

ROGER STEARE



THINKING OUTSIDE
THE INBOX

“Roger is a lighthouse, in thick fog, in the
middle of a zombie apocalypse”

Richard Watson, author, Digital Vs Human



“It’s said a good creative, in art or literature or music, can step outside the everyday and look at it with new eyes. A sideways view. Roger has this uncanny ability: to look at what we do every day, in work, in play and in interactions with each other and ask ‘if this is what we do only because we have always done it - is there a better way?’ He offers an alternative. A way that can turn confrontation into community, coercion into camaraderie and business into pleasure for all, top to bottom. Too good to be true? I’d certainly recommend you take the time to read and find out.”

Nick Knowles, TV presenter and RTS award-winning writer

“What Roger does so well is to stimulate your thinking in ways you never imagined. If you’re tired of the status quo, bored with the platitudes, washed out by the mundane, then open your eyes, ears and heart to the world of Roger. In Roger’s writing you will find inspiration, agitation and provocation, blended with intelligence, perception and kindness. He is unique.”

Tracey Groves, CEO, Intelligent Ethics

Contents

Testimonials

Why have I written this book?



The power of listening in silence



Hey Google, why is my boss a control freak?



How board behaviour affects corporate culture



What are the 10 most in-demand skills for 2019?



What are the 7 moral principles shared by almost all societies throughout human history?



How workplace meetings not only make us more anxious, they also make us more stupid.



What is systems thinking and how do we get better at it?



Does artificial intelligence help us do stupid things faster?



Here's to days off and sleeping on the job



Are we both angels and demons?



Does it pay to be good?



How much is enough?



Can robots ever have a conscience?



From Sunday Cheer to Monday Fear
poem by Matt Abbott



Reasons to be cheerful



Working for your selfie



Work-life balance, ABBA style!



Why do we need to educate and hire
more generalists?



Does success lead to happiness or vice versa?



What we don't know, matters



What grounds us?



Should we move to Mars or plant
500 billion trees?



Can a picture be worth even more than a
thousand words?



Blue sky thinking on vacation

Many thanks to...

About Roger and his work



Why have I written this book?

“When you are a Bear of Very Little Brain, and you Think of Things, you find sometimes that a Thing which seemed very Thingish inside you is quite different when it gets out into the open and has other people looking at it.”

WINNIE-THE-POOH

I have worked as The Corporate Philosopher since 2002. During this time, I have read thousands of articles and books and written some of my own. I have also met, taught and debated with thousands of leaders at work. But what I have begun to learn is how little time we take to stop and think thoughtfully.

We allow ourselves to be bombarded with information. Some of it makes sense. A lot of it doesn't. We are overwhelmed with

data, opinions and prejudices. The average executive I meet has to process several hundred emails a day, most of them carbon copies, just in case... And when they're not dealing with emails, they spend their time in back-to-back meetings, trying to work out why they're there, what they should or should not say; and if they can get away with it, dispose of those emails while making out they're making notes!

There isn't enough time to think outside the email inbox. And that's why I decided to write a weekly blog not called 'Thinking outside the Box' but called 'Thinking outside the inbox'.

After a few weeks, I found that the open rate for the blog was well over 30%, which I'm told is above average. I also began to get some very encouraging feedback from readers who said they appreciated not only the brevity of my musings but also the range, depth and relevance of the questions I try to cover. Readers also said they love the way I use other people's quotes and the images I use to grab their attention. This is deliberate and is based on the English language adage: "A picture is worth a thousand words".

After a few months, I had a chat with my design guru Ned Hoste of The Big Ideas Collective and asked him how many blogs I would need to write to fill a book or almanack. We agreed that with good use of images, quotes, text and "space to breathe", one blog would spread over four pages. So by July 2019, I would have enough to publish this book!

We also talked about references and footnotes and decided not to use the academic form of citation, but to use the original hyperlinks embedded in the blog and create QR codes that you can scan with the camera on your smartphone, to take you

directly to the source material.

The next thing you'll notice is that the blogs are chronological. Ned, my editor Camilla Etheridge and I tried to group them into themes, but there are too many crossovers to make any meaning, meaningful. So they're printed in the order they're written.

This book is designed for dipping. You can flick through it randomly or use the Contents page. It doesn't matter. Each blog takes no more than a couple of minutes to read - unless you want to explore the referenced articles, in which case each blog might take a couple of hours!

The other thing I'm offering is a book with space to write notes or attach stickies, if you want. So please feel free to make this book your own, although as I already have a beard and glasses, you won't need to doodle them on my photo!

What's this book about?

This book is about thinking; it's about thinking differently; and it's about the things we ought to be thinking about. It's also about our feelings and our intuitions.

Ultimately, it's about who we are, how we live and work together, and how we confront the challenges we ourselves are creating.

My work as 'The Corporate Philosopher' began when business leaders asked me to help them and their colleagues to think about, debate and decide the right thing to do. It was about ethics. So some of the blogs focus on our moral character, our purpose, on leadership and on culture.

More recently, I have helped people understand systems thinking, which helps us not only understand every part of a system, but the relationships between these parts. For example, systems thinking helps us to understand the relationship between vehicle pollution, respiratory disease and climate change. It also helps us to understand how our behaviour can change when we are at home and when we are at work, because our personal relationships change. We become part of different but connected human systems.

Most recently, I've become fascinated by the potential of AI for both good and evil. The ability of an AI system to scan for cancerous tumours more accurately than an experienced oncologist feels good. But using AI to hook us on social media and the mental health issues this can trigger, feels very wrong to me.

This book is not a beginning or an end. It's part of an ongoing train of thought and debate with people like you who want to be 'Thinking outside the inbox'.

Thank you for reading this book and do let me know what you think on my [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) feeds.

Roger Steare
July, 2019

BLAH
BLAH
BLAH...

How workplace meetings not only make us more anxious, they also make us more stupid.



You will not be surprised to hear that when I ask leaders, “What percentage of your working day do you spend in meetings?”, the average they say is around 70%, with a range of 50% to 90%. So if you want to improve pretty much anything in an organisation, improving the quality of debate and decision-making in meetings can achieve significant and rapid gains.

Sadly, many meetings in many organisations are poorly designed and poorly led. This is because the following questions have not been properly thought through. Is there a clear question to debate and answer? Are the right people in the room? Who’s chairing the meeting? Do we have all the critical information we need? Who is playing devil’s advocate and have we debated all the possible solutions? Have we listened to the quiet voices? Who’s the observer and what can we learn from their feedback?

The reasons for these questions not being asked and answered have nothing to do with governance, minutes and agendas, but to do with politics, sociology and psychology. In my essay for the *Financial Conduct Authority’s Transforming Culture in Financial Services*¹, I have shared insights from MoralDNA which demonstrate how feudal power exercised by “misleaders” creates fear and anxiety. In order to speak truth to power, you need to feel psychological safety.

The other reason, according to David Robson in his forthcoming book *The Intelligence Trap*², is that to allow “collective intelligence” to emerge, everyone needs to ensure

that powerful and dominant voices are constrained; whilst quieter, more reflective and sometimes the most expert voices, are heard. Read Montague at Virginia Tech has also published a research paper which confirms that status anxiety really does make us stupid: “You may joke about how committee meetings make you feel brain dead, but our findings suggest that they may make you act brain dead as well.”

So my advice is simple. If you want to improve things quickly, don’t boil the ocean with an expensive and lengthy “transformation” program. Just boil a kettle and have intelligent, informed and fearless debate on the decisions that matter in every meeting- over a nice cup of tea or coffee!

“If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be ‘meetings’”

DAVE BARRY

Further reading



¹ *Transforming Culture in Financial Services* by Roger Steare



² *The Intelligence Trap* by David Robson



³ *Group settings can diminish expressions of intelligence...* by Virginia Tech



photo: Charlie Davies, charliedaviesphotography.com

About Roger and his work

Professor Roger Steare is internationally recognized as one of the leading experts advising boards and executive teams on how to build high-integrity, high-performing organizations. His work with BP after the Gulf of Mexico disaster has been crucial to the company's recovery plan, with his decision-making framework and leadership training endorsed within the US Department of Justice Consent Agreement of 2016. He has advised Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds Bank, Nationwide and RBS after the credit crisis, PPI mis-selling and Libor manipulation scandals, with his work publicly endorsed by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Roger has worked with clients to achieve these results by basing his guidance on the evidence of polymathic research; and on best-practice across all workplace sectors from

around the world. He has conducted extensive empirical research on both personal and professional integrity, with his MoralDNA® Profile cited in papers published by the Chartered Management Institute, the Chartered Insurance Institute, EY, the FCA, Oliver Wyman and PwC. His work has also been profiled in *The Times*, the *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, the *Wall Street Journal* and *Les Echos*.

His book *ethicability* has sold over 25,000 print copies and has been licensed as an e-book to over 600,000 employees across the firms he advises. He also teaches and writes for Thinkers50, “the world’s most reliable resource for identifying, ranking, and sharing the leading management ideas of our age.”

Roger is Visiting Professor in the Practice of Organizational Ethics and Corporate Philosopher in Residence at Cass Business School. He also teaches at Duke Corporate Education, Headspring Executive Development, London Business School and on the Thinkers50 Executive MBA.

“Roger has helped me consider business decisions from a fresh perspective. His approach might be rooted in philosophy, but in reality, it is about pragmatic, profitable yet principled management of a business, for long-term success.”

JOE GARNER, CEO
Nationwide Building Society

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TheCorporatePhilosopher.org



You can now buy and back Thinking outside the inbox on Kickstarter!

Thinking outside the inbox will be published in November 2019, but you can save money and get signed copies and limited editions on Kickstarter now! The following rewards are now available worldwide:

1. **Early bird discounted copy** for £12.00 each instead of £15.00 - a saving of 20%
2. **Signed copies** for £25.00 each.
3. **A limited edition of 100 copies**, numbered, signed and presented in a slip case for £50.00 each.

For the UK only, the following multipacks are available:

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5. **A "Thoughtful leader"** team pack of 12 signed copies for £180.00, a saving of 40%
6. **"A Masterclass with Roger Steare"** for £7,000.00, with 100 signed copies thoughtfully included for free!

To order and to read all terms and conditions, please visit:
www.kickstarter.com

Thank you so much for investing in thinking!



*"Thinking is the hardest work there is,
which is probably the reason why so few
engage in it."*

HENRY FORD