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Albert Read

Former Managing Director of Condé Nast Britain, Author of The Imagination Muscle

How to have Ideas - Imagination and Leadership in the age of AI. 'Has anyone had any good ideas recently?' If the audience are struggling to raise their hands, they have come to the right place. This talk is an uplifting journey through the possibilities of the human mind and the tricks you can pick up from others, if you know where to look. What consistent but surprising trait can you find in Nobel Prize winners in science? What's different about the way Bill Gates reads books? What thought process connects Uber with the hit musical Hamilton? Albert shares his practical tips for combining technology and human creativity at work: where does AI go from being your strongest research assistant to diminishing your own potential by allowing you to 'cognitively offload?' What are the four stages of creativity and how do you incorporate them into the modern office? What are the modern tools and techniques that allow for deep work? More widely, why is the imagination so fundamental to a flourishing career? How do you instil it in the culture around you? Which companies have done so successfully? How do you create an expectation of ideas from your teams? How do you give junior employees the confidence to share their ideas? How do you keep the drumbeat of innovation alive in your company? Albert applies lessons from the arts, science and entrepreneurship to the business world. He addresses the very real and pressing questions that leaders face around growth and the need for innovation. He shows how, in the age of AI, human creativity is more important than ever; but it needs to reassert its vitality and, if it is to thrive, adapt to the new tools at its disposal. Albert's research into the imagination, from his book The Imagination Muscle, illuminates a talk which is both wise, inspirational and of the moment. It touches on his time running Condé Nast and presents concrete ideas from what he learned about building a confident, zeitgeist-setting, idea-generating culture within an organisation.

Launching Vogue in 28 Markets. Albert spent a large part of his career at Condé Nast taking US brands — Vogue, GQ, Architectural Digest and Condé Nast Traveller — and launching them in Asia. The arrival of Vogue China was one of the epochal moments in magazine publishing history but, behind the scenes, it was the result of years of hard work, diligence and cultural sensitivity. Similarly, the opportunities for lifestyle brands in the Middle East now presents enormous opportunities combined with considerations for a local perspective. Operating in a business that has launched brands in 28 markets, Albert learnt a great deal about what to do and what not to do. He has grappled with the questions: how do you interpret a brand like Vogue and its values in a new culture? What are the sensitivities that you must be alert to? How does internal culture change from one market to another, and how does it stay the same? How do you manage a brand network across multiple markets in the age of social media? In what ways are the next generation of consumers coalescing around international brands and in what ways are they fragmenting? In a world rendered borderless by the new digital landscape, the task of internationalising a brand is even more delicate

and complicated than it used to be. But, with rising education standards across the world, together with increased prosperity, it is one rich with potential.

Perpetual Disruption: The New Rules of Leadership. How does a leader operate in the era of perpetual disruption? The disruption caused by technology to business continues apace. The lifespans of companies are shrinking. The digital landscape opens up the field to new disruptors, more consumer choice, radically re-imagined supply chains and, more generally, new ways of doing things. Leaders must now not only possess the ability to make money for their shareholders, but also grasp a whole range of issues: the geo-political landscape, the emphasis on sustainability, the transformative role of technology, AI, the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and what – exactly – the workplace means for a new generation of employees. Drawing on his own experiences at Condé Nast, running powerful consumer brands such as Vogue, GQ and Wired – Albert navigated the storm of perpetual disruption in the media landscape. He describes the mindset shift and the new skill-set he had to employ. He has learned that the rewards for the modern leader go to those with an open mindset, those who can put aside the 'need to feel right'; those who are externally focused, with the greatest networks, those trained in counter factual thinking who can engender a culture of psychological safety and a spirit of optimism…and those who can imagine the future.

Creativity: An Executive Work-Out. A poll of over 1,500 CEOs in 2010 ranked creativity as the most important leadership quality for success in business. The World Economic Forum has called creativity "the one skill that will future-proof you for the jobs market." How do we ignite creativity within our organisations? The clues are there in the behaviour of the great entrepreneurs, scientists and artists: How has Jeff Bezos created an idea driven culture? Why is it that the Nobel Prize-winning scientists also tend to be artists? What chain of thought processes led to the invention of the Post-It Note? Why was being fired from Apple one of the best things that ever happened to Steve Jobs? On a personal level, how do we build our courage to be more imaginative? How do we rediscover the passion for ideas that we felt as children? Based on the research for his new book, The Imagination Muscle, and his leadership position at Condé Nast, Albert asserts that the human imagination is still paramount, that ideas are the source of all growth, fulfilment and success — and, above all, he says, "to imagine is to be alive."