

Everything is Changing!

What employees want from work is changing. What consumers want from their products and services is changing. How politics, society, and the environment acts, reacts and behaves is changing.

Everything is changing. And fast!

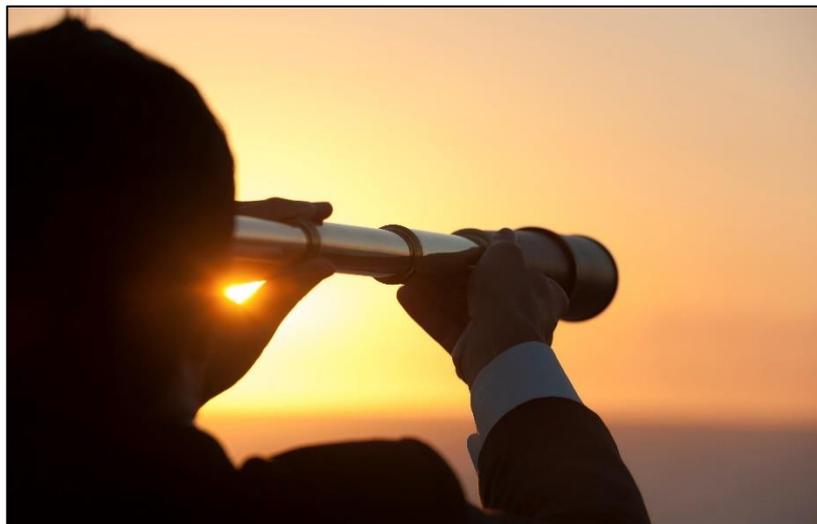
Many organisations have the challenge of changing to stay relevant. They must adapt to survive, as new entrants and new tech disrupts their markets, and they must reinvent to be the organisations talented people want to join.

All organisations should have a really good look at who they are, what they want to contribute, what they do and how they do it, how they are structured and how their people are treated.

They should do it now. And do it regularly. Corporate self-reflecting of this type guards against complacency and recognises opportunities that need urgently grasping.

Three Mindsets

At CONTRACT we work with many types and sizes of organisations in a range of industries and locations. We have been noticing how the events of 2020 has accelerated three trends which we view as critical. In our work, guiding organisations in how they grow, develop and change, we see 2021 as a watershed moment for them.



We have noticed three distinct and inter-connected mindsets and ways of being that will assist organisations to self-reflect, change, and act in different ways than before. These three mindsets drive thinking, execution, and behaviour – in fact, they drive everything an organisation needs to stay awake.

And they should start living them now.

And keep living them every day.

Three mindsets and ways of being that everyone in the business cultivates, and ones that they encourage their partners and stakeholders to understand and adopt as well.

Futurist | Agilist | Humanist

Futurist | Agilist | Humanist are what we have termed these three mindsets and ways of acting. All are terms you will recognise; they are not new. Like most changes they are around for a long

time, on the edge of things before they become mainstream, seemingly overnight. Some organisations and people can of course apply the terms to themselves already; not many can claim all three with confidence.

We are pretty sure that there is exponential synergy between these three ways of being. We don't see them as favourite chocolates you can select from the box whilst ignoring the rest. For us, they come as a package – they reinforce each other, they are integral parts of the same system, and their impact is diluted if they are unbundled.

We are convinced that the organisations and people who really embrace this right now and throw down their old concepts, ideals and methods will take the lead. Maybe there are more of these than we think, and we should check at the 'back of our metaphorical cupboards'. Consumers will want to buy from these forward-thinking organisations, other businesses will want to partner with them, and people will want to work for them.

Thinking & Planning as a Futurist

Many leaders from C-suite level to team leaders have grown up on incremental change; improving, fine-tuning, and evolving what and how things are done. It's what many of us know and are comfortable with. More visionary leaders often become frustrated by their own efforts to transform things, as their more cautious colleagues resist change that leaps, rather than edges, forward.

In short human beings find it hard to let go.

We become attached to what we think, what we do and find it difficult to jump into an uncomfortable zone.

However, the answers we need for our future aren't in our past, we have to stop looking over our shoulder to solve problems or find a way forward. Hindsight and insight are valuable for learning and many of us have strong skills in these areas; now we need to develop equally strong ones in foresight. The examples we have of organisations that have disrupted their industry or own businesses did just that; they tapped into foresight, predicting what might, could, or should be. And we are in a complex, uncertain, and volatile environment that is often accelerating exponentially so reheating what we have done before isn't going to cut it.

That is what being a futurist is. Letting go and rebuilding.

As leaders, we need to think more about the future, and encourage others to think about it too, exploring more what could be possible, considering what might happen in the world, in politics, in society, in the environment. Using thinking that looks for weak signals that are emitted in the early stages of change, finding the emerging patterns of potentially fast-growing trends. Being futurist is even exploring several possible futures, or investigating multiple potential opportunities, or finding different ways to contribute to what the world, clients or consumers need. This type of thinking will create direction that inspires and plans that can flex as events unfold. We need to accept that flexing plans and changing course are necessary for sustainable success, because in our world unexpected things do happen.

Operating as an Agilist

Agile as a concept and a set of tools and methodologies has emerged and developed over the past 40 or 50 years. Again, it's not new. However, when coupled with a Futurist mindset it takes on greater significance. On its own working in an agile way brings greater efficiency, faster and more focussed ways to develop products or software. Combined with a futurist approach it provides the means to bring change in a series of waves that build on each other at pace. An agilist mindset ensures customers are kept at the core, end customers as well as employees as customers, partners as customers, the organisation as customer, the environment as customer and so on. In addition, a futurist-agilist-humanist approach can bring more. Maintaining urgency by working in short sprints, devolving decision making to teams, creating teams from your network of talented people, people who aren't tied to restrictive roles.

The operational fabric and activity of the organisation is developed from the direction created by futurist thinking, the agilist mindset, tools and methods enable and deliver those plans. Agile is flexible enough, fast enough and focussed enough to deliver with an unpredictable and changeable environment in mind. It also allows leaders to coach, collaborate, and consult in a humanist manner rather than control and direct their people.

Behaving as a Humanist

The final piece of the three-mindset jigsaw is behaving as a humanist. This means treating the people you work with whether you are a leader, or a colleague, as the person they are rather than an employee. The recent lockdowns have allowed us to get a window into the lives and homes of our colleagues, through virtual meetings. Many people want to change the way work fits into their life and organisations should allow more flexibility to make life meaningful and sustainable for their people. It means leaders practically creating environments where people feel safe to speak up, be themselves, have a viewpoint and challenge things for the better. It means treating everyone else with respect, kindness, care and understanding, rather than stereotyping, judging, and criticising. It means being more transparent, treating employees as adults and including them in as many things as humanly possible. It means enabling, empowering, and extending others every day; reskilling and upskilling them for whatever is around the corner and encouraging everyone to think about themselves and others as a futurist would. Now leaders have had to trust people there is no going back, it means they have to helping their team members contribute to the organisation, bringing all their skills, knowledge, and attitude to the game.

Perhaps most importantly acting in a humanist way means inspecting our own unconscious biases, privilege, and work through the gender, race and other '-isms' that permeate our society and organisations. The spotlight that has been shone on these kind of equality issues by movements like Black Lives Matter and Me Too means that organisations have to act to make their workplaces different than they have been. Humanist organisations will show that all people can be included and valued for whoever they are and celebrated for whatever they bring.

Behaving as a humanist means you create a system and culture where everybody actively wants to be part of it, they don't want to leave, and other people actively want to join. It becomes the cultural glue that makes the other 2 mindsets and ways of being 'stick'!

Working Towards Three Mindsets

In CONTRACT we believe each of these mindsets and ways of being has a part to play in bringing success and sustainability. Of course, we don't find it easy, we face the challenges every day posed by a world that is full of paradoxes, and the picture we have painted will take effort and time to even get close to. We are still taking on the challenge as we feel it is the right thing to do. In the process of reinventing our own organisation, we expect road-bumps on the way, and we look forward both to the challenge and the benefits it will bring, to our business, our people, and our clients.

Much of what we already do for our clients consists of us assisting them in considering, creating, and strengthening these mindsets. However, over the past 12 months we have, like many of you, updated our services, found new thinking, and created different concepts and methods as we looked to the future. And that Futurist-style thinking continues using agile approaches to get them 'match ready'.

It seems to us a massive opportunity missed if you aren't thinking and planning as a Futurist, operating as an Agilist, and treating each other as Humanists.

History proves that the ones who grow out of the most challenging periods in history are the ones who look to the future, prepare for it and step into it.

We invite you to join us and create a similar movement in your own organisation. ***It's what drives our purpose of inspiring a humane economy.***