

syncwize



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coffee corner quarterly

Staying in touch with our freelance professionals

“The fact that we live at the bottom of a deep gravity well, on the surface of a gas covered planet going around a nuclear fireball 90 million miles away and think this to be normal is obviously some indication of how skewed our perception tends to be.”

~ Douglas Adams, *“The Salmon of Doubt: Hitchhiking the Galaxy One Last Time”*

what did you love about today?

Wow. 2015 has proven to be a tough year. Reviewing the experiences of every contractor on our books, thinking back on client meetings and even just looking around our own office, it's clear that every single one of us is feeling frazzled. For one reason or another. Without going into an analysis of why the entire workforce has taken such a beating over the past 12 months, one wonders whether things will be looking up after the summer break, or not.

I for one am finding it impossible to predict how 2016 will turn out; at this stage I — like most of you—am merely hoping I can get through it. In fact, I've made a decision to just do the best I can with what I have.

Motivational messages seem trite and shallow in times of hardship, but viewing a short video clip recently, of Victor Frankl—himself a survivor of the holocaust—speaking on what made the difference to those who survived the Nazi concentration camps and those who didn't, I am reminded again that life has the meaning that we give it. In other words, the degree to which we



we choose to adopt.

Most of us chafe at difficult times but perhaps it's time we make a point of relishing them—perhaps now is the time to look in the mirror and abandon poor practices and perspectives, which will position you more favourably to take on the future. Perhaps they are even a precursor for change and a pre-boom period! Someone once said that if one learns to replace judgement of situations as good or bad with a sense of gratitude, one's whole experience of life can take a turn for the better.

Besides, tough times needn't affect our enjoyment of pleasant ones. “The existence of broccoli does not in any way affect the

emerge victorious from tough times is a factor largely of the perspective

taste of chocolate”. Well said, John Green.

So once again, at the end of another challenging and possibly draining year, we encourage you to make a choice to find the silver lining on every storm cloud. Start by looking back on the year as it concludes and acknowledging your achievements, the things you did, experiences you had both good and bad, and the challenges that you overcame. Then find the good in each event: did it make you stronger, was it perhaps a stepping stone to greater things?

For our part, it is our wish for every one of you that your year ends with some tranquillity, a good helping of fun, and the joy that only the company of loved ones can bring.

And remember, as Howard Zinn so succinctly puts it, “the future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is in itself a marvellous victory”.

We're still looking for an additional account manager to join our team. Someone with a sound understanding of information technology and experience in recruitment, who can engage intelligently with our professionals, clients and prospective candidates. Who gets a kick out of bringing a smile to others' faces, who is obsessive about providing the best possible service, and who believes in working with integrity. Someone who knows the bottom line is about doing the best you can in every moment. If you know a suitable candidate who is looking for a company like syncwize, please put us in touch. Enquiries can be addressed with Helen on helen@syncwize.co.za or 083 390 8137.



We extend a warm welcome to the following professionals who recently joined our team.

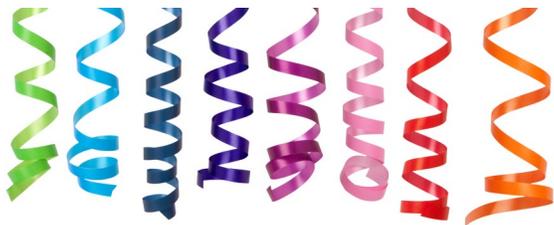
- **Graham Fenn, Nicole Pillay and KG Lephoko**, UX designers
- **Carin Oelofse and Rita de Canha**, senior project managers
- **Steve van Niekerk and Nick Milicevic**, technical specialists
- **Egbert van der Walt**, programme manager... Egbert is returning to syncwize after an extended assignment with our sister company, Knowledge:Worx

Welcome on board to all of you, we wish you the best of luck in your new appointments, and look forward to a positive and mutually rewarding relationship with you.

Hearty birthday wishes to all of you who celebrate the passage of another year this quarter.

Birthdays are a new start, a fresh beginning, and a time to pursue new endeavors with new goals. Move forward with confidence and courage. You're all special peeps, and we hope that your special day and all of your days for the coming year are amazing!

- October** Aubrey Huntly, Ashley Lowe, Rajen Nagar, Present Siwele
- November** Graham Fenn, Carl Gordon, KG Lephoko, Kavitha Palanisamy
- December** Harry Naude, Zelda Muller, Nicole Pillay, Anzio Scrimnger, Egbert van der Walt



For various reasons, this year has been a little short on our previously regular get-togethers... something which we hope to remedy in 2016, particularly when we see how badly some of you need a break from the office!

We recently hosted a final breakfast session at Moyo's restaurant next to the Zoo Lake, and thank all those who made the time to attend. It was a relaxed and happy environment, and was a pleasant change for those who have challenges attending mid/late afternoon cocktail and snacks sessions!

Unfortunately, yours truly was so carried away by the early morning sunshine, great company and enjoyable conversation, that the only photos taken were of all of us standing in queues, drooling over the luxurious spread laid out for us. Sorry for that!

a recipe for creating devoted customers?

"Rocket: Eight Lessons to Secure Infinite Growth", a new book about what it takes to create iconic brands, find 8 keys to 'converting customers into apostles' in the consumer sales industry. We thought these were very well put:

- Don't ask them what they want—they're too limited by what they know, and are not big on imagination
- Woo your biggest fans—2% of customers are responsible for 20% of sales but with their networks and the

effect of word of mouth, they may actually generate up to 80% of sales

- Consider their complaints a gift
- Looks do count—visual brilliance may be costly but it's invaluable
- Love is infectious: transform your employees into passionate disciples. Passion equals knowledge equals solutions equals sales
- Ramp up your virtual relationships—online and 24/7 is the opportunity of a lifetime

- Take giant leaps—big dreams, not incremental improvements, are what change the world
- Remember, before it happens, that relationships are not stable: if you're not improving you're declining

Adapted from "8 Lessons to Secure Infinite Growth", an article by Sylverstein, Bolden, Jacobsen and Sajdeh in Leader.co.za



reinvention is the name of this game



The economic situation—likely to be exacerbated by a looming recession—is forcing companies to rethink the way they do business. IT is not only an enabler, but is in many cases the key element in the new mix. More than ever before, IT is the driver of innovation. In such a market, those who have already begun taking advantage of opportunities to align themselves with the future will find themselves best placed for exciting assignments in years to come.

It's clear from everything happening around us that South Africa is in the midst of an unstable, and rapidly worsening economic situation. Given the continuing stagnant 'growth' rate of the economy and the negative factors affecting business, 2016 can be expected to be at least as challenging as 2015 for most companies.

At the same time however, the technology revolution remains not only in full swing but is escalating, containing the seeds of a broad range of fundamental changes to lifestyles, consumer expectations and the way business is conducted.

These twin drivers of change (amongst others, of course) are key to keep in mind when seeking contracting assignments which will place you favourably for your future career, and can in fact bear the seeds of your future success.

One obvious move for many companies will be smarter strategic planning and more stringent management of true return on investment. Businesses are already feeling the pressure to work faster, leaner and smarter to retain and attract market share, with a concomitant effect on the skills now being sought. Not only this, but the need for maximum productivity means that those resources who are most productive are likely to be more in demand. Productivity may come from many sources, but a common underlying factor is positive outlook and a good work ethic.

Companies are moving to rationalise, streamline and de-complicate their soft-

ware development processes. There has already been a strong move toward an Agile-based approach to software design and development, and the demand for individuals experienced in the application of Agile principles has risen rapidly, with Agile experience now being a standard requirement for all project-type professionals. Given that the adoption of Agile is a relatively new trend, most clients understand that extensive experience with this approach is rare, and are quite happy to consider contractors with Agile training or limited experience for now. However with Agile on the rise, you will do well to grab any opportunities for either exposure to, or training in, Agile. And take note that this requirement is not limited to project managers... business/systems analysts, technical team leads and even developers will benefit from having Agile exposure.

The ability to develop unique and innovative offerings, thus carving out special market niches is another—and more long-lasting—key success factor for businesses next year. In the context of IT contracting, particularly in the financial services market where online and mobile solutions have opened the door for new, non-traditional financial services providers, there has been a significant spike in demand for Mobile technology design and development skills. The same high demand for Java skills experienced over the past few years has now moved to UX designers and the full range of Mobile development skills. This small pool of specialists is already highly sought after, and the challenge for organisations will be not merely to attract, but to retain, skilled resources. Once again, if you have an opportunity to gain exposure to this environment, whether from a business or technical perspective, grab it with both hands. We do however recommend that you stick to an assignment for at least 2 years to gain meaningful experience.

With the entry of non-traditional competitors into the field of financial services, competition has also heated up significantly for professionals with sound knowledge of Card and payment systems. Both of these focal areas are becoming key selling points for business analysts.

With continuing economic challenge, companies will also be exploring ways to grow

while controlling costs, and re-assessment of strategic projects may well result in companies embarking on a drive for smarter processes and marketing, with less dependency on developing cumbersome supportive IT solutions and emphasis on clever business solutions and fit-for-purpose technology. One prediction is that companies may move away from traditional large infrastructure vendors to lower-priced alternatives from newer generation, innovative suppliers. Familiarising yourself with the alternatives available in your particular niche will probably be a worthwhile investment of your time.

Big data and the opportunities it affords for innovation will also do well, but in a targeted and cost-effective manner where return on investment is clear, or where a unique competitive advantage is possible.

There also seems to be increasing focus on sound IT architectures; architects with knowledge of Java and complex system integration are becoming more in demand. Gartner predicts a rise in adaptive security architectures, mesh app and service architecture and advanced system architecture (jargon concerning the "digital mesh" and smart machines, neuromorphic architectures and field-programmable gate arrays, deep learning, pattern-matching algorithms and Internet of Things platforms abounds). In the financial services industry, sound knowledge of compliance is in increased demand—clearly in response to the increasing pressure for sound and comprehensive governance. Knowledge of compliance in this industry will lend solidity to any business analyst's credentials.

Contract professionals, whose future relies so much on the experience gained today, will do well to align themselves wherever possible to companies and/or contracting opportunities offering exposure to these new technologies and business trends. Now, more than ever, the value of intellectual capital and hands-on experience cannot be underestimated. Those who take an active lead in building their skills may well find that they emerge on top when the business climate improves.

"A recession can be expected to create new opportunities for firms with disruptive technologies to prosper"

-Andy Robb



think you know your colleagues?

Many people quite naturally believe they are good 'intuitive psychologists', thinking it is relatively easy to predict other people's attitudes and behaviours. We each have information built up from countless previous experiences involving both ourselves and others so surely we should have solid insights?

No such luck.

In reality people show a number of predictable biases when estimating other people's behaviour and its causes. And these biases help to show exactly why we need psychology experiments and why we can't rely on our intuitions about the behaviour of others. One of these biases is called the false consensus effect. In the 1970s Stanford University social psychologist Professor Lee Ross set out to show just how the false consensus effect operates in two neat studies (Ross, Greene & House, 1977).

False consensus

In the first study participants were asked to read about situations in which a conflict occurred and then told two alternative ways of responding. They were asked to do three things:

- Guess which option other people would choose,
- Say which option they would choose,
- Describe the attributes of the person who would choose each of the two options.

The results showed more people thought

others would do the same as them, regardless of which of the two responses they actually chose themselves. This shows what Ross and colleagues dubbed the 'false consensus' effect – the idea that we each think other people think the same way we do when actually they often don't.

Another bias emerged when participants were asked to describe the attributes of the person who made the opposite choice to their own. Compared to other people who made the same choice they did, people made more extreme predictions about the personalities of those who made didn't share their choice.

To put it a little crassly: people tend to assume that those who don't agree with them have something wrong with them! It might seem like a joke, but it is a real bias that people demonstrate.

Eat at Joe's!

While the finding from the first study is all very well in theory, how can we be sure people really behave the way they say they will? After all, psychologists have famously found little connection between people's attitudes and their behaviour.

In a second study, therefore, Ross and colleagues abandoned hypothetical situations, paper and pencil test and instead took up the mighty sandwich board.

This time a new set of participants, who were university students, were asked if they

would be willing to walk around their campus for 30 minutes wearing a sandwich board saying: "Eat at Joe's". (No information is available about the food quality at 'Joe's', and consequently how foolish students would look.)

For motivation participants were simply told they would learn 'something useful' from the study, but that they were absolutely free to refuse if they wished.

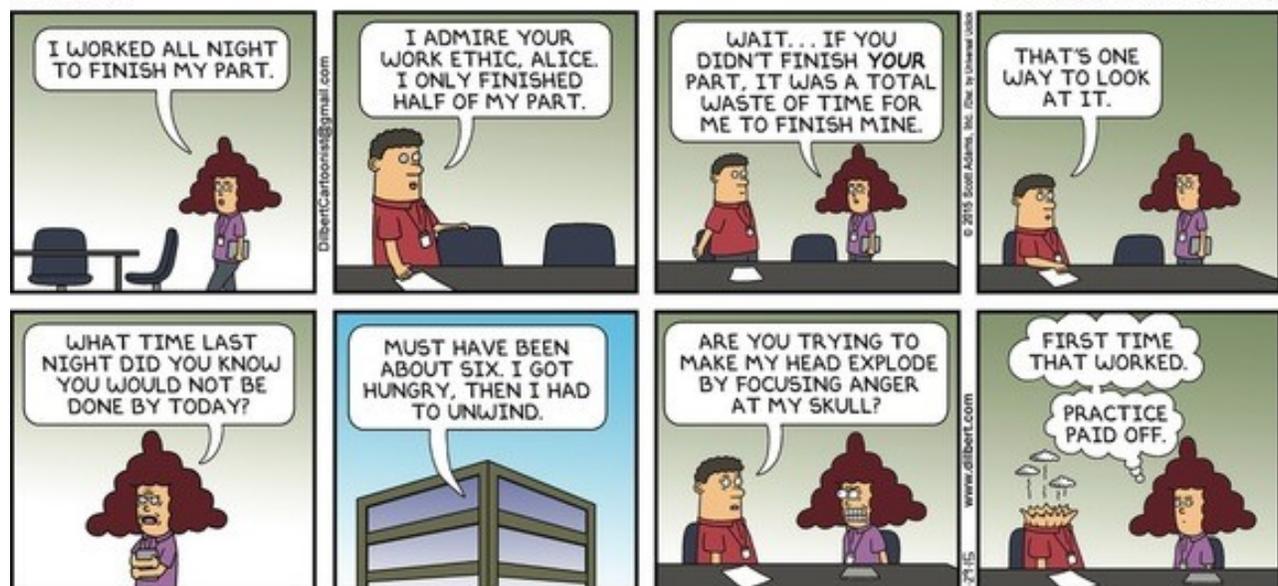
The results of this study confirmed the previous study. Of those who agreed to wear the sandwich board, 62% thought others would also agree. Of those who refused, only 33% thought others would agree to wear the sandwich board.

Again, as before, people also made more extreme predictions about the type of person who made the opposite decision to their own. You can just imagine how that thinking might go. The people who agreed to carry the sandwich board might have said: "What's wrong with someone who refuses? I think they must be really scared of looking like a fool."

Copied verbatim from Dr Jeremy Dean's article "Why We All Stink as intuitive Psychologists: the False Consensus Effect" on Psychology's website: <http://www.spring.org.uk/2007/11/why-we-all-stink-as-intuitive.php>

DILBERT

BY SCOTT ADAMS





If you're taking time out over the festive season, we hope you find yourself relaxed, replenished and rearing to go again. And safe travels to those who are venturing away from home.

Live your life in full colour and be blessed !



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This newsletter is intended for syncwize's contractor team, and is published quarterly as a means of conveying general information. We would love it if you'd like to contribute, place an advertisement, or have a specific request for inclusion. If so, please contact Pascalina or Helen.