

Shane Cragun interview



Shane Cragun, is Founding Partner at SweetmanCragun, a global management consulting training firm. He focuses on establishing Leader-Accelerators throughout the world at the individual, team, organizational, and societal levels. He is the co-author of “Reinvention Accelerating Results in the Age of Disruption” (Greenleaf Book Group Press).

Leaders must “change before they have to”. How do you know it is the right time?

There are three things that must be in place that will inform you that it is time to think about totally reinventing your career.

The sinking feeling (from intuition and data you have read) that you are being left behind in the world; the understanding that you are working for a company that either is not doing so well, or is on the brink of being disrupted; and your personal, internal “need for change” has become so strong that it triggers you to action.

The phrase “Age of Uber” has been used in your book. How would you define it?

Another way to say “Age of Uber” is to say “Age of Disruption”.

We picked Uber as our opening story because everyone around the world needs a lift from a third party once in a while (taxis in the western world, motorcycles in the Asian world, and back of the pick-up truck in Latin America). Everyone can relate.

Taxicab companies are so panicked they are suing Uber and Lyft. But the writing is on the wall. No doubt there will be even more innovate transportation models coming along that will challenge Uber and Lyft. You can say goodbye to the taxis over the long term.

So [. . .] in a nutshell [. . .] Uber signifies a major disruption – or global shockwave – slamming into the taxicab business around the world.

How key is it for a successful reinventor to “think big”?

We must think big to break from the inertia of the status quo. We use an example in the book that when NASA was still flying space shuttles, 70 per cent of the fuel was used just to get off the launch platform at Cape Canaveral.

Reinvention is the most challenging of change projects because you are putting everything (even sacred cows) on the table and questioning their value. When you do this, you must think big and have big dreams of where the organization can go.

What could be the next global disruption?

There are many ripples that are coming our way that are incremental improvements in technology. But there is only one huge disruption that is certainly being locked and loaded as we speak and on its way that will have as big an impact as the personal computer and internet. That is artificial intelligence and robots.

This disruption is so huge that they are suggesting that within a decade there will be no need for 1.1 million truck drivers in America because there will be driverless trucks.

In this modern age, is corporate arrogance still a trap companies can fall into?

Yes. This is probably a lesson that will never totally be learned. When you are the CEO and in the C-suite of a Fortune 500 company and things are going well [. . .] you are consistently hitting Wall Street expectations [. . .] stock is going up [. . .] and your income is big [. . .] and you receive huge applause from your employees [. . .] and you are written up in magazines [. . .] it would be hard pressed for any of us to stay 100 per cent teachable and humble. It is the nature of the beast.

Are there any dangers in constant reinvention?

Yes. You can design out your competitive advantage. You can design out what makes you distinct and why you are really successful. And that is a quick way to irrelevance and failure.

We believe in reinvention at points in time when it makes sense, and then launching major continuous improvement efforts to keep things sharp.

Is moral character an under-appreciated asset in leaders?

Very much so. We tend to hire for "IQ" but we tend to fire for "EQ." Character falls into the EQ bucket. It is things like: honesty, meeting commitments, work ethic, doing the right thing, etc.

Jack Welch, who is one of the most successful turnaround CEOs in the past 200 years, said that the breakthrough at GE only happened when he finally had the guts to fire people that got great results (competence and IQ) but left bloody bodies behind (lack of character in leadership).

How do you encourage companies and individuals to "confront the brutal facts" about their situation?

Generally companies that approach us are ready to change and ready to go through an exercise of "confronting the brutal facts."

Sometimes, however, there is half of the leadership team that remains unconvinced that going through a reinvention effort is worth the time. In these cases we ask those that believe reinvention should take place to take a month or two and build a business case that has quantitative and qualitative data that makes their point, and present it to the other 50 per cent.

Generally, when those dragging their feet actually see the reality of the situation in black and white, they are motivated to "confront the brutal facts."

In simple terms, what is a reinvention roadmap?

The reinvention roadmap comprises two things: a graphic that shows how to design and reinvent a better organization by outlining the choices that can be made, and how they interact; and 11 exercises to follow to walk through the map.

What is the number one skill needed to be a successful reinvention coach?

Credibility. In order for a leadership team to let someone into their inner circle and challenge and examine their strategies and previous choices, they need to feel very competent that their facilitator coach will make them successful.

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