

Ancient Wisdom meets Modern Leadership
to Inspire a Fresh Path Forward

THE **nomadic** MINDSET

NEVER SETTLE...for TOO LONG

KEVIN COTTAM

**Integrate: The Ability to
Sustain Sustainability**

E: globalnomadkevincottam@gmail.com

L: [linkedin.com/in/kevin-cottam/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/kevin-cottam/)

W: www.thenomadicmindset.com

 **GoNomading**
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Integrate: The Ability to Sustain, Sustainability

*The ability to sustain, sustainability,
is the ability to weather time, accept the changes,
protect our resources for longevity, and realise that every part
of the universal food chain plays an intricate, crucial, major role
in what makes the world go 'round: an interconnected universe.*



***“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking
we used when we created them”***

– ALBERT EINSTEIN



DECEMBER 20, 2017, MAASAI MARA, KENYA

Joel Soit, my Maasai brother, picks me up from the Mara Simba Lodge for our morning-long walk through the barren grasslands of the Maasai Mara. While we chat, stopping at times to listen to the birds singing, watch the baboons frolic, or focus on our ultimate quest to find the hiding place of the shy hippos, I happen to mention the ground looks barren, and he just smiles. Then he says . . .

“Lions killed two of my cows last night.” This stops me in my tracks. Fear rises inside me with concern for the safety of the young herders. He says the herders are okay. We look each other in the eyes, and I feel his calm, still presence. It seems, from his matter-of-fact statement, that it has no real effect on him. This helps calm me. I sense this a normal part of existence in the Mara. It is just like the cup of coffee I had for breakfast—a normal occurrence—that’s just life in nature. However, I know it bothers him to some extent because every cow is currency for sustaining their survival, and now he has two less.

*Lions killed
two of my
cows last
night ”*

We continue our walk, talking from time to time while looking for the hippos. Walking in the stillness of nature gives me time to reflect upon this lion-and-cows situation and observe more of the nomadic existence and how they sustain themselves on a daily level.

Joel stops at a tree and rips off a branch, then puts it in his mouth to take the bark off one end. He chews the wood at the end to fray it and then moves the branch around in his mouth like a toothbrush. “This is how we brush our teeth,” he says. He hands me a branch, and I repeat his actions. To my surprise, it feels great and my teeth feel cleaner.

These two examples, the killing of the cows and the toothbrush tree, exemplifies their innate ability to sustain their existence in different ways. Even the shy hippos who are afraid of humans are hiding somewhere, and that is how they hope to sustain their existence. Life is raw for nomads, and they strongly believe that to sustain the world, the world needs to embrace and be responsible for the interconnectivity of all things.

The nomads’ ability to sustain their culture and be resilient for thousands of years is a result of sharing, taking risks, observing threats, fast thinking, vision, stillness, community, culture, family, adaptability, flexibility, and being ready to migrate—not just physically but mentally. All are qualities of the nomadic mindset.

This story is just part of nature’s magical play. How does nature’s play translate into sustainability for you?

Sustainability is . . .

Sustainability is the interconnection of four pillars: people, planet, profit, and culture. The right balance of all four creates the circle of life. These pillars are in constant migration, ever changing, ever flowing, and definitely not static. The same goes for what your leadership, corporation, clients, and markets ought to be, theoretically.

There is an innate, flowing, natural balancing and rebalancing act that allows harmony of all parts. The hazard to watch for is when unbalance occurs in such things as understanding, vision, clarity, leadership, market disruption, and more. That is why the leader needs to be bold, strong, and aligned to their true north, i.e., vision, or direction.

Sustainability is a destination for many leaders around the world today. To want or have the ability to sustain is another destination to strive for and is interconnected to fulfilling your business model. This sometimes is a challenge for many leaders and individuals because they might be limited by shareholders,

“*Sustainability is a destination for many leaders around the world today*”

fiduciary matters, boards of directors, the executive team, or even clients and different viewpoints. The other side of that coin, though, is your personal courage, beliefs, and values to drive a company in a purposeful direction for all of mankind. It may sound lofty; however, this is vital today for future generations.

It takes the right mindset to understand all three mindsets—nomadic, builder, and settler—are needed to work together to sustain all systems, whether personally or corporately. Your leadership requires the intricate balance that is sustainability and knowledge of the mindsets.

Is sustainability a destination for your organisation? Is it part of your vision, mindset, and business model? It should be if you don't want to become a dinosaur. What do you have to do, now, to start implementing systems that align with a sustainability model?

The “Problem” of Sustainability

If the nomads understand sustainability, then what is the big problem, and often pushback, that exists around understanding and implementing sustainability initiatives in the world and institutions today? To understand this better, I had some enlightening conversations with two pioneers, leaders, and practitioners in the corporate sustainability movement: Guy Bigwood and Andy Last.

Guy Bigwood, a pioneer and experienced practitioner in the corporate sustainability movement suggests, that the

biggest change needed in organisations is a greater understanding of the importance of systems thinking. We live in a world of complex, dynamic, and interconnected systems that manage and provide for all aspects of our lives from the air we breathe, to the way we live in communities, to the way our financial systems work.

For nomads, this a normal mindset; their understanding of how systems work together is crystal clear. On that point, Guy translates this to the corporate environment.

Today, in general, our literacy and understanding of these systems is low. We think in a very linear, siloed way and don't sufficiently understand and/or consider how our decisions affect other parts of the system, which has caused many of the problems we face. For business and society to become really sustainable, our leaders need to better understand and then make conscious decisions that consider how we interlink and interdepend on the financial, social, and environmental systems around us. Consequently, leaders need to expand their education and knowledge to think in a circular, systemic, and sustainable way.

That is who we are. Just like the nomads and nature”

We have the same capacity to be interconnected, not just through technological methods of today, or communication, or relationships, but through our innate, deeper human capacity of social interactions with our environments. That is who we are. Just like the nomads and nature.

In many ways, this encourages a back-to-the-future sustainability thinking model that aligns with the nomadic mindset. Andy Last, CEO of MullenLowe, and author of *Business with a Mission*, consults with global, multinational organisations such as Unilever on sustainability. He explains,

The shift we have seen in the world is a shift back in some ways. Businesses were founded based on a need by society, and you go back to the companies set up in the late nineteenth century in the USA and in the UK. They met a need in society, and leaders recognised the connection to society in terms of their employees. They needed to be looked after and their customers were in society; therefore, they needed to be cognisant of what was going on in society.

I think the shift that has happened over the last 30 years is that businesses became more beholden to the stock markets and the algorithms of stock markets and managing the short-term financial statement rather than the longer term of the growth of the business. With this, you see short-term leadership and the short-term holding of leaders.

Where is this short-termism leading to? What are the consequences?

Andy goes deeper into the social factor,

With the post-financial crash, growing understanding, the limits of the planet, the transparency driven by the internet, companies couldn't control or hide away a big part of their operations. And a younger generation coming into the workplace want more because they have grown up with the visibility of the internet. Plus, seeing social inequalities and the limits of the planet, all this is pushing business back, I believe, to having to understand its relationship with society and recognise that.

1. If the social factor is an issue here, especially with the millennial generation and younger, what are you doing to address this to attract the best and brightest talent?
2. What mindset(s) do you want your future employees to have?
3. Have you ever wondered who, in your corporation, will look at the system and sustainability?

Guy addresses what he has discovered on this question.

From experience, it is often the nomad who sees and starts to understand importance of systems thinking in an organisation. They move around the system first and see the effect on the people and planet. It seems that the nomads are frequently the instigators and key drivers of sustainability. The nomad then appreciates the roles of the builder and settler profiles to make their sustainability vision real.

They move around the system first and see the effect on the people and planet ””

Who might those nomads be in your company? For a corporation to flourish as Guy suggests, it takes individuals with all three different mindset typologies to interconnect and migrate to a sustainable solution together. There is no magic formula to determine the quantity of individuals you need within

a particular mindset dominance. It will depend on the vision and evolution of your institution at any particular time.

An organisation that appears to be upholding a “sustainability contract” is Unilever. Guy and Andy both say Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, understands this. Unilever is one of the oldest multinational consumer goods corporations (established in 1929) and focuses on food, beverages, cleaning agents, and personal care products. Let’s take a brief look at Paul’s mindset and views on sustainability and the problems and possible solutions existing today.

Case Study: Unilever

Paul says,

The world we want is an enormous responsibility. The very essence of capitalism is under threat as business is now seen as a personal wealth accumulator. We have to bring this world back to sanity and put the greater good ahead of self-interest. We need to fight very hard to create an environment out there that is more long-term focused and move away from short-termism. (Confino 2012)

If I reflect on nomads when considering long- versus short-termism, they have a long vision of their culture, the environment, when they may need to migrate (as the Mongolians), and what it takes for them as individuals and a community to live and sustain themselves. When it comes to their immediate goals of day-to-day living and grazing their animals, they believe if they overgraze a field or pasture, then it will take a long time to grow back again. Practicing sustainability, for them, is a natural occurrence.

On an organisational note, though, Guy shares that,

Polman has driven the organisational transformation of Unilever towards sustainability while having to battle the financial world to do annual reporting instead of quarterly. He has challenged and made analysts and others realise that a longer-term strategy delivers better results.

How successful are you in trying to convince your shareholders, executive teams, and board of directors of long- versus short-termism? Are you bold enough to step into that discussion—perhaps disagreement?

Business Model Alignment

When speaking about sustainability, Paul suggests it comes down to the type of corporate business model you aspire to and how that aligns with your fiduciary duty. Does your business model align and integrate with your vision, values, and purpose? Is sustainability a driving centrepiece of that model? Do your strategies, financial instruments, and decisions align with your destination, or in this case, vision? Paul asserts,

I don't think our fiduciary duty is to put shareholders first. I say the opposite. What we firmly believe is that if we focus our company on improving the lives of the world's citizens and come up with genuine sustainable solutions, we are more in synch with consumers and society, and ultimately, this will result in good shareholder returns. (Confino 2012)

1. When considering this quote, how important to you is sustainability within your business model?
2. Does improving the lives of world citizens interest you?
3. Can you see how this mindset could result in increased returns?

Paul's view relates to the qualities of the nomadic mindset. Guy says that Paul is one of those nomads who sees the linkage between the four pillars of sustainability (people, planet, profit, and culture). They are, in essence, the destination he has led Unilever towards with great success. It is one that drives interconnectivity—holistic and human focused. Now where does this nomadic vision and perspective come from? It starts with vision, values, qualities, and purpose. As Paul says,

The moment you discover in life that it's not about yourself, that it is about investing in others, I think you're entering a steadier state to be a great leader. Because above all, I think the main quality of a leader is to be a human being. There's no reason you are special because you happen to have this job or these responsibilities. (Cunningham 2015)

Get Out of the Way

In other words leaders, *get out of the way* and migrate to expansive thoughts from a human and economic perspective. The institution and its purpose are greater than you. What is needed is creating an environment of interconnectedness within companies at all levels and mindsets including external stakeholders,

climate, and people. This comes down to alignment of why your corporation exists in the first place.

Sadly, though, if you look around you, you will see that myopism (narrow thinking) is rampant in much of the world's governments and organisations. While many corporations are implementing sustainability strategies and moving in the Unilever direction, conversations and research have suggested they are not going far enough fast enough. It takes bold, courageous leadership to make this happen.

Guy reiterates this belief, which reflects the Maasai ritual of becoming a warrior:

We need more brave, bold, and courageous leaders who want to disrupt their industries and build more truly sustainable and regenerative businesses. Challenges to sustainability comes from many angles, and Wall Street is one of them: personal greed, wealth, and corruption play a large role that limits sustainable thinking and processes.

Are you solely filling the pockets of your shareholders or Wall Street? Or do you possess a more expansive picture of this thriving world?

Paul goes further when he refers to investors, “We must attract the right investors. If you buy into our approach to long-term value creation . . . then invest in us. If not, I respect you as a human being, but don't invest in us” (Bent 2010).

How bold and courageous are you as a leader to assert yourself to the lion? Are you willing to take on the responsibilities and put your life on the line?

It is worth repeating a couple quotes here that reflect responsibility: Benson Muntere, the Maasai warrior, said, “you cannot kill a lion alone; it takes everyone,” and Paul Polman said, “the world we want is an enormous responsibility.” What do you think?

you cannot kill a lion alone; it takes everyone ”

Sustainability needs Resilience as a Mindset Quality

Resilience Is Normal for Nomads

If you are to embody sustainability as part of your business model, it takes resilience to make it happen. Why? Because the sustainability pathway can be bumpy as you have come to realise. Where does this resilience comes from? Kwek Kok Kwong, CEO NTUC Learning Hub, Singapore, suggests it comes from nomads.

A nomad is somebody who is quite resilient and is constantly looking for ways to survive, looking for greener pastures, looking for the next place, not for only himself but the entire troupe, so there's a bit of that family thing, a bit of that wolf pack thing. We move together as a pack and we help, we look after each other, and it is our duty to make sure as a tribe, as a pack, we all survive.

For centuries, nomads have lived in disruption from droughts and wars to explorers exploiting them and using them as slaves, persecuting them as heathens and dirty uncivilized people, and systemic efforts to exterminate them

“*you have to be resilient and adapt fast*”

as a society. Today, nomads still face a massive threat from climate change, government and developer land grabs, and the overdevelopment of tourism that simultaneously treats them as mascots or a circus show for tourists.

Resilience is what has allowed them to sustain their life and culture and simply survive. It is part of that movement of the mind: the nomadic mindset.

They are proud individuals and communities who want to preserve and sustain their culture while trading or doing business. They are continuing to adapt, though, as is their way, and they change when need be. This resilience and adaptation is how their mindset functions and responds to their environment. Just as Joel Soit, my Maasai friend, took the lion killing his cows in stride, you have to be resilient and adapt fast. This is normal for nomads. It is the nomadic mindset.

How normal is resilience for you?

A Resilient Organisation

A sustainable organisational culture is based on systems, people, culture, and nature being resilient: the bounce-back factor. It first takes the right mindset qualities to understand this and then implement what is needed within the culture. Some debate that people today have decreased resilience, and a primary reason may be because we are too comfortable and lack the hunger our nomadic ancestors needed to survive and thrive. Is this a first-world problem? Good question.

1. How resilient are you, your employees, or your organisation?
2. Who are the nomads in your company who have the resilience to courageously forge new innovations, strategies, and marketing ideas?
3. Think about what actionable steps you can develop to create a resilient corporate culture.

There is no, one, answer; however, it typically starts with executive leadership vision, mindset, actions, and interconnection with their systems. Some think that to build a resilient organisational culture, you need to have motivated, engaged employees interconnected with others, the vision, and the destination.

This plays directly into Andy Last's (CEO of MullenLowe) words, "The mindset is vital to be spoken about and observed as it is the single most [important determinant] of productivity and engagement of the workforce."

Engagement Interventions To Consider

There are multiple engagement interventions that companies are implementing that can assist in you sustaining a resilient corporation. These are some interventions to consider:

INTERVENTION 1

Provide a solid, comprehensive sustainability footprint that employees can engage with and undertake themselves through cooperation with other teams/tribes.

People are searching for a home or an institution they can belong to and grow with that supports their beliefs and purpose. They want to be part of a greater, expansive vision for humanity. This means an organisation needs a "walking the talk" set of sustainable principles.

Andy says,

This puts a number of different behaviours onto leaders, which is to be open to partnership with other players in society, whether it is government or not for profit, to demonstrate their companies' purpose, its right to exist in society, and the value it is bringing to society. This shows the openness of communication that business leaders need to show more vulnerability because they can't control everything that is going on. This doesn't actually play well with the players on Wall Street, but it plays well [with] the other stakeholders in society.

How can you enrich your sustainability footprint?

INTERVENTION 2

Create a culture that rewards independent, autonomous thinking.

Roland Genson, Director at the European Council has found,

If you allow your people to lead with their own competences, you take a risk that you do not control anything, and things are moving all the time. And that, in my mind, is good. You are moving all the time, and nothing is stable. It is a way to get to targets and get motivated people; this is a way to reach a collective mindset where “change” is just considered as “normal.”

In what ways does your organisation allow freedom to think?

INTERVENTION 3

Incorporate the qualities of a nomadic mindset, which lead to a resilient and motivated organisation.

Andy’s business model concerns making a rational business case to understand sustainability and its value for a corporation’s legacy and existence in today’s world. He makes the case that “nomadic learning has been around a lot longer than capitalist learning, and this nomadic mindset is a way to motivate the workplace, which is a common [human resources] and leadership challenge in today’s organisations.”

*nomadic learning
has been around
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What are the nomadic qualities you want embedded in your company?

INTERVENTION 4

Prioritize those with mindsets who are more entrepreneurial or intra-preneurial.

This is Andy’s thought on this from what he has experienced in multinational organisations:

We need new ways of prioritising mindsets and the mindsets for business. I definitely see big problems in the big, multinational companies who need to move towards being more entrepreneurial, and they all say they want to become more entrepreneurial with more people able to make decisions

while pushing down this decision making to the lowest level possible. This is very difficult in a hierarchical rule that follows structure, and therefore they speak about intra-preneurs. You don't hire an intra-preneur based on a skill set; it is absolutely a mindset.

What are the ways you can inspire entrepreneurial and intra-preneurial mindsets?

What you find in nomadic cultures is that they have to be entrepreneurial, independent, flexible, fast thinkers with a fluid system of interconnectedness within their environment and their internal and external communities. It was easy to observe this happening in the camel market in Morocco, with the Maasai at the food and goods market, with the Maasai women making beautiful, beaded jewellery then selling to it tourists, or the Mongolian nomad gathering his family together to shear the sheep to sell the wool for cashmere products.

INTERVENTION 5

Hire not just by skills but by the dominant mindset you need for that position.

Nothing disengages people more than fulfilling a role that doesn't fit with their why and mindset. Everyone can have the same skills yet not the same mindset to put those skills into action. The challenge of today is finding the right people with the right mindset for the right position so they remain motivated and engaged in their activities.

Identifying a person's mindset dominance (nomadic, builder, settler) by looking at their associated qualities and stories assists human resources managers and talent recruiters to better hire for a sustainable growing and thriving organisation. This will enrich the environment and culture dramatically by building more confidence.

In what ways can you identify the different mindset typologies?

Sustaining the Future of Organisations: Partnership Trend

The next destination and growing trend that will assist you in achieving sustainability is working in partnerships. Andy shares,

Mass communication is changing radically, and they are now having to stay aware and adaptable to all the channels of digital communication, which means partnering with all sorts of digital start-ups. There is a partnership

motif playing out now. You see research and development is increasingly being driven by partnering with outside companies and not internally.

Is this a new trend, or is it a back-to-the-future quality of the nomadic mindset? Developing partnerships has been a defining quality of nomads for centuries. It is part of the nomadic spirit and mindset. If you think back to Indulge in the Tea Ceremony at the beginning of Part 2, you will remember partnerships are what has helped sustain cultures, networks, economies, safety, support, relationships, and communities. Perhaps, then, the ability to sustain sustainability is through resilient partnerships. What can you do to make building partnerships a new destination?



My partnership with Joel Soit, a Maasai warrior, to learn about their resilient, sustainable culture continues. One component of helping me complete part of this cultural exploration is seeing a hippo. I have seen four of the Big Five animals while in the Mara, yet I haven't seen the hippos.

As we walk through the Maasai Mara in search of hippos, Joel approaches two young nomads/herders of about five and eight and asks if they have seen any hippos. They nod their head and lead us to them. Ah, communication/partnership/resilience/sustainability/being better together.

What mindset does a sustainable organisation need for the future?

A balance of the nomadic, builder, and settler mindsets.

What mindset do organisations need more of in the future?

The answer is unanimously the nomadic mindset.

Guy says, “nomads are the drivers in sustainability.” And sustainability is the interconnection of the nature of things.



Your final destination in returning home is to embrace one of the most important nomadic leadership qualities and principles: you can Never Settle . . . for Too Long. Just pause to reap the harvest of your achievements . . . then start the cycle again.



LEADERSHIP RETHINK

Essential nomadic leadership qualities to embody:

Ability to sustain

Sustainability

Interconnection

Balance

Values

Lead

Growth

Learn

Inspire

Motivate

Energize

Independent

Adapt

Flexible

Entrepreneur

Intra-preneur

Communication

Engage

FINAL QUESTIONS

1. What is a business model that will lead you to a more sustainable balance of mindset typologies?
2. What can you change so you integrate processes that will lead to a more resilient environment—starting with your people?
3. How important to you is having a business model that promotes sustainability?

“Having the right mindset is one of the most important success factors of great and inspiring leaders. The Nomadic Mindset is a necessary read for leaders of all levels traversing today’s disruptive environments.”

Marshall Goldsmith – Thinkers 50 Ranking: #1 executive coach and the only two-time #1 leadership thinker in the world

Kevin Cottam believes the mindsets of the world and leadership is becoming increasingly narrow and inward focused; if we are to survive, thrive, and flourish in Industry 4.0, we need to expand our mindsets. He proposes the path towards an expanded mindset can be found through embracing the qualities of ancient nomadic wisdom that have changed, adapted, and survived through the test of time and, in many cases, may have been forgotten.

“100% of executives interviewed said they needed more people with a Nomadic Mindset.”

The Nomadic Mindset, a metaphor for “the movement of the mind,” takes you on a journey by drawing upon and vividly sharing a wide range of exhilarating real-life stories and experiences of the nomads in Mongolia, the Maasai in Kenya, the Berbers in Southern Morocco as well as executive conversations and case studies.

This rare, fresh back-to-the-future leadership book will incite you to rethink your mindset and raise your awareness of two other mindsets: the builder and settler. All three mindsets will give you insights on how you can better lead an interconnected, innovative, and engaged organisation. Look inside to discover why you should learn about the nomadic mindset and what the nomads know that you don’t.

“A tour de force of wisdom: alive, insightful, inspirational, intriguing, timely”