

# PROFESSIONALISM + RESILIENCE = OPPORTUNITY

Join us at the 2021.2 NIBA Convention in February 2022 for first-hand exclusive insights, exciting networking opportunities, and world-class speakers.

The following is a tête-à-tête with Mark Carter, an international keynote speaker, trainer and coach. Mark shares his expertise on how businesses and employees can prepare for their return to the office, and insights into post COVID-19 working practices.

**Insurance Adviser:** What are your insights into how employers and employees will adapt to post COVID-19 return to the office working arrangements?

**Mark Carter:** A hybrid-working model for many businesses is part of the return to office arrangements. One of the first considerations is what does hybrid look like for you, your team, and your business? Make sure to land on an approach that suits your culture and needs. We may well read about businesses (often tech based) leading a trend offering their people the opportunity to work from home indefinitely. This approach won't work for everyone or all industries. Even when you break down the layers of behavioural science the odds are stacked that you'll have some people who may well appreciate more time working from home whilst others crave the energy and buzz of the office environment. Take a temperature check, gain your team's input, have candid conversations and find a hybrid model that will work for you.

It will be great to adopt more patience too! With ourselves as well as each other. To paraphrase from psychology, we may well have all been in the same storm, but we have been experiencing it from vastly different vessels. We have no idea what



our colleagues or clients have experienced during the last 18 months. Learning to judge less, and not leaping to assumptions is a lifelong quest given that we are, by nature, meaning making machines! Our brains are always churning over giving meaning to messages, situations, scenarios and, well, stuff. Perhaps put a special focus on the skill I often link to being the only one I'd train in sales if limited to a single theme only: learn to ask better questions and be genuinely interested and present to the answers.

As we all get back to the office, hybrid or in person, it's also a great time to recognise that every individual plays their part towards the culture. Business leaders may well steer the direction through a strong vision, mission values and culture playbook. Yet it is people, all individuals that bring it to life. In order

## ABOUT MARK CARTER

Mark Carter is an international keynote speaker, trainer and coach. He has over 20 years' experience as a global learning and development professional. He is a regular mainstream media contributor and author. His TEDx talk, 'Paws and effect', was the movie trailer for his latest book 'Add Value'. Mark has custom built a bespoke learning academy for SMEs and individuals with a focus on personal and professional development. He has developed unique programs and IP that simultaneously dovetail with a variety of globally recognised behavioural and business tools he's accredited in. The keynotes and deeper dive learning programs he delivers, from blue chip billion dollar businesses to SMEs, are frequently around key themes such as leadership, culture, customer experience, sales, change or creativity. All have a common thread of people and behaviour.

for the new office environment to be one that is warm, welcoming, easy, successful and fun, I've got to be willing to participate, not simply spectate.

**IA:** What other advice can you share about working practices post COVID-19?

**MC:** Sharpen your focus and adopt habits that ensure the four primary pillars of culture operate more optimally.

**Administration pillar:** Every business requires a playbook of processes. Amidst lockdowns and entire workforces forced to work from home, processes have required updating. Periodically continue to do so bearing in mind the two ends of the administration seesaw. Make sure processes aren't so complex or convoluted you need multiple science degrees to figure them out. Don't leave critical ones to interpretative chance.

**Performance pillar:** Once everyone knows the rules and values, individual performance can be tied to collective targets and results. Make sure everyone knows their own numbers or objectives, and take a holistic approach towards performance achievement through three types of goals.

- Performance goals: KPI, business objective related
- Learning goals: continued upskilling, personal and professional development
- Fulfilment goals: the feel-good factor substance of life, often not, at first glance, directly linked to business objectives.

Arm people leaders with more sophisticated, personalised, coaching capabilities to ensure meaningful conversations are conducted at an individual level around all three goals not just improvements towards percentages or results. In a post COVID-19 world, one thing many people have learnt perhaps on a deeper level is the precious nature of time with family or friends, living life through experiences and personal fulfilment.

*"Sharpen your focus and adopt habits that ensure the four primary pillars of culture operate more optimally."*

- MARK CARTER, INTERNATIONAL KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Learning pillar:** Keep time on your calendar for continued upskilling. One lesson, no doubt amongst many, that stands out from the last 18 months may well be the need to be ready to adapt. In the same way that change is frequently regarded as a constant, so too is lifelong learning. Don't sacrifice your development time (personal and professional) from the calendar when things are busy. Your continual learning is as important an activity as other tasks. Protect your calendar and invest in yourself. For businesses, develop a robust learning culture beginning with on boarding and engaging individual learning pathways, including blended and on the job learning.

**Innovation pillar:** Not all creativity is innovative. Not all innovation is disruption. Yet all creativity has value. Innovation and disruption are born from time allowed in creative play and pondering 'what if?' The innovation pillar is also frequently viewed as a holy grail of sorts. Just don't confuse the fun stuff (free food, work from home, casual dress or pets in the office) as the substance of innovation or uniqueness. Innovation and fun work in conjunction with the other pillars balanced. Without processes, personal accountability or continual learning, innovation (especially the fun stuff) is akin to a Hollywood set. A balsa wood facade that may look like the real deal at first glance, has a tendency to crumble or disappoint when put under the microscope.

During the 2021.2 NIBA Convention, I'll be expanding on other insights relevant to themes, such as personal resilience and the adapting nature of both work and business in a post COVID-19 world, that simultaneously happens to be in the digital age, experience economy,

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convention to see  
Mark in person or  
virtually on 8 February  
2022 in Melbourne.