

**How curiosity and  
creativity are your  
superpowers in the  
digital economy**



# the human edge

Greg Orme

# Praise for *The Human Edge*

‘Don’t be afraid. *The Human Edge* will teach you how to beat the machines in the AI revolution. After reading this book, I found the 4Cs became my daily mantra. Highly recommended for technophobes and digital natives alike.’

**Lisa Perrin, CEO, Creative Networks,  
Endemol Shine Group**

‘Forget “project fear” – here’s how to survive and even thrive in a future shared with artificial intelligence. *The Human Edge* tells us why we won’t be being replaced just yet – and how you can make the partnership with AI work for you.’

**Mark Adams, Director of Communications,  
International Olympic Committee**

‘The 21st century guidebook you and your kids need to stay one step ahead in the age of computerised competition.’

**Adrian Monck, Member of the Managing Board,  
World Economic Forum**

‘The intelligent person’s guide to the future.’

**Jules Goddard, London Business School Teaching Fellow;  
author, *Uncommon Sense and Common Nonsense***

‘An important book for anyone seeking to make an impact in our transforming world with those distinctive qualities that make us truly human.’

**Julian Birkinshaw, Professor of Strategy and  
Entrepreneurship, London Business School; co-author,  
*Fast!Forward: Make Your Company Fit for the Future***

‘Turn off your phone, un-divide your attention and read this important book. It’s an essential guide to keeping your job (and possibly your mind) in the 21st century.’

**Richard Watson, author, *Digital Vs Human***



# 4

## The power of purpose

*How finding motivational meaning  
unleashes the 4Cs*

*'He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.'*

Friedrich Nietzsche

Superpower: **Consciousness**

Dance Step: **SEEK**

Igniting questions:

- How does being conscious of meaning differentiate us from AI?
- What are the benefits of purpose?
- What choices help to clarify your 'Why'?

4Cs value: **Inspiration and motivation to make an impact**

In 2009, Bronnie Ware wrote an online article called 'Regrets of the Dying', about her time as a palliative carer for those in the last months of their life.<sup>1</sup> It attracted so much attention that Ware expanded the initial blog into a book of the same name. It describes the phenomenal clarity people gain at the end of their lives. 'When questioned about any regrets they had or anything they would do

differently’, she says, ‘common themes surfaced again and again.’ By far the most common regret was some version of this statement:

*‘I wish I’d had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.’*

Ware writes: ‘When people realise that their life is almost over and look back clearly on it, it is easy to see how many dreams have gone unfulfilled. Most people had not honoured even a half of their dreams and had to die knowing that it was due to choices they had made, or not made. Health brings a freedom very few realise, until they no longer have it.’ The Dalai Lama also advises that we ponder our mortality: ‘It is crucial to be mindful of death – to contemplate that you will not remain long in this life. If you are not aware of death, you will fail to take advantage of this special human life that you have already attained.’<sup>2</sup> Six years before he passed away from pancreatic cancer, Steve Jobs expressed a similar sentiment: ‘Remembering that I’ll be dead soon is the most important tool I’ve ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything – all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure – these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.’<sup>3</sup>

How do you live a meaningful life? And, why is it important? Finding meaning is our first Dance Step – SEEK (within the superpower of Consciousness) for the same reason Bronnie Ware, the Dalai Lama and Steve Jobs bring it to our attention: becoming more aware of *why* you do things ignites a zestful, passionate and creative way of being. Meaning is also a powerful motivator, unleashing human emotions. Unlike machines, we need curiosity, joy, satisfaction and passion to encourage us to try new things, keep going after a setback and live life to its fullest. Meaning, purpose, mission, whatever you choose to call it – I use these terms interchangeably – motivates you to sustain 4Cs-type behaviour. Fascinatingly, there’s a feedback

loop created by developing these 4Cs habits which nurtures an even greater meaning in your life. Finally, as I'll reveal, it even changes your brain chemistry for the better.

## What is meaning?

Meaning is a North Star to guide your decisions when life gets complicated. It's a powerful engine that'll supply you with the determination to keep going when things get tough. And, it's a coach to encourage you to try new things in order to keep growing as a person. It helps you to move beyond simply understanding *what* you do, and *how* you do it, to instead ask a slightly disconcerting additional question: 'Why do I do, what I do?'

After more than a decade of formally and informally asking individuals this question, I've noticed a pattern. For many, work has little consequence beyond a source of finance and societal status. Their answer to the 'Why?' question in the context of their career is along the lines of: 'I work to earn cash to live. If I earn enough money I can also enjoy nice things.' But, if you dig a little deeper, you find the same person derives powerful meaning from their wider life – it just doesn't sit in the compartment labelled 'work'. You'll find they place great significance on some passionate unpaid role or hobby: sailor, painter, rugby coach, amateur dramatist or gardener. Even if they don't have time for passions and pastimes, most people light up when they describe the value they derive from their role as a devoted cousin, brother, sister, mother, father, uncle, auntie or friend. The tantalising opportunity hides in these responses. If anyone can derive huge meaning from roles they are not paid for, that they elect to do for free, surely it's possible for all of us to find the same satisfying purpose in *everything* we do – including work?

## Meaning is the new money

In Israel, there is a group of ultra-orthodox Jews who have devoted their entire life to reading and interpreting the sacred text of the *Talmud* – the primary source of Jewish religious law. They enjoy none

of the usual trappings of success. In fact, they're so poor they have to receive hand-outs from the Israeli government just to make ends meet. Despite their relative poverty, in repeated surveys they report higher levels of happiness than most groups on earth. Why is this? By dedicating their life to an activity that they find hugely meaningful, something other than themselves, they have discovered a purpose to their life.<sup>4</sup>

By contrast, the average British worker admits they fantasise about quitting their job 16 times a year. A distinct lack of work satisfaction is not confined to the UK. People sense the lack of meaning in most jobs and are miserable about it. Wages in the Western world show only a marginal relationship with job satisfaction. In contrast, people selecting their career because of its potential meaning has grown steadily over the last 15 years.<sup>5</sup> Nine out of ten workers who already have a job say they would willingly trade a percentage of their lifetime earnings for greater meaning at work.<sup>6</sup> This emerging picture prompted the *Harvard Business Review* to proclaim in one recent article, 'Meaning is the new money'.

This book is not spiritual or religious in any way. I merely mention the Talmudic scholars to make the point, despite myths to the contrary, you don't become more curious and creative because you are paid more cash. The 4Cs superpowers are not switched on by a higher salary, a hefty end-of-year bonus – or even a free trip to the Caribbean. They are immune to the traditional external motivators thrown in your path by employers.<sup>7</sup> Curiosity and creativity ignite only for intrinsic (internal) motivators.

This insight was the focus of a psychological study of university students about to leave college to embark on their careers. One group of students stated their primary goal was to make money. The other group explained their objectives were more intrinsic: a mixture of helping others and personal growth. The researchers left both groups to their own devices out in the real world for two years. After this time, the impact of their chosen goals on their levels of satisfaction was clear. The purpose-driven students were happier than they were at college. They'd set out on a path and

were reaping the rewards. Of course, they had not completed their objective: there is never an end point to helping others or growing as a person. Conversely, the profit-motivated students felt like they had achieved their goal: they'd made some money. But their level of satisfaction was unchanged from two years earlier in college. Interestingly though, as a group, they reported higher levels of anxiety and depression.<sup>8</sup> To be satisfied with life you don't just need goals, you need the right type of goals.



## Human habit

### What sort of happy am I?

Think about the last three months of your life and answer the following questions. Score 1 if the answer was 'never', 6 if the answer was 'always' and from 2 to 5 for anything in between.<sup>9</sup>

- 1 Do I feel happy?
- 2 Do I feel satisfied?
- 3 Do I feel that my life has a sense of direction or meaning to it?
- 4 Do I feel I have something worthwhile to contribute to society?

The first two questions measure happiness. But it's a different type from that in the final two questions. Questions 1 and 2 measure your level of pleasure-seeking happiness, which comes from getting what you *want*.<sup>10</sup>

If your combined score for questions 1 and 2 was 8 or above, you're within the top five per cent of pleasure-seeking people in recent studies. That's great. Of course, there's nothing wrong with this type of happiness: it's just not the subject of this chapter, as it doesn't support the 4Cs model.

We're focusing on your scores for questions 3 and 4. This is your level of profound satisfaction, which comes from getting what you *need*: a meaning in life.<sup>11</sup> The insights and human habits covered in this book are designed to help build up these two scores. If your combined score for these two questions was 7 or above, you're in the top five per cent of people in the meaningful happiness category.<sup>12</sup>