

5 C's Of a Renaissance (Wo)Manager

INTRODUCTION

“How can I prepare someone for the things that don't even exist yet?”

I was talking with my best friend the other day, she just recently became a mother for the first time. We were discussing how her son's childhood and life in general, is going to be so different from the one we had. We were wondering about his future, about his education, his career, his everyday life. He is going to have things that haven't been invented yet, experience challenges we can't even think of at the moment. He'll probably study something that doesn't even exist yet.

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I started my Marketing studies in 2010. At that time, at a company where I'm employed right now and have been for the past three and a half years, there wasn't a possibility to visit Facebook or any other social media during working hours. If you have tried to log in to Facebook, you would be redirected to the company's website right away. Spending time on social media during your working hours was considered a waste of time.

Five years after that, when I had a Marketing degree in my hand and was about to get a master's degree in Business information systems, the same company posted a job on their Facebook page, for a Marketing Associate. The job description listed managing social media for the company, as one of the main responsibilities. Disruptive changes, led primarily by the technology revolution, have caused changes in companies' business models and employment landscape, in just five years. The five years of my University education.

When I was in elementary school, the idea that people would be working as social media managers wasn't imaginable. The idea of social media as a concept wasn't even imaginable. During my high school and University years, the importance of social media rose, and we started talking about how the companies can use it to promote its business. During all of my years of formal education, the society went from a *black and white TV* state of mind to *Netflix* state of mind, and yet I managed to adapt and succeed in the new and different environment.

The only constant during my life so far was the change. I wouldn't be surprised if five years from now, I'm working for a company that hasn't been founded yet. Or, If I'm the CEO of the company that has a product so unimaginable right now, that you would be laughing if I had told you. We don't know who will become the next Apple, Instagram or

Google, who will be the next Steve Jobs or Mark Zuckerberg, or what will be the technology of the future. But, I think there are a couple of things that will keep our minds open, enable us to survive, adapt and succeed in the world, whatever it becomes - tomorrow, next year or maybe even ten years from now.

CURIOSITY

“Replace the fear of the unknown with curiosity.”¹

Whenever I'm facing the question “What makes you the best candidate?” or “What is your biggest strength?”, I always go with “Curiosity”.

I think curiosity is ageless, it is important to have it - across geography, demographics, industries, sectors or roles. Why?

Curiosity is a perfect ground for mindset growth and adaptation in any kind of social or working environment. By exploring curiosity, you are allowing yourself to constantly wonder “why”, “what” and “how” and to include others in that process - you listen to others rather than just listening to yourself.

Curiosity feeds the hungry mind. You are letting yourselves to see what other people think, to hear from people from completely different backgrounds, to always look for new and better solutions, to listen and to be listened to.

There is a lot of people, especially young professionals, who sometimes are afraid to ask questions, whether it's because of their own restraints, or their manager's, or both. By being curious, you encourage people in your surroundings not to be afraid to ask questions - you'll learn, you'll grow, and so will they.

Curiosity is thought-provoking, insightful and inspiring. It is a meta-skill - it is not a skill by itself, but rather it's something that should be the base for every trait, skill or value out there. Curiosity will enable you to anticipate future skills requirements, prepare you for new business environments and business models.

By exploring and cultivating curiosity, you'll step into the infinite pool of possibilities. You'll be able to push boundaries, step out of the comfort zone and go with whatever challenge life/work puts before you. You'll be able to go with the flow of the unknown. No topic is off-limits when it comes to curiosity.

¹ Penelope Ward, *Jake Understood* (2015)

CREA(C)TIVITY

“It seems the harder I work, the more luck I have.”²

One of the important traits everyone should have is creativity or creative thinking. To be a Renaissance manager, you should always be able to think about new ideas and to be able to get new perspectives on old problems and challenges. Also, creativity applies to people management as well. There is no way the company can grow in any way unless people don't grow. Seeing the qualities, and potential in people, is crucial for your business, for you as their manager, for the company, and for themselves.

I think that creativity is not something that I have, and somebody else doesn't. Everyone is creative - it just manifests itself in different ways; our minds work differently, depending on our personal and professional backgrounds, our interests, our likes, and dislikes, etc. In my opinion and experience, creativity comes from diversity and action – learning new languages, seeing different places, talking to and knowing people from various backgrounds and cultures, and generally being interested in how things work somewhere out there, in the land of the unknown. Having experience, knowledge and interest in different areas, than the one that is your own.

There are companies, who have seen how diverse knowledge can benefit their employees and eventually, their business. They are sending their employees on rotation within the company as a mandatory part of the employees' development plan. For example, an engineer would spend a week working with the marketing department, marketing would spend a week working with the production department, production would spend a week working with the HR department, and so on. Some people would say that this is a waste of time and valuable resources, but this is a way you boost creativity and innovation within the people - they see different people, different processes, hear completely different points of view and their everyday life can receive a completely new perspective.

Creativity is sometimes wrongly linked only to marketing and advertising fields, but rest assured, there is no industry today that can say “We don't need creative thinkers”. On two lists: *Best cities for startups*³ and *10 of the world's most creative cities to live, work and play*⁴, in the top 10, two cities overlap - Berlin and Copenhagen. The most creative

² Thomas Jefferson, 3rd U.S. President

³ https://valuer.ai/blog/top-50-best-startup-cities/?cli_action=1560321115.849

⁴ <https://www.creativeboom.com/features/10-of-the-worlds-most-creative-cities-to-live-work-and-play/>

cities are the ones that are the best for the startup ecosystem. Creativity is crucial for innovative environments.

Even Drucker said, “I read a lot of history, biographies, science, and novels... I do not read management or economics.”⁵ A combination of various experiences, hobbies, and interests is crucial for creativity. A team of fifteen researchers at Michigan State University discovered that Nobel Prize winners had much more engagement in various artistic hobbies as opposed to ordinary scientists.

Artistic hobby	Odds for Nobel Prize winners relative to typical scientists
<i>Music:</i> playing an instrument, composing, conducting	2x greater
<i>Arts:</i> drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpting	7x greater
<i>Crafts:</i> woodworking, mechanics, electronics, glassblowing	7.5x greater
<i>Writing:</i> poetry, plays, novels, short stories, essays, popular books	12x greater
<i>Performing:</i> amateur actor, dancer, magician	22x greater

Table 1: Engagement in the arts among Nobel Prize winners relative to ordinary scientists⁶

This indicates an enormous impact that hobbies and non-work related interests have on creativity, across every area of expertise, business, and life.

Creative thinking should be considered meta-skill as well, everybody should have it, everybody should explore it, and everybody should work on it. Creative thinkers are essential for Digital age because for the last 20 years every aspect of our lives has been shaken by the digital revolution. Creativity feeds curiosity, in a way that we always learn about new *why*, new *how* and new *what*. Curiosity breeds creativity, by always asking *why*, *how* and *what*, you get insights into the unknown.

CHILD IN YOU

Lead by example!

Have you ever experienced an interview, meeting or evaluation with your manager, where the other side talked about certain qualities or traits you should have, but you thought that they themselves lack those qualities? Meetings, training, courses or any

⁵ Peter Drucker, from an interview in the Christian Science Monitor (1993)
⁶ Adam Grant, *Originals: How Non-Conformists Move the World*, Viking (2016)

kind of training for your employees, doesn't make any sense if the example you are setting isn't coherent with what you want to achieve. If you are asking someone to take responsibility for the things they have done, they will not be willing to do that if they've seen you avoid responsibility. People don't always practice what they preach, and you know that other people don't take too long to notice this. As Drucker has told us, "All management books, including those I have written, focus on managing other people. But you cannot manage other people unless you manage yourself first."⁷ We are the mirrors in which our people take their points of reference and guides.

Every manager should be able to unleash the child out - to embrace the unknown, always ask questions, to have unfiltered conversations, to release the imagination when needed, not to be afraid of taking risks and making mistakes, not to let failure let them down. Managers seem to proceed with caution when it comes to these things, which results in their people doing the same, which creates a very tucked in and safe environment to work in. And, people working in these environments are resistant to change.

We are sometimes so boxed by our own experience, that we are missing out on great opportunities. "*We have always done it this way*" kind of people have never made history. If you want something bad enough, if you want something innovative, you can't expect it to happen without intent or action.

There should be a brainstorming technique called "*Let your inner child out*" where nothing would be out of reach, where you could unleash your imagination as much as you want and think of the things without barriers and constantly wondering "Is this really going to work". Asking questions is the key to understanding the world around us.

Lead by example, because no matter what age people are - like children - they will not act on what they hear, but on what they see.

COMMUNICATION

Growing up, going through education and finally being on the job market is so much different today than it was 5,10,15 or especially 20 years ago. Each of these phases of our lives is filled with different things, especially when it comes to the technology revolution and all the benefits and challenges that it brings. Communication has changed so much; the digital revolution connected the people across the world and blurred international boundaries. Shift to technology is so big when it comes to

⁷Peter Drucker, *Manage Yourself and Then Your Company: Set an Example*, Lecture by Peter Drucker on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the IEDC

communication, that in some cases it has replaced face-to-face interaction. We are now able to talk to a person in a completely different time zone, but, somewhere along the line, we forgot how to talk to one sitting next to us.

In-person communication has benefits that no technology can live up to. It drives creativity, boosts productivity, builds loyalty and creates an opportunity to engage others in the process. By encouraging people to actually talk to each other, you'll establish positive ties among them and with them. Communication requires so many skills and most of them are not possible to explore on digital platforms. Digital communication is convenient for sure, but in business environments, managers should use it strategically. Whenever possible, In-person communication should be a priority.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Like an old Chinese proverb says, "Learning is like rowing upstream; not to advance is to drop back."

If you are only satisfied with the *status quo*, your status quo is very soon going to become *status way behind*. Progress and growth require continuous improvement(s) on various levels, acquisition, and anticipation of new skills. There is so much change going on in the world and you need to keep up. "*This is the way we do it*" kind of people have never made history. Not only that they haven't made history, but they are also swiped of the market because their way of doing things has been overcome a long time ago.

*"If the rate of change on the outside exceeds the rate of change on the inside, the end is near."*⁸

Improvements are based on curiosity, crea(c)tivity, new ideas, on feedback. When talking about improvements, I'm not talking about the times when things are not going so well and you know you have to change something. Simply reacting to problems that occur doesn't take much effort. I'm talking about the proactive improvements (or as Drucker would say - change leaders). If you want to succeed today and have a chance of succeeding tomorrow, you must embrace lifelong learning.

Unlock your potential, the potential of your team, the potential of an idea, through improvements. Educational resources for formal improvements range from reading articles and visiting conferences to full-blown courses. But, there are so many other

⁸ Jack Welch, Former CEO of General Electric

ways you can improve yourself or your team. For example, having a friendly game of volleyball after work can benefit teamwork skills.

The three pillars of “The best way to predict your future is to create it”⁹ are curiosity, proactivity, and crea(c)tivity.

CONCLUSION

The future is dependent on today's Renaissance managers, and their curiosity, imagination, and creativity.

It's a well-known fact that Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man is special because of its magnificence in two areas, art and science, but I think it could have another dimension - business. Like Vitruvian Man is able to touch the end of both a square and a circle, the Renaissance manager should be able to adapt to any environment he or she is in, should be able to work with different people, to respond to different challenges put before him/her at any time. Since there's no possible way to become an expert in everything, especially not in the things that don't even exist yet, how can *Manager* transition into *Renaissance manager*?

By being curious about the entire spectrum of individual and global differences, constantly learning new things (no matter how big or small), being interested in things outside your comfort zone and/or area of expertise, talking with different people and exchanging ideas, doing sports, being able to give and receive constructive criticism. All of those things can make you comfortable with the unknown of the present, and the unknown of the future.

Great managers should be up to date with global trends for sure. But, since we know these things are prone to change, they should be cultivating values, traits, and skills that could help them (and everybody else around them) adapt to any environment, any opinion, any challenge - today or 10 years from now.

The greatest “C” of all, is that all of these things mentioned above are *contagious*. You don't have to put special effort into transferring these skills to your people and educating them - you just have to do them and believe in them. If you are interested in doing and learning different things, people around you will follow.

⁹ This quote is credited to both Peter Drucker and Abraham Lincoln

Encourage yourself and by that, encourage the people around you, to be interested in, and to explore more than one thing. Be knowledgeable about different things, try out different things, have a variety of experiences and hobbies.

Being a Manager is just a job. Being a Renaissance manager applies to your role as a boss, as a colleague, as a friend or as a parent. No matter if you are a student, a young professional, or you just became a parent for the first time, if you nurture the thing(s) outlined above, there won't be future unpredictable enough, for you, your people, your friends or your children.

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