

Decision Making in Uncertain Times

Facilitator: Tim Oldman, Leesman

Speakers: Major General Tom Copinger-Symes, Commanding Force Troops Command
An anonymous Director with Chief Security Office, the Financial Sector
Omar Rahim, CEO Energi Mine
Lesley Uren, Senior Client Partner, Korn Ferry

A fantastic line-up of speakers from a range of backgrounds came together at WeWork Aldwych in May, bringing first-hand experience and examples of decision-making in uncertain times.

The speakers were introduced by Tim Oldman of Leesman. Omar Rahim, a crypto/blockchain expert, started out as an oil trader before moving into other energy fields and finally launching Energi Mine in 2017 to revolutionise the way energy is purchased and consumed globally. Lesley Uren has long experience in human resources starting in large corporates before moving across to consultancy. The anonymous Director within the Financial Sector, has worked in security in Europe and Africa ensuring the safety of the corporates who employed him. And finally, Tom Copinger-Symes, a Rifleman by trade who got involved in data and now commands what he described as 'the digital bits' of the Army.

Tom Copinger-Symes opened quoting the Duke of Wellington - that success in warfare, as in life, is about 'knowing what is on the other side of the hill'. Once you might have been blinded, literally, by the fog of war. That challenge remains but the greater danger nowadays is from too much data (fake news, deception, distraction) - the trick is in processing the data you have. And the answer to the risk of decision paralysis from too much data is 'let not perfect be the enemy of good'.

Omar explored how bitcoin and cryptocurrencies, once disrupters split between those who wanted to change the world and those who simply wanted to make as much money as possible, have become, with the arrival of entrepreneurs looking to raise large sums quickly, a more generally accepted means of doing so.

The financial sector Director, talking about security in banking, a highly regulated industry, pointed out that the size of bigger organisations tends to provide its own protection, as they have large teams with which to deal with the issues that smaller, more creative companies may not have. He also noted that in his industry, banking, there was increasing collaboration on the security front between corporates with greater information sharing for the benefit of the wider sector.

HR consultant Lesley noted the importance of building multi-disciplinary teams, of breaking down silos and driving collaboration, making the most of the talent you have, sharing to solve a skill shortage. Adding that change is constant 'that's the challenge', she also noted that it's not just moving desks and walls but the human element which is more important. To which Tom added that 21st century leadership is less about having all the answers and more about working out what the right questions are, with the answers 'crowdsourced' from lower levels. Interestingly too, in this fast paced and uncertain world, 'if you're not making mistakes - you're not making anything'.



Questions from the floor included 'how do you train a gut instinct?', 'what snippet of advice is key?', and 'why would reliance on intuition not lead to more silos?', to which some of the answers were: 'build diverse teams and listen', and 'having conversations about your purpose rather than your career is key'.

This was a fascinating evening with much to consider from different points of view but the general take-away has to be - be prepared. That it is as important to focus on having the right tools to do the job you should be doing, as it is to measure enablement as much as engagement.

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