

How often have you faced a situation when you knew in your heart that you could have achieved more?

IS YOUR BUSINESS IN A HOT SPOT?

Sitting around the boardroom table during your monthly meeting, are you and your colleagues working well together as a team, sharing ideas and making things happen? If so (and I hope so), you could be in a **'Hot Spot'**.

"We enjoy being part of a Hot Spot. When Hot Spots arise in and between companies, they provide energy for exploiting and applying knowledge that is already known and genuinely exploring what was previously unknown...Yet organisations are not always about generating Hot Spots. **How often have you faced a situation when you knew in your heart that you could have achieved more?**"

Dr Lynda Gratton, author of *'Hot Spots – why some companies buzz with energy and innovation and others don't'* seeks to understand how and why some organisations are so adept at creating Hot Spots and thriving in them. Gratton is Associate Professor of Organisational Behaviour at the London Business School and has been placed at number 34 on the Financial Times list of the top 50 business thinkers in the World. Gratton has written this latest book to help companies to make the energy and excitement associated with Hot Spots part of everyday work life.

"Hot Spots shows managers how it is done."

But what are Hot Spots? Organisations become capable of real success through the extreme energy within Hot Spots. Think of international household names such as 'Nokia', 'Google' and 'Starbucks'. These are companies leading the way in their respective fields. These organisations are flourishing with energy within their Hot Spot. The courage and enthusiasm of these organisations is keeping them ahead of the game.

"Hot Spots occur when the energy within and between people flares – when the mundane of everyday activities is set aside for engaged work that is exciting and challenging. It is at these times that ideas become contagious and new possibilities appear. It is the dynamic combination of a cooperative mindset, cross boundary working and an igniting purpose that can result in the emergence of a Hot Spot. Hot Spots are crucial and the need for them has never been greater."

So the great results and the Hot Spots occur when a "mindset of cooperation emerges" but what happens when there is a lack of cooperation within an organisation, when there is a competitive mindset? Gratton discovered in her research that

competitive behaviours create barriers, more often than not unwittingly and unconsciously, but barriers nonetheless. Gratton spoke to the management team and various members of the workforces within the organisations she visited and discovered that in several cases the management were content with the cooperation and the teamwork, stating that **“teamwork is crucial to the performance of this company.”**

The Workforce however, saw it differently. There was no such sense of team work but a strong degree of competitiveness which was driving the members of the teams to work as individuals. Success was recognised and monitored individually rather than as a team so people stopped communicating and kept ideas and skills to themselves. It became a race to the top, an almost Darwinian ‘survival of the fittest’.

Gratton has realised that **“Companies that abound with Hot Spots are smart about using all points of leverage to encourage a mindset of cooperation, including rewarding practises that encourage team rather than individual performance, positive executive leadership practices that encourage and model cooperative working, and informal activities and events that encourage a sense of mutuality.”**

Gratton breaks her learnings into four ‘elements’ to assist her readers on the way to igniting their own Hot Spots. These are 1. **A Cooperative Mindset** – “Hot Spots emerge on their own – they cannot be ordered forth or dictated. People choose freely to give of their human capital (intellectual, emotional, or social) – they volunteer.” 2. **Boundary Spanning** – “value in companies is created by exploiting what is already known through strong relationship ties. Novelty and innovation emerge through exploration – this is facilitated by networks of relationships that cross boundaries.” 3. **Igniting Purpose** – “the latent energy in boundaryless cooperation is ignited with a spark. The responsibility of the leader is to ensure that this spark is created.” 4. **Productive Capacity** – “Hot Spots are formed at the nexus of a network of commitments that establish what actions will be taken and by whom.”

So we all want to be part of these Hot Spots and we would all like our organisations to be at the forefront but we have learned that **Hot Spots emerge on their own so what can the role of the leader be?** Gratton found that within companies with an abundance of Hot Spots the “leaders had played a crucial role by asking the difficult igniting questions, creating a network of friendships and opportunities for boundaryless cooperation and championing and supporting the unique signature processes that create the context for the emergence of Hot Spots.”

The team is the future, the future is hot!

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