

Editor's Words

Purpose

In the last issue I wrote about the need for perseverance, patience and determination. As an entrepreneur who has been on both sides of the path to success I hold those ideas close to me and have learned over the years that no matter how difficult a situation is you can come through it if you stick to your principles.

However, there is another belief that is even more central to me as a person and as an entrepreneur – and that is purpose.

I first became interested in the idea of purpose long before it was a phrase hijacked by the marketeers to describe all and everything that is done to achieve corporate one-upmanship. I have long been fascinated with cosmology, the origins of the universe, the nature of consciousness and the deepest questions about our existence.

Searching for answers

While I was at school I was a typical under-achiever. I didn't make it to university – I didn't even finish my A-levels. I had the potential to do well and found most subjects easy but I was always more interested in making money, learning about business and searching for answers to questions which, at the time, I didn't fully understand.

I ambled through my late teens and early twenties. I set up several companies – some worked and some didn't – eventually I found the thing that all entrepreneurs are searching for; it made money, I was good at it, and I enjoyed. I published my first magazine in 1997 and the rest, as they say, is history.

However, despite enjoying some success I was never really satisfied. My interest in things, both materi-

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ally and metaphorically, often waned. The things that gave me pleasure soon started to sparkle less and over time I became disillusioned with what I was doing – and more importantly, what I was contributing.

In 2004 the Astronomer Royal, Martin John Rees, Baron Rees of Ludlow, collaborated with Channel 4 to produce three fascinating documentaries entitled 'What we still don't know' and later published a book under the same title. These works sought to answer the most fundamental questions concerning our existence: Why are we here? Are we alone? Are we real?

I won't bore you with ethereal nature of the simulation hypothesis or attempt to expound the theoretical certainty that we are merely digital incarnations of our ancestors, but I can tell you that those documentaries had a profound effect on my life. It wasn't that they were earth-shatteringly brilliant in their composition – it was more that they set off a spark in my brain and made me truly question myself and my purpose in life.

The Moody Blues

My dad was a big fan of the Moody Blues. As a child I remember listening to the song '22,000 days' countless times and I always remember thinking

how long life was. I mean 22,000 days – just think what you could do with all that time. Scroll forward 24 years and I had already used up 8,760 of my days – and I was nowhere.

I have to be honest with you; I've spent the last 16 years obsessively searching for answers to many of these questions and I still don't have much to report. Purpose, at the most fundamental level, requires you to ask one simple question – why? But the problem with coming to a definitive conclusion is that you can always add 'why?' onto the end of any answer that seeks to address the original question – until you get all the way back to why are we here? We all recognise purpose in the micro but unless you are willing to go all the way back to the macro and examine the fundamentals you end up with a fairly superficial answer.

It's some sort of answer

The conclusion I have come to, albeit not a very profound one, is that you can only do your best while you are here and set goals that mean you can make a small difference in the micro. Will we ever know the answer to the question, why are we here? I doubt it. Will we ever understand how the universe came into existence from an infinitely small and dense point of energy? Probably not. Will the nature and origin of consciousness ever be explained in a way that we can comprehend. Definitely not. But can we all contribute a little to make the world a better, cleaner and fairer place for the short time that we are here? I think we can.

For the last 18 months I have worked tirelessly with a small team of people to get ERP Today off the ground. We have been fortunate to enjoy some success and we are very proud of our

accomplishments. We have worked with fantastic companies, interviewed great personalities and, in some small way, contributed towards making the ERP community a little more cohesive. It's really been a blast.

As I look forward to 2021, I see an important role for our little start-up. We will continue to publish our quarterly print magazine which showcases the amazing work that our partners undertake. Our digital hub will be expanded to include daily news from inside the industry and keep our readers and subscribers up to date with the latest developments in the industry. And, our Live! platform will break new ground with weekly live interviews, webinars and moderated web chats on the topics that most affect digitally-ambitious enterprises.

But above all, we will be focussing our efforts on doing something of real purpose.

What will you say you did?

We are living through historic times: In centuries to come our great great grand-children and their families will look back on this year and talk about it in living rooms, learn about it in lecture halls and analyse it in boardrooms, while historians will eulogise over it as they recount a year that rocked the globe.

And when we finally come through this and have the opportunity to look back we will have to answer a simple question. What did we do to help?

I know doctors, nurses, teachers and scientists who have all done their bit, and more. Hearing the daily routine of people close to me who have been on the frontline is humbling in the extreme. While we have been battling with working from home and coming to terms with meeting our colleagues and customers over **Zoom**, they have been at the coalface, in the

firing line and making sacrifices that we can barely comprehend.

To that end, ERP Today is spearheading a campaign on behalf of **NHS Charities Together** in support of their **COVID-19 Urgent Appeal**. I don't have the space here to tell you about the work the charity does but I am sure you can imagine that it is singularly focussed on providing help where it is needed most.



Fundraiser with a difference

Our fundraising event is scheduled for June 2021, although we realise it may be postponed to one of our alternate dates in September if the crisis hasn't abated in time. I am asking everyone who reads this to show your support and get behind this initiative so that we can all give back as a community to those who have sacrificed more than we can imagine.

How can you help? Well you don't have to shave your head or stop drinking alcohol for a month. You don't have to cycle 100 miles or climb a

mountain. In fact, all you have to do is attend a fundraising event at the glorious **Ascot Racecourse** and ensure that your employer is doing their bit by contributing in some way.

We had already raised a significant amount of sponsorship money for our annual awards event and I will be putting every penny of that towards our fundraiser. The idea of resurrecting an awards dinner so we can all congratulate ourselves seems trite and slightly vulgar at the moment. Of the sponsors that I have already spoken, to every single one has pledged their support for our new idea - apart from one. (I will give them a bit more time to reconsider before shaming them). For the few sponsors that I haven't managed to speak to directly I will be calling you soon.

The day will be totally focussed on raising as much money as possible for the NHS COVID-19 Urgent Appeal and the centrepiece will be a series of competitive individual and team events and activities - although there will also be plenty of eating, drinking and catching up with colleagues and peers that many of us won't have seen for a long while. We will be pitching teams from each company against each other - it's going to be competitive and there will be prizes and significant

bragging rights for the winners. We will also be asking you to invite keyworkers to share in the experience - many of you will work with hospitals, healthcare trusts, and care providers and we want to make sure that as many of these worthy keyworkers attend as possible so they can see our collective gratitude at first-hand.

We won't be releasing the event website until the new year but we are open for donations, contributions and ideas now.

Now is the time to stand up as a community and make a difference. ■