in too. We were going to create a roadmap for change and a vision to describe the future we wanted to be a part of...

Phew, quite a lot of inputs or ingredients all placed into a small space. But I wanted to do much more than just review content and answer a big question, I wanted to show them something they had not seen before, outcomes as well as an output. A journey as well as a deliverable.

And so I crafted the terms for the space....and my theory was this...

*A new culture cannot happen overnight, you need to create a space for it to be developed. How you experiment, refine and perfect what you want to be, as well as deliver tangible results along the way, is crucial. The Cell is the space for that experiment. It's the How as well as the What. It's the model of What Good Looks Like and it's the Journey as well as the end game.*

My proposal said...The journey of How and What needs a map of some kind...and you need to trust me to develop that map, that blueprint, that set of outputs. And they agreed again...

The Cell was born...

Let's pause for second...here is my inner theory of what I was going to do with the individuals, the team,...and remember it's still a bank I was dealing with here...back in January 2015. These individuals hadn't seen much change in a while, some were already browbeaten, most were disengaged, and they had retreated into silos quite nicely.

*The only way to do this well, is to be able to think and model what you want to do, through multiple lenses. We call them Elements, the place you are coming from. Some of these are straightforward and some are hidden, a little bit mysterious, but all are required.*

You also have to Design what you want, Lead it and then ultimately Transfer it and the legacy of it to those to help create and run it. Just follow the Blueprint, one element at a time.

Recall when I mentioned Leap before? Each Element is a leap and has a place in the Design as part of the Cell. ..there is theory at work here for the individual, the collective, the leader, as well as the content of the work.

And on we went. ..the question of where are we going led to step 3...what are we doing...why are we doing this...why is this part without strategy, this doesn't fit, this doesn't even make sense....what should we do, why should we do it...who cares, we care, why?

All challenge was allowed, all ideas were discussed, all thoughts were accepted, we coined a little phrase, we can do in half a day, what the organisation would take a month doing.

So the core team of 10 people, did the following. ..we reviewed 500m dollars worth of stuff, turned it into a 3 year road map with IT architecture with 58m dollars of synergy identified, 7 new levels of Resilience across the bank, 13 new hi tech Capabilities, a world class operating model, thought leadership in terms of new functions and components, linked it to a new technology architecture which we created artefacts for and gave choices to the executive, and a

sequence and a schedule, with outputs that made it make sense for the executive and those on the ground, the doers.. and we didn't stop there....we solved problems that came from the Regulator, which could have initiated 100m worth of unnecessary change programmes. ...cost avoidance I guess in some way...and we shaped a business case for a totally new kind of ambition that the group wanted to achieve...a big idea!

The Managing Director fell off his chair, they all did. ..the tangible leaps had been made, we had made sense of the strategy and added to it, decisions became a lot easier...our output became recognised as a guide for the whole group, a mirror for our intentions, and a way through all the challenges. ..

nice right? Exciting, invigorating and purposeful.

Not bad...I guess. ..9 people and me...but that was just outputs...and that's only half the story. But what we didn't do, until more recently, is tell the other story...the journey of the 10 people that had shaped and taken on a 500m dollar strategy, and succeeded in solving it, and evolving it into something bigger

We hadn't talked about Outcomes as well as Outputs.

Stories, of how...reflection and improvement, and bigger aspirations and ideas...I had been adding Elements into the team but not visibly because the team was also an experiment for me. Individuals had delivered this output, not anyone else. The way the team worked and the excitement and collaboration they generated through the journey was worth capturing. My inner thoughts at this time...were something like this...

*It's all about the Experience, the People who make the experience. These need to be selected or even better, self-selected. The group of people need to have an open mind, be good at bonding quickly, feel comfortable in a working group where they choose their own governance and rules. They have to be encouraged to think differently and make important decisions. Their diversity and skills will set them apart and their strengths combined will make them powerful. But they need Elements, The team has to have an understanding of each other's character in order to be more than the sum of the parts...*

So I set about capturing the experience of the journey and played it back to them as a step 4. Simple surveys about how they felt about the words I had been using, the Elements which were defining our mindset.

I revealed them to the team, showing them how they had been applying them...Thread which became no silos,

Goal which became target operating model,

People which became values like Honesty, Integrity, and Safety, and others like

Explore which became blue sky,

Growth which became common goals,

Products which became output,

Attitude which became no hierarchy,

Blueprint.which became design...and the biggest one....mindset which became culture.

The results were really profound. We compared 18 months ago to now, outcomes of what had evolved, what had changed for good, and real comments and feedback about how they felt about themselves and each other. Their new mindset.

I wish I could show you some of their results. But what I can tell you is what it made me think as a summary of how I felt and how I reflected upon how good you can be....

*Above and beyond. The highest aspiration is possible, the hardest thought, the eternal journey, the journey of being alive, when alive really matters. The moments it creates, the feeling. The success. Sounds positive right? And it is, it needs to be, because it will lead to Growth. All these*

*Elements need to point in the right direction, otherwise the Cell will wither and new Cells won't work. Constructive verses Destructive must be in your thought pattern. Be the change, execute it and leave it to Grow without you...*

And that's what the survey said. And here we are through to today....and they are still going, they have gone from a nice experiment to becoming the go to team for problems and strategy solving. They do it with ease and the products they created have become iconic.

But I haven't finished yet. ..there is more to do. ..in my little blueprint, there is another stage, after Design and Lead....it's called Transfer...

Transfer....which really means how does that team continue the Experience when the world changes again and even I go... How will it continue to grow....how it will it tackle bigger challenges and more radical approaches to solve problems. I believe they have it in them, and I think I've got to convince them they do too...what needs to be embedded into them is the Blueprint, the Elements and the story of how they are changing things. ...forever. That is how you do it after all...

*The Elements, they will come alive. Like I said, each one has a part to play, each one is part of the whole. You do it in stages, get to a point and then reflect.*

*This kind of thinking and doing, may already be around, I'm just putting a frame to it and finding the words to build it out as part of a story, as part of an experience that is so much richer than just a job, a role. If there is something missing out there, it's a better Blueprint, it's Meaning, it's Attitude, it's Mindset, it's Character...*

*Nothing is impossible, but how you do it, may just be a brilliant story...*

So, to summarise, what I'm saying is that you can template how to fuse all these ideas, words and techniques together, in a small environment and team, and deliver great things, outputs that are breakthrough as much as tangible. ..in the Cell.

Put the outcome as well as output however into someone's DNA and even your own...then you will succeed in changing it all and help create a meaningful mindset. .

And finally, if you're wondering what do you do now...well you should go write your own story...  
The end.