

Creating Symphony within Jabil

by Cheryl Goodwin

Cheryl Goodwin is a Business Unit Director in the Healthcare division of Jabil, focusing in the Diagnostics sector, leading four BUs across eight global sites. She's a biomedical engineer (BS/MS) by training but developed a passion for the business side of the industry early in her career through her experience in manufacturing services organizations and via her MBA. As the leader of her businesses, she's most interested in leveraging Jabil's capabilities through excellence in operations and strategic partnering with her global, innovative team. She's an avid learner, currently working on her PhD in Business Leadership, where her research is focused on leading relationship workers in the fourth industrial age.

The technological revolution of the fourth industrial age, marked by advancements of automation and artificial intelligence, is altering the workforce as we know it. Not only is technology eliminating jobs, it's also changing the work content of the jobs that remain and will be created in the future. Because of this change, leaders in our organization need to know how to develop our future talent.

As a Business Unit Director (BUD) in the Jabil Healthcare division, I am regularly challenged by the need to keep products shipping, customers happy, P&Ls profitable, and my team progressing through their current obstacle and into their future roles. My work is also informed by my side hustle: getting my doctorate in business leadership. During my studies, I dove into the popular business ideas about technology acceleration, the workforce informing the twenty-first century, and proven leadership theory. The demands of the fourth industrial age will require workers to progress beyond their knowledge worker, domain-specific, deep expertise from the previous century into relationship workers with the ability to integrate system-level thinking into their skill set.

System-level thinking is defined as synthesizing, not analyzing; seeing relationships in seemingly unrelated things; detecting broad patterns to give specific answers; and combining elements others haven't thought to before (summarized from the work of Daniel Pink in *A Whole New Mind*). Klaus Schwab, leader of the World Economic Forum, believes that by 2020, complex, systematic thinkers will be far more in demand than content thinkers. So as we begin to focus on the development of systemic thinkers, we begin to create images in our minds of the new workforce. Leveraging metaphors in his book, Pink uses the word symphony to discuss how workers need now to be holistic in their approach to the domains in which they work. Therefore, let us think about how we can become better ourselves and empower our teams by elevating symphony at Jabil.

1. Learn to play more than one instrument

The first way that we can apply symphony ourselves and encourage it in our teams is by playing different instruments in the orchestra. When I first joined Jabil, I was a Technical Business Development Manager supporting Medical Devices and Diagnostics customers in the

healthcare division. As part of that role, I needed to know a lot about our capabilities, via our technology and innovation groups and through our manufacturing facilities. When a customer came to me with a certain need, I knew where to find the solution, even though I was not the subject matter expert; I knew who played what well, so to speak. However, I longed for deeper customer relationships, so I sought out new positions in the BU. This was possible by my understanding that there are plenty of instruments to be played in Jabil. Further, I never encountered a manager who was not supportive of my desire for growth and diversification. Jabil, of all the organizations I've worked for, embraces cross-training and experience development in new functional areas. And now, in my role as a BUD, I have the distinct advantage of having developed and maintained a network of experts from my original role that I can ask to come "play" for my customers!

2. Practice smarter

The role of the conductor in the orchestra is not just to lead the musicians during the main performance, but it's also to cultivate an environment in which to practice with discipline the pieces they will play. A system-level thinking organization must be a learning organization, which means that learning is a foundational construct within the business process. Peter Senge, in his work *The Fifth Discipline*, gives a few examples of how to become a learning organization. The first is to embrace dialogue. Teams need to fully discuss challenges in their work processes that are causing issues. Mature leaders cultivate this dialogue. They allow their team members to discuss issues honestly and without reservation. Leaders also create learning cycles which produce action as a result. Geoff Colvin describes the process of action learning as deliberate practice, which he says is designed to improve performance, can be repeated a lot, has continual feedback, and is mentally demanding (from *Talent is Overrated*). This is not necessarily fun, but the intent is to learn and improve, which should encourage us to sustain. One of the most deliberate practices that Jabil uses in the Business Unit is the weekly indicator. It is not fun (sorry, finance team!), but it drives a deliberate practice for healthier business. Many other functional groups can boast of similar practices, and these need to be embraced to learn as systems-thinkers.

3. Listen to the whole orchestra

The purpose of having so many unique instruments in an orchestra is not just to have many individual sounds, but rather to have these individual instruments produce music when played together. In order to be excellent system-level thinkers, we have to learn to first understand the intent of each instrument playing each note. Going back to Pink's definition, we need to connect disparate pieces of information. We cannot do that if we only pay attention to the flute. We need to be able to detect broad patterns and then we need to apply specific solutions. One of the best ways that we do this within Jabil is through the Customer Value Map (CVM) produced during the Master's program. Using the CVM, we understand every piece of the customer's business, including how their executives are driving their business metrics to how each division is facing challenges to meet their strategic initiatives. Through this broad understanding, Master's takes us through the process of creating unique, detailed solutions. These solutions have brought unparalleled value to Jabil already, in actual business awards, but also by convincing our

customers that we understand their markets and can produce solutions beyond even what they ask of us. It proves that we are not a single-player band, but that we understand and adopt a systemic process to approaching our market and those of our customers.

4. Be flexible and adaptive

The last way that we can use the metaphor of symphony to create better outcomes at Jabil is to promote our existing beliefs. There are key elements of Jabil's leadership behaviors that support system-level thinking, including courageously decisive and continuous agility. Both of these strategic leadership behaviors demand our leaders to handle change and uncertainty well and then adapt to a new way of business, when needed. The expectation of our leaders already is not that they would be static in their approach to customers or challenges, and this is further reinforced when we picture our work as a symphony. Though I'm not a musician or a stage performer, I know that the key to a good performance when faced with an obstacle is to improvise. As Pink puts it in *To Sell is Human*, we need to cultivate a practice of saying yes. That doesn't mean that we don't create hard boundaries, for example with the excellent quality of our products, but we do learn to say yes to the customer or challenge and then ask ourselves, what next? This process of "yes, and" keeps us buoyant when business is tough. And business is tough, and only getting tougher due to higher expectations driven by technology, connectivity, and information parity.

5. Sell more tickets

All of these ideas help make us better leaders in our businesses, but our passion is also to meet the expectations of our organization. In order to succeed for our people and our customers, we also have to succeed for our shareholders and help it deliver the promises it makes to those who invest in us. Thankfully, each of the previous ideals enable excellence, and through excellence, we produce work that people want to participate in! When's the last time you went to a symphony where the person who went before you said it was awful? (OK, when's the last time you went to the symphony at all?!) But the point is true for any other analogy where you buy a ticket to attend. We need to be excellent in order for the word of mouth to bring in the next night's patrons. Our success is to sell more tickets, and we do that by creating promoters who sing the praise of Jabil along the way.

6. Revel in the applause

Let's be honest. We're in a tough industry. We need to take the chances that we get to enjoy our successes and have fun at work and after it! Our life is about more than what symphony we play, but the concerts we're a part of should bring us great satisfaction!

There are many ways as leaders that we can further develop our teams but cultivating these system-level thinking methods gives us concrete actions that also align with the Jabil culture and the changes of the fourth industrial revolution. Integrate symphony into your mindset on business, help your teams understand how relationships impact our excellence, and enjoy the show!

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