

# ARE YOU FIT FOR THE EVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGY? YOUR ENVIRONMENT COULD BE THE TOOL YOU'VE OVERLOOKED.

**THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION (ISS) SERVES AS A SPACE ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH LABORATORY IN WHICH CREW MEMBERS CONDUCT EXPERIMENTS IN HUMAN BIOLOGY, PHYSICS, METEOROLOGY, AND OTHER FIELDS. IT OPERATES AT THE EDGE OF THE MOST RECENT TECHNOLOGY; A STAGING BASE FOR POSSIBLE FUTURE MISSIONS TO THE MOON, MARS, AND ASTEROIDS WHILE SERVING COMMERCIAL, DIPLOMATIC AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.**

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**L**ong term ISS experiments have revealed a great truth to humankind. We have the tech to travel to other worlds, but our bodies are only designed for this one. From gravity's impact on blood flow, bone loss, and muscle atrophy, to our earth-bound microbiome and its effects on our gut health, organs, and the immune system: our grand dreams are limited by an inability to replicate an environment precisely calibrated for human survival. Meanwhile, back here on planet Earth, decades into our modern technological revolutions, it's also evident that our fundamental biology is challenged to keep up. Tech evolution and the environments where they meet is creating stress and overwhelm - pushing some to the brink of debilitating health issues.

When we can't solve for this organism-environment conundrum, we merely overlook the limits of our biology and the environments in which we thrive. Our hubris has us think and act as if we live independent of our biome, rather than face the fact that we're an organism shaped by an adaptive dance millions of years in the making. However, something quite fascinating happens when we embrace the fact that we are mere aspects of a whole system - in a co-constitutive, reciprocal and consequential relational exchange with everything.

While we enjoy the tech that provides overall betterment of humankind, there seems to have been an unintended consequence that disconnects us from operating as part of the whole system. We seem to be working hard to function better as individuals utilising all manner of tech to improve our productivity and happiness - with

catchy sayings like "I'm working smarter not harder." Most people are finding that dealing with the technology in this way frequently adds its own overwhelm, stress and keeps us "busy." Not much is changing is it? We're still complaining of having no time, a general feeling of everything speeding up, and constantly working on how to improve "our-selves."

Turning our attention to the fact that we're part of a whole system of people/places/things, and given our inherent limitations made evident above, we need to learn to function effectively with others, influencing them and ourselves to get things done together - having the environment to do the heavy lifting for us.

We're not fit for the current social and technological environment that's evolving around us and if we approach it as individuals, we never will be. We need to consider a new approach to getting things done that includes functioning at a much higher and evolved level. One where we stop being the centre of our own universe and orient ourselves as an aspect of the whole environment around us, inseparable from everyone and everything in it. Any activity we engage in has a consequence on the whole environment we inhabit, both our internal and external environment.

We're continually influencing and being influenced by our environment. We're an adaptive species, but we can't adapt faster than our biological evolution dictates. Whereas the ability to fabricate and make objects and technology can be done exponentially when you remove the human factor and set in motion systems and processes that are not governed by the same biological laws we are. The industrial revolution marked a shift to powered, special-purpose machinery, factories and mass production. It began a process, speeding life up at a rate that expands all the time. Technology is evolving quickly and exponentially; while, at the same time, humans are evolving slowly and gradually. Technology, hard and software, is speeding up; human-ware isn't. Technology demands a speed, pace, and complexity few are fit to process. The fact is that human beings are never going to evolve fast enough to keep up with the demands of evolving technology, so how do we get fit for coping with this evolution?

What if the answer was not trying to get every last bit of bandwidth out of our limited mind-brain-bodies to keep up with the ever-increasing pace that technology is having us work at? What if the environment could accelerate things for us? What if we could build and maintain an influence ecology to do the heavy lifting for us? Might "environment" itself be a technology we've overlooked? Perhaps our "environments" are a tool that can help us do a lot with a little. Tools have always helped us do more with less, and our environment is a tool we rarely utilise. Especially when you consider the countless hours and dollars spent attempting to coordinate people in massive enterprises to produce large-scale buy-in.

"Influence Ecology" is an abstract concept for the reciprocal, co-constitutive organism-environment relationship that we're all in with everyone and everything around us. We're organisms within the environments we live and work, continually influenced by it, and in turn, influencing it. This is the meaning of ecology. An Influence Ecology harnesses the power of environment. Our "social ecologies" - people (social), conversations (narratives), things (physical) - have an enormous influence on us achieving results; some forward our ambitions and others are limiting. Human beings are social animals - we succeed or fail depending on the social ecologies we are in. Our ability to get specific things done and coordinate action is determined mostly by the environment we're in and almost impossible in one that does not support it.

Nicholas A. Christakis and James H. Fowler in their book *Connected: The Hidden Influence Of Social Networks* compiled research that showed a wide variety of traits—from happiness to obesity—can spread from person to person, showing how your location in the social network might impact your life in ways you don't even know.

Our ability to act is determined in large part by the environment we inhabit at the time we attempt to perform. It is difficult, if not impossible, to take action in an environment that does not support it. This principle is true, not only within physical environments, but also within the social and linguistic landscape. You succeed or fail because of your access to specific and valuable help. More accurately, you succeed only when your ideas and actions are supported by environments where reciprocal relationships accept and nurture them.

An intuitive person will begin to see the merits of building ecologies and think, not just in terms of their education, but also in terms of the environments they need to occupy, build, and maintain to satisfy their highest aspirations. With the construction of these environments, they become a tool to do more with less; we might even slow down to speed up.

How do we slow down to speed up? Elite performance is often addressed through efficiency; developing our fitness to do more with less, for example, working fewer hours to produce the same income or how in martial arts we can redirect energy back to an attacker.

How might we harness the environment as a tool to "do the heavy lifting?" I'll use the example of a tech company to begin to understand this. Consider that most technology enterprises direct action through teams. These enterprises are made up of many types of teams: functional, cross-functional, project, virtual, intra/entrepreneurial, and self-directed. Teams require a cohesive framework to coordinate action, accelerate initiatives, and support large-scale buy-in. This acceleration can produce a reduction in expenses; however, more importantly, it can profoundly reduce the cost of missed market revenue. For a tech company, consider the millions saved if the time to complete a product launch is cut in half, however, imagine the millions lost if the product misses a market window or delivery to a large client. In technology, being the product leader is paramount.

## BUILD AN INFLUENCE ECOLOGY

Here we focus on the power of the whole environment: the people, systems, structures, and narratives of social ecologies. Social ecologies have an enormous impact on individuals and influence the results they can achieve. Some forward our aims, and others are limiting. Influence, ideas, and practices spread from person to person, and our occupation and location in the ecology impact our lives in ways that accelerate our aims, initiatives, and timelines.

## ONCE BUILT, DEVELOPED, AND MAINTAINED, THE ENVIRONMENT CAN DO THE HEAVY LIFTING, NOW ACTING AS A MULTIPLIER TO INFLUENCE THOSE THAT OCCUPY THE ECOLOGY.

For example, if I seed a new idea into an existing ecology, this idea produces effects from both the reactions against it or the pull towards its acceptance. Both impact the environment in some way because both are something the members of the ecology must now address.

Those skilled at seeding ideas, narratives, processes, or standards know that these seeds bear fruit with time. These seeds act as a type of Trojan horse to infiltrate and spread throughout the ecology; they begin to alter the environment and hence those who reside within it. Once the environment is altered, the organisms naturally adapt, then, the environment responds again - in a continual co-constitutive, co-creative dance.

It may now go without saying that if a team seeks to influence an ecology (enterprise, or some subset of the enterprise), each personality can accelerate that influence in unique ways. It will, however, make a difference to inventory what influence is present and what influence is missing or flawed. There are four dominant personalities that are commonly observed in every transaction: one dominated by ideas/possibilities; another by narratives/intentions; one that is suited for processes/action; and a fourth that is given by standards/facts. If we study all four personalities and their ability to influence, we might then conclude, for example, that our influence ecology is ripe with ideas and vision (subjective orientation) but is missing systems and processes (objective orientation). This means that the ecology we build might be missing key ingredients to support our aims.

Through most of human history, it has been posited that human beings generally fall into one of four basic personality or behavioral types or temperaments. One of the earliest records of this was written in 400BC by Hippocrates, who noted that the four basic temperaments of human behavior were - Idea-Oriented, Theory-Oriented, Action-Oriented and Fact-Oriented.

It is posited that we are a eusocial species where different individuals have different jobs to do. There is a division of labour, generations overlap, occupy the same colony, and cooperate to care for young. For example, an ant colony includes a Queen (reproduce), Workers (hunt/protect), Drones (mate), and Alates (establish new colonies). While born

genetically similar, environmental triggers evoke genetic switches to produce the perfect balance of the required roles. Each role allows the collective group to thrive. No one role has primacy.

No matter which of the hundreds of personality studies that proliferate the marketplace, there is no doubt that organisations run best on a balance of the required roles in any ecology. If we were to seed our environments with the ideas, narratives, processes and standards that each personality is fit to perform, then we begin to use our environment as a tool to do the heavy lifting for us. This is where we need to develop our fitness and enhance our performance. Not simply focusing on improving our "self", but focusing on improving our ability to transact with others in a reciprocal way that builds environments where we work together in the most efficient way, performing the role we're most suited for, and allowing others to do their job depending on where we are in the transaction - just like the ants. I think the more we accept we have an inherent/innate and dominant personality that functions best when involved in certain parts of a transaction, our ability to get things done and get buy in from others we need help from is accelerated for aims we have in all areas of life.

Maybe our human-ware has been here all along.

## FOCUS ON FITNESS

Fitness increases effectiveness and efficiency. I can do more with less effort when fit. To develop our fitness in something, we must first build through effective and deliberate practice. For example, consider how we get competent at swimming. We could read about it, study it, watch videos, discuss it, and perhaps even practice on dry land, and yet still we wouldn't know swimming until we got into the water and tested our understanding through action. Furthermore, our fitness to swim could not be developed in a single attempt. For competence, knowing requires doing and fitness requires practice.

Technologies will continue to speed our projects, initiatives, and results. Can you keep up? It is possible to speed up transactions while reducing personal hardship or struggle? Those we work with report an increased competence to influence and accelerate transactions, the ability to transact for more valued roles within their enterprises, and a reduction in the adversity or struggle they or others experience.

In the next article, we will be exploring how our fitness increases effectiveness and efficiency. One note: it's not much fun, which is why most don't do it.

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