

# BUSINESS ROCKS

The Very Best Of Stuart's Five-Minute Friday Focus

**Volume 2**



**STUART CROSS**

Published by Lillywhites Research Press, Newark, Nottinghamshire

© Stuart Cross 2014. This book is copyrighted material. All rights are reserved.

It is against the law to make copies of this material without securing specific written permission in advance from the author, Stuart Cross. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval systems, or transmitted in any form or by any means – including, but not limited to, electronic, mechanical, photocopying and recording

- Page 5. **INTRODUCTION**
- Page 6. **1. DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING?**  
How to grow profits by 10%; Bring your strategy down to earth;  
In-flight entertainment; The limits of one-year goals
- Page 9. **2. EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP**  
The purpose of leadership is...; The jobs you can't delegate;  
Are you leading with facts or leading with your ego? How are  
you finding new talent? The #1 secret to getting anything done
- Page 12. **3. THE FAST-PACED COMPANY**  
Next time I'm backing the hare; Don't spend 6 months on a  
one-year plan; Gearing up for growth; Rollout roulette
- Page 14. **4. THIS SPORTING LIFE**  
Tour de France tour de force; Handball hero; The aggregation  
of small margins; How the best get even better
- Page 16. **5. INNOVATION AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT**  
Failure is the Siamese twin of innovation; Dear Santa; The three  
habits of highly effective companies; A horse, a horse; The  
weakest link; Crises and opportunities; Transformations don't  
transform; And finally...
- Page 22. **DOWNLOAD THE TRACKS**
- Page 23. **ABOUT STUART CROSS**



# INTRODUCTION

Why are so many business books so big? Don't the writers know that successful, busy executives simply don't have the time to read these tomes?

What's more, at the heart of every thriving business I know are people with a great deal of common sense. And common sense doesn't need too much explanation. You pretty much 'get it' straight away.

These two insights were the foundation for my Five-Minute Friday Focus emails. First, I know you're busy and that your time is precious, and second, I realise that most good business ideas can be captured in just a few words.

To add even more interest, and to get you whistling your way through the day, I also decided to include some song lyrics that relate to that week's management insight to each email.

This booklet is based on the best of the first year's Friday Focus emails. Rather than simply list them in chronological order, I've grouped the mini-articles into five topic groups. I called it "Business Rocks" both because of the music connection, but also because it contains nuggets of business insight that you can pick up and use.

My recommendation is that you take the following approach to using this booklet:

- *Periodically dip into it and take one or two of the topics that seem relevant to you and your business*
- *Discuss the insight and any associated questions with your team, and identify up to three rapid actions you can take to improve your performance*
- *Commit to these actions – with specific names and deadlines – and follow-up to review the impact these actions have had*
- *Finally, download the songs onto your favourite MP3 player*

Enjoy!



Stuart Cross  
Newark-on-Trent  
January 2013

# 1. DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING?

## HOW TO GROW PROFITS BY 10%

I have found one of the key secrets to success in business. In fact, I believe that if it were implemented properly most businesses could quickly grow revenues and profits by 10% or more. Here it is: know your medium-term objectives!

Yes, I agree that this not a spectacularly new or innovative insight, but over the past week or so I have come across three leadership teams that are suffering because they don't have clarity on what's expected of them beyond, at most, the next 12 months. This means that initiatives that don't pay back immediately are not being pursued and that these executives are paying little attention to new, potentially exciting growth opportunities.

So, what are your medium-term goals – and those of your organisation – and if you asked your team about their 2-3 year objectives, what are the chances that they would give the same response as you?

*Off the record: The Road To Nowhere* by Talking Heads

*Well we know where we're going*

*But we don't know where we've been*

*And we know what we're knowing*

*But we can't say what we've seen*

*First published 4 May 2012*

## BRING YOUR STRATEGY DOWN TO EARTH

High-level visions and strategies are about as useful to your people as an airliner is to commuters waiting in a bus queue. The bus passengers may briefly look up and notice the plan and its vapour trail, but even if it is travelling in the same direction, it cannot possibly help them reach their destination.

Similarly, your strategy will have no discernible effect on your organisation unless you can bring it down to earth and make it tangible. This means, among other things, spending the time and effort to communicate your goals, allocate resources and re-set accountabilities and individual objectives.

In what ways do you need to bring your 'high-level' strategy down to earth so that your people can maximise your 'ground-level' results.

*Off The Record: Trains And Boats And Planes* by Burt Bacharach

*Trains and bloats and planes are passing by  
They mean a trip to Paris or Rome  
For someone else, but not for me  
The trains and the boats and planes  
Took you away, away from me*

*First published 22 June 2012*

## **IN-FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT**

We've just returned from our family vacation with our three young boys, which, for the first time, involved a long-haul flight. The boys were excited that they were able to choose which films or TV programmes to watch on their individual back-of-seat TVs.

Half way through the flight I decided to stretch my legs. As I looked across the cabin I was surprised to see that over half of the passengers weren't watching films or TV shows at all. Instead they had switched channels to watch a map showing where our flight was and how far we still had to travel.

People want to know where they're headed and the progress they've made. That's true for people's work and life as much as it is for long-haul flights.

How do you help your people understand the direction of your business and where you – and they – are on that journey?

*Off The Record: Born To Run* by Bruce Springsteen

*Someday girl, I don't know when  
We're gonna get to that place where we really want to go  
And we'll walk in the sun  
But till then tramps like us  
Baby we were born to run*

*First published 31 August 2012*

## THE LIMITS OF ONE-YEAR GOALS

I've recently been involved in organizing a global survey of CEOs and executive directors on leading growth. The most surprising finding was that fewer than one in four of these executives use multi-year growth targets to drive their business – the vast majority use single-year targets.

Relying solely on single-year goals leads to incremental improvement only. It is not possible for you to deliver step-change growth in 12 months. A multi-year goal, on the other hand, provides ongoing guidance for your organisation and helps you determine what is and what isn't a good use of your company's precious time and resources.

If you're only using single-year targets to drive performance, what benefits could you create for your customers and your organization by defining and pursuing a multi-year goal?

*Off The Record: Break On Through (To The Other Side) by The Doors*

*The gate is straight, deep and wide*

*Break on through to the other side*

*First published 21 September 2012*

## 2. EVERYDAY LEADERSHIP

### THE PURPOSE OF LEADERSHIP IS...

The purpose of leadership is to build ownership. Despite what all the books might say there are many different leadership styles that can work, which is why characters as diverse as Lincoln, Nelson, Gandhi, Churchill, Jobs, Aung San Suu Kyi, Martin Luther King and Elizabeth I can all claim to have been highly effective leaders.

The critical thing is to be true to yourself and to focus on whether you are building ownership and commitment to your objectives. So ask yourself, what is your team's level of ownership and commitment to your goals and what steps could you take to build it further?

*Off The Record: The Mayor Of Simpleton* by XTC

*If depth of feeling is a currency  
Then I'm the man who grew the money tree  
Some of your friends are too brainy to see  
That they're paupers and that's how they'll stay*

*First published 14 December 2013*

### THE JOBS YOU CAN'T DELEGATE

Despite what HR experts say about inclusivity, community and teamwork, my experience is that at the top of all high-performing organisations is a leader who sets clear and stretching goals and who is in demanding in ensuring their achievement.

Two of your critical jobs as a leader are to set the bar for high-performance and then to hold your people to account in performing against it. Yes, you should involve your teams in developing the solutions and strategies that will deliver your objectives, but you cannot delegate either the setting of your organisation's key goals or holding people to account in their accomplishment.

How clearly have you set your organisation's objectives, and how effectively do you hold your people to account?

*Off The Record: Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood* by The Animals

*Baby, do you understand me now? Sometimes I feel a little mad  
But don't you know that no one alive can always be an angel  
When things go wrong I feel real bad.  
I'm just a soul whose intentions are good  
Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood*

*First published 13 July 2012*

## **ARE YOU LEADING WITH THE FACTS OR LEADING WITH YOUR EGO?**

When does a leader's focus, determination and persistence become foolish pigheadedness? The answer, I believe, is when your ego – your need to be seen to be right – overshadows the facts.

Chelsea sacked Andre Villas-Boas mid-way through the recent football season. Part of the problem for AVB was that he seemed fixated on his "project", which was to remove and marginalize the more experienced players and create a new, more dynamic playing style. That's fine, but it's results that count in football – just as they do in business – and when he left the club Chelsea's results were poor.

AVB's replacement, Roberto Di Matteo, took a more pragmatic and fact-based approach, made the best of the players at his disposal and went on to win the FA Cup and the UEFA Champions League. What's more Di Matteo seemed happy to put his ego to one side and constantly gave the players the credit for the team's success.

How do you ensure that your innate desire to be seen to be right doesn't blind you to the facts?

*Off the record: Disease Of Conceit by Bob Dylan*

*Gives you delusions of grandeur and the evil eye*

*Gives you the idea that you're too good to die*

*Then they bury you from your head to your feet*

*From the disease of conceit*

*First published 25 May 2012*

## **HOW ARE YOU FINDING NEW TALENT?**

Most weekends I run a junior football team of six and seven year olds. Last month we played at a couple of tournaments where scouts from professional football clubs were in attendance on the look out for new talent. Of the 19 boys I took along to the tournaments, for example, five were invited for trials at these clubs.

In contrast, several company executives have complained to me that they just don't have the right people in their organisation to deliver their ambitions effectively. What's more, they are also frustrated by their inability to find suitable candidates externally.

Increasingly, the success of your business, as with football clubs and other sports organisations, will be driven by your ability to attract, retain and develop top talent. What 'scouting' network do you have in place to find your future leaders and how confident are you that the top talent in your industry will come to you?

*Off The Record: I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For* by U2

*I have run, I have crawled*

*I have scaled these city walls, these city walls,*

*Only to be with you*

*But I still haven't found what I'm looking for*

*I still haven't found what I'm looking for*

*First published 15 June 2012*

## **THE #1 SECRET TO GETTING ANYTHING DONE**

Your ability to get anything done is directly related to the quality of your relationships with your colleagues, partners and other stakeholders. Wherever I see an example of slow progress, a failure to deliver a project or an unresolved problem, I also tend to observe poor quality relationships between the different players. Even if you have hierarchical superiority and can effectively tell someone to do something, the solution will be sub-par if the relationship isn't also strong.

What actions can you take today to strengthen your relationships with your colleagues and your team?

*Off The Record: Sometimes You Can't Make It On Your Own* by U2

*Tough, you think you've got the stuff*

*You're telling me - and anyone - you're hard enough*

*You don't have to put up a fight, you don't have to always be right*

*Let me take some of the punches for you tonight*

*First published 26 April 2013*

### 3. THE FAST-PACED COMPANY

#### NEXT TIME I'M BACKING THE HARE

Pace is far more important than accuracy in securing business success. Three months ago, for example, I ran a workshop for a client to help them develop a new strategy. I recently followed up with my buyer and found out that the team are still developing their plans and still haven't got round to action. Yet many of the themes we developed could have been acted on almost instantly. The solutions may not have been perfect, but I'm sure they would have been good enough and would have allowed the business to learn faster and more cheaply than is likely to be the case now.

In Aesop's fable the tortoise beat the hare, but 99 times out of 100 the hare is likely to cross the line first, and if I were a betting man my money would always be on the hare. Let's face it, it's a lot easier to teach a hare to be disciplined than it is to teach a tortoise to be fast.

Which kind of organisation do you lead – a tortoise or a hare?

*Off the record: The Distance by Cake*

*As they speed through the finish, the flags go down*

*The fans get up and they get out of town*

*The arena is empty except for one man*

*Still driving and striving as fast as he can*

*First published 11 May 2012*

#### DON'T SPEND 6 MONTHS ON A ONE-YEAR PLAN

Modern business strategies rarely last much more than 2 or 3 years, yet companies can still spend 6 months or more developing them. If you're spending that amount of time deciding what you need to do, you'll never have the time to implement effectively.

US civil war general once said that the secret of his success was that he "got there firstest with the mostest!" It's the same for you. As a leader of your business you not only need to set the direction, you must also set the pace.

How long does it take set your company's strategy and what steps are you taking to pick up the pace?

*Off The Record: Can't Stop Now by Keane*

*I noticed tonight that the world has been turning*

*While I've been stuck here withering away*

*Though I know I said I wouldn't leave you behind*

*I have to go, it breaks my heart to say*

*First published 11 January 2013*

## GEARING UP FOR GROWTH

You don't start a car in fifth, and even Usain Bolt doesn't really get into his stride until the last 40 metres of his 100 metre sprints. Yet, many business leaders are so anxious to generate growth that they try to implement their new growth initiatives without moving through the gears. It hardly ever ends well.

Tesco's failed investment in its US chain, Fresh & Easy, for example, is to be sold, with write-offs of over £1 billion. Unlike the retailer's focused development of its Express concept – which took five years to create a profitable model that could be rolled out at scale – managers quickly opened over 100 Fresh & Easy stores, even though the concept had not been tested.

Innovation pace isn't about moving straight to launch; it's about learning rapidly and applying those lessons faster than your competitors. Think big, but start small and act fast.

Where are you trying to start a new growth project in fifth, when you should be moving through the gears?

*Off The Record: Fast Car* by Tracy Chapman

*You got a fast car*

*But is it fast enough so you can fly away?*

*First published 19 April 2013*

## ROLLOUT ROULETTE

I'm not one to say, "I told you so" (he lied!), but back in 2009 I argued that Tesco's strategy in the USA was flawed. So, I wasn't at all surprised that, earlier this week, the UK grocer announced that it is pulling out of the US and disposing of its Fresh & Easy format.

There are three stages to product and service development: (1) Test and develop a profitable concept that customers love; (2) Build scale and continue to improve the model; and (3) Drive for market leadership. Tesco's implementation strategy went straight to stage 2, and aimed to reach scale as quickly as possible. This approach made it far, far harder for management to refine and improve the concept as it went along. By missing out the critical first stage Tesco's management team are now facing a loss of up to £1 billion on their investment.

It doesn't matter how much market research you do, you can guarantee that your initial prototypes of any new product or service will be wrong. Where are you paying the price of moving to roll out too quickly, when you should have first developed a compelling and profitable concept?

*Off The Record: The 59th Street Bridge Song* by Simon and Garfunkel

*Slow down, you move too fast*

*You got to make the morning last,*

*Just kicking down the cobble stones*

*Looking for fun and feeling groovy!*

*First published 30 November 2012*

## 4. THIS SPORTING LIFE

### TOUR DE FRANCE TOUR DE FORCE

Like many men in their forties and with a penchant for lycra, I took up road cycling a few years ago. So I was both delighted and blown away by Bradley Wiggins' victory in the Tour de France last week.

I was equally impressed, though, by Team Sky's performance. When it was established in 2009 its leader, Dave Brailsford, set a goal of creating a British winner of the Tour within five years. At the time this goal seemed outrageous, but Brailsford's leadership and ability to inspire and engage, his team and rider development strategy and the whole team's excellence in executing his plans has meant that the goal was achieved with two years to spare!

Brailsford's leadership created a united organisation, the team's strategic clarity built a focused organisation, and its excellence in execution delivered a relentless organisation. Team Sky won the Tour de France, but the team is also a tour de force.

How united, focused and relentless is your organisation?

*Off The Record: Tour de France* by Kraftwerk

*The hell of the north: Paris – Roubaix*

*The Cote d'Azur and Saint Tropez*

*The Alps and the Pyrenees*

*The final sprint: Champs Elysees*

First published 27 July 2012

### HANDBALL HERO

I'm now completely caught up with the Olympics – from the opening ceremony, through to the pool, cycling, gymnastics, weightlifting and even "The Sculling Sloth", the rower from Niger who finished over a minute behind the rest of the field.

Having seen much of the coverage I can now safely conclude that the most thankless task in Olympic sport is that of the handball goalkeeper. Their main role, as I understand it, is to pick the ball out of the net 40 times each match, unless, by some streak of luck, the ball, which is thrown from a few yards away at 70 mph, smacks into their body or face, at which stage the commentator announces, "What a save!"

It's easy to eulogize your stars and top talent, but all organisations need their equivalent of handball goalkeepers, the people who are willing, almost unseen, to carry out the thankless tasks.

Who has the responsibility for the most thankless task in your business and how can you recognise their contribution to your organisation's success?

*Off The Record: Heroes* by David Bowie

*Though nothing, nothing will keep us together*

*We can beat them, forever and ever*

*Oh, we can be heroes just for one day*

*First published 3 August 2012*

## **THE AGGREGATION OF SMALL MARGINS**

Step forward Dave Brailsford. Just weeks after leading Team Sky to a one-two finish in the Tour de France, he has now masterminded eight cycling goals medals for GB at London 2012, and helped to create a national feeling of happiness that this country simply isn't used to!

Ask Brailsford about how he has achieved this success and he will talk about the "aggregation of small margins." It is his coaching and support team's ability to identify the tiny gains in a thousand different areas – technique, training, equipment, nutrition, hydration, sleep, and even personal hygiene! – that has helped the athletes perform at their peak.

How effectively do you create the "aggregation of small margins" for your team, and enable them to perform at the peak of their potential?

*Off The Record: Running Up That Hill* by Kate Bush

*And if I only could, I'd make a deal with God*

*And I'd get him to swap our places*

*Be running up that road*

*Be running up that hill*

*With no problems*

*First published 10 August 2012*

## HOW THE BEST GET EVEN BETTER

I've been attending an FA course on youth soccer coaching. In addition to a mix of students and other grassroots coaches, there are three ex-professional players, one of whom played regularly in the Premier League.

It can be tempting to think that, once you've reached the top of your profession, you have nothing left to learn. Or you may feel that it would be a sign of weakness if you were seen to need or want to invest in developing your core skills.

All the ex-professionals, however, have come to this course with an open mind and a willingness to learn. They are able to share their experience and perspectives, but – critically – they are also learning.

What have you specifically done to develop your core skills over the past six months, and what are your plans to do so in the rest of 2013?

*Off The Record: Hang On To Your Ego* by The Beach Boys

*I know so many people who think they can do it alone*

*They isolate their heads*

*And stay in their safety zone*

*First published 5 April 2013*

## 5. INNOVATION AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

### FAILURE IS THE SIAMESE TWIN OF INNOVATION

A few years ago I learnt to sail dinghies. For the first few days I was focused on one thing: not to fall in the water! I saw capsizing as a sign of failure and I was determined not to fail. On the third day the wind blew stronger and we were learning more technical manoeuvres and, unsurprisingly, the boat tipped over and I ended up in the sea.

I quickly realized that falling in the sea was not the worst thing in the world, and that the best way to understand how to balance the boat and maximize its speed was to, sometimes, go beyond its natural limits.

It's the same in business. Failure is the Siamese twin of innovation. The secret to success is not to avoid failure but to fail – and learn – as quickly and as cheaply as possible.

*Off the record: Right Next Time* by Gerry Rafferty

*You've got to grow, you've got to learn by your mistakes  
You've got to die a little every day just to try to stay awake  
And when you believe there's no mountain you can climb  
Well if you get it wrong you'll get it right next time*

*First published 18 May 2012*

## DEAR SANTA

Argos, the UK multi-channel general merchandise retailer has announced that, as part of a move to attract more affluent customers, it will dramatically reduce the size of its catalogue.

This will come as bad news to my 7-year old son, Louis. Last year, when we asked our three boys to write a Christmas list for Santa, our two older boys gave my wife and I a traditional list of 5-10 items. Louis, however, grabbed scissors, glue and paper and created a 20-page booklet of toys, games and gadgets that he'd cut out of the Argos catalogue. When we asked him which of the 50 items he really wanted, he told us that it was impossible for him to choose.

Many of the proposed lists of strategic initiatives from executive teams remind me of Louis' Argos list. Driven by a detailed understanding of all the issues facing the business, and not wanting to miss out on any potential new opportunities, the teams become unable to prioritise or choose the most important projects that they really want to drive.

As we enter the planning period for 2013, what are you doing to make sure that your agenda for next year is focused on your very biggest priorities and doesn't look like Louis' Argos Christmas list?

*Off The Record: Did You Ever Have To Make Up Your Mind?* by The Loving Spoonful

*Did you ever have to finally decide?*

*Say yes to one and let the other one ride*

*There's so many changes and tears you must hide*

*Did you ever have to finally decide?*

*First published 26 October 2012*

## THE THREE HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE COMPANIES

I've been thinking about my best clients and what differentiates their performance from the rest. I've come to the conclusion that they are superior in three ways: (1) They set a clear, compelling and profitable direction for their business; (2) They engage the whole organisation in pursuing this direction, so that every team and function is clear on their role and feels part of its success; and (3) They demonstrate discipline and perseverance in the pursuit of their objectives by setting clear priorities, allocating resources appropriately, holding people to account, celebrating successes and making necessary corrections along the way.

All my clients are busy, talented people who are striving to improve the performance of their organisations, often in difficult trading conditions, but the best excel in these three areas. Which of these three leadership behaviours do you consistently demonstrate and which do you believe you need to develop?

*Off The Record: This Hard Land* by Bruce Springsteen

*We'll sleep in the fields, we'll sleep by the rivers  
And in the morning we'll make a plan  
Well if you can't make it  
Stay hard, stay hungry, stay alive if you can  
And meet me in a dream of this hard land*

*First published 9 November 2012*

## **A HORSE, A HORSE**

No doubt you have seen this week's confirmation that archaeologists have discovered the body of Richard III underneath a Leicester car park. It is certainly a victory for the scientists and their painstaking, forensic work. But it is an even bigger victory for Philipa Langley, a screenwriter from Scotland and the secretary of Scotland's Richard III Society. It was Philipa's passion and drive that raised the possibility that the body could actually be found and it was her relentless determination that led directly to the scientific work.

Philipa's story proves, once again, that with belief, focus and perseverance, almost anything is possible. So, if you're wanting help to get an idea off the ground, the first place you should look is in the mirror.

*Off The Record: I Won't Back Down* by Tom Petty

*Well I know what's right, I got just one life  
In a world that keeps on pushing me around  
But I'll stand my ground and I won't back down*

*First published 8 February 2013*

## THE WEAKEST LINK

Our family skiing holiday with Ski Esprit last week was excellent – right up to the point that we left the resort and I forgot my wallet (yes, I know, I’m an idiot – I’ve already had that feedback from my wife!). The resort staff were excellent and by the time I reached the airport they had located the wallet and put it in their safe. They also gave me a number to call to organise its return.

That’s where the problems started. The lady at the call centre suggested that it would be easier all-round if I just allowed them to cut up the cards and bin the wallet. When I refused her ‘generous’ offer she demanded payment before she could return it. “That’s going to be difficult,” I replied, “Especially as my wallet is in the resort and so I have no cards with which to pay you.”

Creating a customer-driven business is hard because you are only as strong as your weakest link. Ski Esprit’s customer service was as excellent in the resort as it was frustrating at head office.

Where are your customer service weak links and what are you doing to embed greater customer centricity right across your business?

*Off The Record: Your Call’s Very Important To Us, Please Hold* by Sparks

*At first she said, “Your call is very important to us”*

*And then she said, “Please hold, please hold”*

*I’m getting mixed signals, mixed signals*

*First published 1 March 2013*

## CRISES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

Yesterday I heard that the Chinese word for crisis – wei-chi – could also be interpreted as meaning opportunity. This seems an apt thing to learn in a week where Christians are celebrating Easter and the Jewish festival of Passover begins. Both these religious events commemorate the hope and optimism that is possible in even the darkest of times.

Crisis and opportunity often co-exist. It’s easy to focus on the immediate issue and to solve the problem, but you may miss the opportunity.

What are the major issues and problems that you are facing in your business, and what new opportunities could they offer you?

*Off The Record: Better Things* by The Kinks

*I know you’ve got a lot of good things happening up ahead*

*The past is gone, it’s all been said*

*So here’s to what the future brings*

*I know tomorrow*

*You’ll find better things*

*First published 29 March 2013*

## TRANSFORMATIONS DON'T TRANSFORM

Why is it that 'business transformation' programmes rarely, if ever, transform organisations? These centralized, top-down, process-heavy initiatives tend to move glacially slowly and fail to engage people who will have already read the book, seen the movie and bought - or been given - the t-shirt, mug and mouse-mat. And the almost inevitable linkage between 'business transformation' and a complete overhaul of your information systems means that any benefit is likely to be at least two years down the line, smaller than you'd anticipated and cost double your initial estimates.

If you want to transform your business, avoid transformation programmes. Instead, raise the bar, clarify your goals, focus on your priorities and involve and engage your line teams to work at pace to deliver against them. Think big, start small and act fast.

Where are you relying on a long-term 'transformation' programme when you could be delivering more rapid, more sustainable results through a series of smaller, bottom-up initiatives?

*Off The Record: Waiting In Vain* by Bob Marley

*I don't wanna wait in vain for your love  
Because if summer is here, I'm still waiting there  
Winter is here, and I'm still waiting there*

*First published 8 March 2013*

## AND FINALLY.....

This is the 100th edition of Friday Focus. Each edition takes about 30 minutes for me to think about, develop and write. The key, for me, has been to set aside the time each week so that I can reflect and think.

All great businesses and all great products and services start with an idea. And, as with my Friday Focus, the creativity that is necessary for business development work is based on finding the regular time and space so that you can let the ideas flow. Creativity doesn't respond well to immediate time pressures, but it does respond well to discipline, persistence and effective time management. That's when you start the process that leads to unexpected 'aha' moments and new ideas.

How well are you organising your diary so that you can reflect, be creative and develop the ideas that will be critical to the future success of your business?

*Off The Record: Simple Twist Of Fate* by Bob Dylan

*He awoke, she wasn't there; he told himself he didn't care  
Pushed the windows open wide, felt the emptiness inside  
A feeling to which he just could not relate  
Brought on by a simple twist of fate*

*First published 10 May 2013*

## DOWNLOAD THE TRACKS

Here's a complete listing of the tracks from each of the articles:

- *The Road To Nowhere* by Talking Heads
- *Trains And Boats And Planes* by Burt Bacharach
- *Born To Run* by Bruce Springsteen
- *Break On Through (To The Other Side)* by The Doors
- *The Mayor Of Simpleton* by XTC
- *Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood* by The Animals
- *Disease Of Conceit* by Bob Dylan
- *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For* by U2
- *Sometimes You Can't Make It On Your Own* by U2
- *The Distance* by Cake
- *Can't Stop Now* by Keane
- *Fast Car* by Tracy Chapman
- *The 59th Street Bridge Song* by Simon and Garfunkel
- *Tour de France* by Kraftwerk
- *Heroes* by David Bowie
- *Running Up That Hill* by Kate Bush
- *Hang On To Your Ego* by The Beach Boys
- *Right Next Time* by Gerry Rafferty
- *Did You Ever Have To Make Up Your Mind?* by The Loving Spoonful
- *This Hard Land* by Bruce Springsteen
- *I Won't Back Down* by Tom Petty
- *Your Call's Very Important To Us, Please Hold* by Sparks
- *Better Things* by The Kinks
- *Waiting In Vain* by Bob Marley
- *Simple Twist Of Fate* by Bob Dylan

## ABOUT STUART CROSS

Stuart Cross is a consultant, coach and speaker who helps world class companies dramatically accelerate profit growth. Since its launch in 2006 his firm, Morgan Cross Consulting, has attracted clients including Avon Cosmetics, Alliance Boots, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Morrisons and GSK.

Stuart is a regular writer and, in addition to his articles and newsletters, Global Professional Publishing published his first book, The CEO's Strategy Handbook, in 2011.

Prior to launching his consulting business, Stuart was Head of Strategy for the UK retailer, Boots the Chemists. He is a chartered accountant (though he rarely divulges this information on a 'first date') and has an MBA from Warwick Business School. In addition to his consulting, coaching and speaking work Stuart teaches on MBA courses at both Warwick and Nottingham University Business Schools.

As part of his mid-life crisis Stuart joined his first rock band, The Imposters, as guitarist. Do not expect them to be playing at a venue near you anytime soon!

"I have worked with Stuart Cross for over a decade. Stuart has always helped me to think and act differently, and that is the key to innovation in any leadership role." *Alex Gourlay, Chief Executive, Boots The Chemists*

"Stuart is a scarce resource. He delivers rapid results, but he also gains the trust and commitment of the executives and managers he works with to ensure longer-term success." *Ian Filby, CEO, DFS Limited*

"We work with Stuart Cross because he takes a pragmatic, hands-on yet insightful approach to strategy that forces us to address some tough questions, but which gives us the tools and support to answer them." *David Johnston, Chief Executive, Aimia Europe (owners of Nectar)*

"We chose Morgan Cross to help us because of their strategy expertise and also because of their ability to involve managers and directors effectively in the work. Stuart used his excellent strategic skills to help us create a new agenda that will drive significantly higher levels of growth for the business." *Stephen Ford, VP Strategy, Western Europe, Avon Cosmetics Inc*

"Stuart rapidly identified material profit growth opportunities for our UK business. He is focused on results, commercially pragmatic and delivers a lot of value – quickly!" *Najib Fayad, Chief Operating Officer, Nelsons Natural Healthcare*



**Connect with Stuart Cross**

PO Box 9210  
Newark-on-Trent  
Nottinghamshire  
NG24 9EG

Telephone: **+44(0)1636-526111**

Follow Stuart on Twitter: **@stuart\_cross**

Read Stuart's blog: **[www.crosswiresblog.com](http://www.crosswiresblog.com)**

Sign-up for Stuart's weekly newsletter: **[www.morgancross.co.uk](http://www.morgancross.co.uk)**

Cover photography by Adam Winfield | [www.through-the-lens.co.uk](http://www.through-the-lens.co.uk)