

May 2019

As part of the Café Insights series of interviews with insightful speakers, The Insight Bureau recently caught-up with Cyriel Kortleven, an international speaker on creativity and innovation. I asked Cyriel what “the change mindset” really means, and how he suggests we can stay clear of “passion-killers” and remain agile and open to change.



- Andrew Vine** Hello. And welcome to another in the series of Café insights. I'm Andrew Vine, CEO of The Insight Bureau. And today I'm in conversation with Cyriel Kortleven. How are you?
- Cyriel Kortleven** Going well.
- AV** Right. Well, Cyriel. You're usually based in Belgium, but increasingly a global speaker, globetrotting around the world, and someone who's worked in the area of creative thinking and innovation for many, many years. What brings you to Singapore now? What are you up to?
- CK** There was a big conference happening a few days ago -- Asian Professional Speakers. 270 speakers from 30 different countries gathered. And I already spoke at a previous event, but the quality's always really good, so I love to come over and then have a few meetings and build up my network here.
- AV** Brilliant. And, of course, you're talking all over the world, Singapore's been higher and higher on the agenda these days, I think, yes?
- CK** Yes. Absolutely. I love it here.
- AV** Cool. So, in a nutshell, really, 'your claim to fame', what you're known for, is “the change mindset”. And that's what you talk about, but what does it really mean?
- CK** Yeah. I come from a world of creative thinking, facilitating brainstorming sessions. And the last few years I'm really focusing on what I call the change mindset. I have a feeling a lot of things are changing quickly. And you have a lot of the trend-watchers and futurists - they talk about all the new technologies that are happening. But I have a feeling that sometimes we leave the audience a little bit lost; How do we cope with it? How do we cope with the change? How can I get my employees on board for the changes that we need to make?" So, I really focus on the mindset of people. I'm not talking about change management or how you should structure your organization, but as a professional, how can you stay open, how can you stay agile and fresh to cope with the changes?
- AV** Right. And although we ask ourselves the question about why is this important for companies, haven't we always faced change and innovation? Innovation's nothing new, so what is it now, more than ever, that makes this the time to really heighten that priority?
- CK** Yes, absolutely. I have a feeling that it really is a boost in the technologies. Things are changing so fast in the world that people are-- their resistance to change is getting a bit bigger. People can't follow anymore. But they need to stay

open. They need to look forward. And how can you do it? So, I think in these times, we need to help people with being more agile to change, and work with it.

AV Yeah. We know that people are inherently resistant to change. And we've had lots of examples in organizations where creativity and change is stifled. What are the main areas that you see where that occurs? What are the passion killers? I think you use that term. Right?

CK Yes.

AV What are the passion killers that stop people, organizations from change?

CK Yeah. A lot of times, because there is so much change happening, the first reaction of people is saying, "Yes. But we don't have money. We don't have time. We've already tried it. It's not working in our industry." And sometimes they're right. But because the world change so fast, at least stay open. And maybe try it. Maybe it didn't work five years ago. But if you adapt it a little bit it might work now. And if there is no money, okay. Let's see what can we do with a very low budget. Can we still achieve the goals that we have? So how can you get away from those passion killers and at least try it? At least think about it.

AV Do you consider yourself a "thought-leader" when it comes to mindset?

CK No. I don't see myself as a thought leader. I like the term simplifier more. I think there are already many thought leaders in the world. And we need them. And we need their visions and looking forward. But I'm a simple guy. And I believe at this moment -- the world is so complex -- we miss some very simple strategies. It doesn't all have to be rocket science! So, I see myself more as helping people with some simple tools, pragmatic elements, and some new language to look at the basics.

AV So how have you applied this change mindset yourself to improve and to achieve results?

CK What I try to do is also incorporate it in my own life, yes. So, the way I do business ... I'm from Belgium, quite a small country. But immediately I was thinking, if I want to be a professional speaker on this topic, I have to think big. So, at that moment, I really have to think in different ways how to get my business. So maybe one quick example -- it's quite nice, what I've done -- I'm living in Belgium, so I think, what's the country at the other side of the world where I can do business? And so, then I came to New Zealand. That's almost the other side of the world. And I was thinking, if I can do business in Belgium and I can do business in New Zealand, then I'm really a global speaker.

But I didn't know anybody there. So that moment I'm going to look, suspend my own passion killers: It's too far. I can't do it. What I've done, I went on LinkedIn and I looked for who are companies or people working in the domain of creativity, innovation, in New Zealand. And then you get a whole list of people. What I've done is send a short email to them. "Hey. I'm Cyriel. I'm coming to New Zealand. Can we have a chat?" What happened from the ten people that I approached, I got five replies. I got two jobs out of it! So that's for me an example -- it works. If you have a little bit of guts, you apply some simple tips, you can work at the other side of the world

- AV** Well, that's great. Thank you very much for spending some time, coming in, and seeing me today. Before you go, I just thought maybe you could share a few tips for us. You said about being the simplifier. What are some of the things that perhaps we could do that can give change a boost?
- CK** Yeah. You get the summary in 40 seconds of my whole presentation. I have three pillars, "Yes. And. Act". The Yes stands for suspend your judgment. So instead of spending a lot of time with the passion killers, for three minutes, go into the Yes-And mindset and see what's possible. You don't have to do all of them, but at least for three minutes, think about it, and see if there are some interesting elements with what you could do. The second pillar is the And. The And stands for, how can you look from a different angle on your world? So, if you were a marketeer, if you have a challenge or a problem, how would somebody from administration solve your problem? How would somebody from logistics? So, put on a different hat and see what new ideas pop-up. Maybe the last thing is the Act. And there I share a concept of what I call a nano-action. What's a nano-action? You can only spend one hour and \$10 on it. So instead of spending hours, days, weeks, creating the perfect plan, no, what could be a very small step -- one hour, \$10 -- what could be a first step to see if it works or not? And give that a try. And when you apply these three things - the Yes-And-Act - I'm quite sure you will come up with a lot of new ideas, and some things that will help you to boost your own change mindset!
- AV** Some really great gems there. Thank you very much, Cyriel. Lovely to see you. See you soon.
- CK** It was a pleasure
- AV** Okay. Bye-bye.

Cyriel Kortleven is an international speaker who has been working in the domain of creativity and innovation for over 15 years. His mission in life is to boost the creative and entrepreneurial mind-set of professionals and to be ready for change. He is a sought-after to present at conferences, client events and internal leadership development meetings. His playful and enthusiastic style creates an informal atmosphere which he uses to stimulate his audiences to break their fixed-thinking patterns and to unleash their full potential. Cyriel is also author of four books and is one of only 700 Certified Professional Speakers (CSP) in the world.

To learn more about Cyriel Kortleven's experience and insights, please visit:

<http://www.insightbureau.com/CyrielKortleven.html>

To hire Cyriel for a briefing or conference

Email: engage_us@insightbureau.com