

The Picture on the Lid of the Box

What do your people see?

One piece of the jigsaw

Imagine hundreds of jigsaw pieces in a box. If you handed out single pieces to people – what would they see? They would each see only the part of the picture shown on their piece of the jigsaw....

This is the experience of many people at work every day. They work hard and take decisions in their part of a business, but they do so from a perspective of having only 'one piece of the jigsaw'. It means that their hard work can fail to deliver the best outcome for the business, even when done with the best intentions.

How much better would it be if everyone across the business could see the picture of the whole business, on the lid of the box? The "Picture on the lid of the box" would help them see where they fit in and how their 'piece' is related to the other parts of the business and so on.

Creating the 'big picture'

In many businesses, people are exposed to large volumes of information – through the intranet, emails and other literature - that's not curated or strategic. The result: people run their part of the business based on individual assumptions and perspectives, not shared with their colleagues.

Setting out all of the elements of a business in a single picture enables people to get hold of the fundamental elements and the inter-connectedness of the different parts. A good, big picture will simplify the reality of the business for people and show them how it works and where they fit in.

(NB. People respond more readily to images than they do to words. Explaining concepts, strategies and ways of working can require many words when an image instantly delivers the message.)

People are more able to relate their work to the overall context of the business and see how what they do, impacts others. This helps people find new ways to collaborate with other parts of the business, reduces duplication and conflicting activities and, importantly, motivates people to act in the best interests of the overall business.

What results is a form of common 'language' for communicating the workings of the business. This gives people a tangible and common reference point for collaborating with each other.

The big picture ("picture on the lid of the box") can help people to:

- Agree and understand the fundamental elements and interdependencies and touch points.
- Improve the quality of conversation and problem solving.
- Explore and play with possible scenarios and ideas.
- Improve communication on what matters and how things work.

Making it practical...

Create a visual model of how the business works

A good starting point to creating the "Picture on the lid of the box" for your business is to start with a rough drawing. The act of drawing things out (rough and sketchy is good) helps people to better describe and discuss how they see things.

When a small group of people meets to draw how they see the business working, it's amazing the discussion that takes place. It helps people shape, share and deepen their understanding of how things work, or might work in the future.

It works best if people just dive in and have a go, as there's no need to be an artist or have a detailed understanding of the business – just see what comes out when people draw. (A list of the big pieces of the business can help as a prompt). The simple pictures that people sketch usually make things clear and easy for others to interpret.

Depending on your ambition, the scale of your business and what you want to achieve – these basic sketches can form the brief for developing more robust models for business-wide communication and to support business planning & performance improvement.

For example:

- A professionally produced **infographical style model** – endorsed and used by the leadership team across the business in support of strategy implementation
- A working, interactive, **digital model** – great for modeling decisions and for learning how the business works (animation can be used to accentuate the features)
- Constructing a **3D simulation model** to give people the opportunity to 'run the business.'

All of these visual representations will help build meaning and understanding for people.

Purpleworks specialise in creating these "big picture" models – we have extensive experience built up over 15 years across multiple industry sectors and many individual models.

Whatever approach you use, ensure that the visual model captures a simple view of how the whole business works and then get people using and talking about it.

Create a "Playbook"

On the sporting field, teams capture their game plans for winning matches in a PLAYBOOK.

Every player knows each play intimately and the part that they will play. Together, the team sees the overall plan and how they will work together to win.

Purpleworks pioneered the approach to creating Playbooks for whole businesses. We started this in the late nineties and we now lead the market in this powerful approach to getting strategy in play and winning.

A great Playbook spells out the strategy using short texts, visualization and infographical presentation to tell the story of the strategy and the practical things people need to do to get things in play. The Playbook is designed to be a practical, hands on book provided to everyone in the business.

It's the way that the leaders tell the story of where the business is going. What's covered are the big picture context of the market, the megatrends shaping it, what customers are seeking, how competitors are changing and the specific role of the business. It sets out the business direction, goals and how success will be measured.

They work so well because they're based on a modern, "multiple intelligent" understanding of how the mind works. This makes Playbooks practical and easy-to-use, so they become cherished, 'dog-eared' companions to refer to - in everything from business planning to personal appraisals.

Vehicles for dialogue

Once developed, the visual model of How the business works and the Playbook become vehicles for dialogue across the business. They are powerful business tools for managers to share with their teams and hold conversations on, to help everyone find meaning and draw their own conclusions. The prize is a shared understanding of what's in play across the business, what is being prioritised and why.

By getting the big picture, people's work becomes more valuable and meaningful. Inter-dependencies are spelled out. People are prompted to talk about the business in new ways because they see new connections. Distractions caused by politics or self-interest become easier to deal with and reduce to minimal significance.

In short and powerful way to build buy in to the strategy across the business!



“ It’s the way that the leaders tell the story of where the business is going that counts. ”

