

# “A NATION THAT FORGETS ITS PAST HAS NO FUTURE”

WINSTON CHURCHILL

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**A** day etched into the history of our country. A day burnt into the hearts of our people. A day that can, and will, never be forgotten. On that day we saw the phenomenal courage of our men and women as they stood up with incredible belief, determination, and honour to fight not just for their country but for the future of a nation as we know it today.

They gave the ultimate sacrifice. A sacrifice that created our today. Our families and our world. A sacrifice a country will never take for granted.

Now, 80-years on, we don't just want to mark that occasion, but instead we want to learn from it, reflect on the preparations, the execution and the delivery, to celebrate those successes and then understand how we can apply that incredible achievement to today's business world.

**LEST WE FORGET.**

## CRAFT A PURPOSEFUL PATH

The purpose was clear, the path set. Every soldier, officer and commander had that purpose at their heart.

The purpose to obtain firm foothold ashore and to drive forward to capture the city of Caen, the strategically significant capital of Normandy due to its location astride the Orne River and Caen Canal, which would then provide vital transport into and through the region. This purpose stayed with every fighter, an unwavering beacon that drove them forward, every step of the way.

A purpose, the reason for the operation, or business. The reason for being. Having a clearly defined and ambitious purpose is one thing that should underpin every business. A statement that clearly communicates the 'why' of an organisation. Why it is there and if it went tomorrow, what its legacy would be. Whether you're a large enterprise or a small start-up, a business purpose directs the business and keeps it on path.

On the 6th of June 1944, the purpose was understood and each hero aware of what they needed to achieve in order to realise that overall vision. And together, under that purpose, they united. They kept the purpose at the heart of the operation, pumping through every vessel, even when the plan didn't go to plan. The purpose continued to guide and drive them.

## BE A LEGACY LEADER.

Winston Churchill. A man who understood how to lead, and not dictate. A man who knew how to galvanise a nation, political opponents and on the ground troops. A man who united a country. A man in stark contrast to the opposition.

Adolf Hitler. A controller. A fully fledged dictator. A man who controlled the command structure so tightly that he refused to give his military leaders the freedom to make informed and executive decisions. A man whose leadership rule gave the allies a more complete victory during the D-Day offensive when he directed more enemy divisions into a losing battle and to ultimately be destroyed.

Being a business leader is not about controlling every facet of an organisation and always being right. Being a business leader is about inspiring, motivating and driving a workforce forward on the journey to success. Truly great leaders build a trusted team of individuals who compliment the leadership style, who can funnel that momentum and inspire their teams to deliver the purpose and the plan, to every single corner of the organisation. An inspirational leader has the ability to be wrong, to self-reflect and be challenged.

To look back at that day, and months that preceded it, we should be in awe of Churchill's leadership. His ability to connect a nation, to inspire his people and to create a team that would challenge him and make him one of the greatest leaders of all time.



# THE POWER OF THE PLAN

Operation Overlord. An operation that is regarded as one of the most complicated and intricate challenges the country has ever seen. An operation that was led by a team that had limited experience in amphibious operations.

The scale of this plan is extraordinary. A meticulous plan that began years in advance, that involved more than 125,000,000 maps, that orchestrated 160,000 allied forces to land across five beaches and left no stone unturned, no area to chance.

The military SMEAC provides a clear and scalable framework for this effective planning. Set out the Situation, communicate the Mission, focus on the Execution, consider the Admin and Logistics and finally look at the Command and Communication.

This Five Paragraph Order has clear synergies to organisational planning – whether this is topline business strategy or more daily operations. A powerful plan will always detail the goal, the aim, the strategy, the operational demands and the communications.

Lieutenant-General Frederick Morgan, the mastermind charged as the principal planner for the infamous operation. A man who achieved an incredible task who understood the power of the plan and the critical role it played.

# THE ABILITY TO BE AGILE

The monumental D-Day operation wasn't without its failings.

Paratroopers brought to their death weighed down by too much equipment and drowned in flooded marshlands. The relentless journey brought in troops who were drenched and weakened with seasickness by the cruel crossing. Missed landing spots caused by strong winds, scattering paratroopers across the invasion zone. D-Day had its fair share of devastating blows that rocked the purpose and the plan.

However, the ability to be agile, to swiftly respond to unforeseen challenges, kept the D-Day success in the Allies hands. By adapting in real-time, taking risks and persevering in the face of adversity meant the invasion was kept alive.

Business agility can also reap many rewards. The ability to quickly respond to opportunities and threats that present themselves in the marketplace can maintain competitive advantage. The window that appears to respond to a particular customer demand or need, will keep customers at the heart of the organisation. Responding to internal and external influences can promote innovation and foster a culture of exploration.

And whilst, on those shores 80 years ago, the day one mission of advancing to the City of Caen hadn't been achieved, the ability of the Allied forces to battle on and respond to an ever-changing environment, marked one of the most critical turning points in British history.

## D-DAY LEARNINGS



# CREATE A UNITED US

There was the frontline. There was the Airforce. And the naval support. There was a military that realised and brought to life an incredible plan.

But the success of the invasion can't be placed solely in their hands. That day was realised by a united country, a united allied collaboration, with every civilian playing their part to (in the words of Anna Mae Krier) 'save our country. And we ended up helping save the world'.

For every bullet shot it needed women and children to create the machine gun. For every bomb dropped it needed women to fly the planes from the factories to the front. For every inch of land won it needed women and children to build the tanks. For every intel it needed the female codebreakers. D-Day was a full country effort. Recognising more than the frontline, or the

customer-focused teams is an important part of business celebration. To create a business and a brand takes more than just a salesperson or fee earner.

It takes the finance assistant to facilitate timely invoice payments. It takes the customer service representative to be the face of the business on the phones. It takes the marketing executive to create engaging campaigns.

A business is a workforce. A celebration of every role that enables and builds success.

The unification of a country, under a shared purpose and vision, creates a powerful force. And one that involves the dedication and commitment of each and every member. D-Day is a national celebration, an invasion that cost the country an immeasurable amount, but a day that created our tomorrow.



## FOSTER PERFECT PARTNERSHIPS

An Allied victory. A victory owed to not one nation, but a collective.

D-day marked the beginning of one of the most powerful partnerships ever seen. An Ally operation that saw the end of the Nazi tyranny. A multinational effort that brought together countries in a partnership that didn't just pay lip-service to their connections. It was an ally force that showcased the commonality between the parties, a true connection on purpose, values and vision.

British, US, Canadian and a collection of other nations joined hands to create an alliance that was unstoppable. Powerful and united. There would, of course, have been differences in leadership styles, in personalities, in priorities and perspectives, but the greater good prevailed. The purpose of the partnership set those differences aside and laid the foundations for our future.

80 years on, what can businesses take from this? A partnership can be a powerful entity, creating innovation through conversation, opening new markets and business opportunities, pooling resources to achieve internal efficiencies. Joining forces should drive both businesses, compliment each other and be without business arrogance.

A perfect partnership has the ability to build both organisations and unlock the golden growth key. With the right partner, a collaboration should be the cornerstone of every organisational strategy.

On that day, and the months preceding it, the partnership was formed regardless of geographical boundaries, or accent. Together greatness was formed.

## LET LESSONS LEAD YOU

Failure is always an option, and one that should not be feared.

During the meticulous planning of D-Day, attention was paid to previous invasion failings. Failings that could then inform, change action and behaviour to ensure future success.

A close focus was on the raid at Dieppe in France. The failure of this operation showcased the importance of initial air bombings to reduce enemy defences and the role of the Airforce to support the assault troops. It shone a light on the importance of communication through all levels an operation. This focus forged the path for D-Day success. Looking at the past to learn lessons.

Failings are part of human nature and occur throughout the business world. Often failings are seen as setbacks, or even worse as defeat. However, successful busi-

nesses will use their failings as a window of opportunity – to look deep into a problem, find the root cause and then refine and improve systems and strategies. Organisations can create a roadmap to success by using every bit of intelligence they can lay their hands on, capturing those failings to be an essential ingredient to ensure future success.

Should businesses actually celebrate failure and move away from a blame culture to a learning culture? A culture of this sort encourages honest and open discussions across every level of an organisation, approaching failure as a future learning curve that creates business growth.

The D-Day Commanders recognised the importance of past lessons. They understood that looking at and learning from failings could in fact set the stage for future success. A difficult, but essential, task.



# IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE THE 6TH OF JUNE 1944.

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It is difficult to imagine the overwhelming emotions, the heavy tension, the incredible weight that was placed on those troops' shoulders. But imagine we must. Faced against an enemy that was more experienced on a terrain that was better suited to defence, they believed. They believed in the power of the mission. They believed in their leaders. They believed in their fellow troops. They believed in their country.

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And they were committed, no matter what the cost, to unite. That incredible belief created a force that turned an unthinkable fate into one of the greatest successes. We owe a tremendous debt to each and every hero that played their part in that historic day. Part of that repayment is understanding, learning and adopting the lessons that drove their success, in our personal life and business world.

# LEST WE FORGET.

