

## Six key qualities for an empathetic enterprise

How rediscovering Italo Calvino's Six Memos for the Next Millennium in light of the developments of Artificial Intelligence can help businesses shape the future

# Introduction

In this short ebook I will tell you about the six fundamental qualities of the intelligent enterprise or rather of the empathic enterprise, if it is true that emotional intelligence is the first and fundamental form of intelligence.

I will discuss this by drawing inspiration from an Italian genius of the last century: Italo Calvino.

On June 6, 1984 – at that time I had recently turned 16 – Calvino was invited by Harvard University to give a series of masterclasses: six lectures on communication in all its forms and definitions.

Calvino took little time to define the topic he wanted to address: the fundamental values of literature that he wanted to preserve in the next millennium. In the weeks leading up to the lessons he was obsessed with preparing these lectures, so much so that he had enough ideas and materials to produce many others.

Unfortunately, of the six planned lectures he managed to only write five, passing away before he had completed the sixth one, which focused on the theme of Consistency.

What he wrote was nonetheless revolutionary: Calvino's Six Memos are timeless masterpieces that speak about the past, but especially about the current times we are experiencing, between digital and new globalization.

Inspired, therefore, by this work in this paper I have tried to focus and bring back to you what I believe are the six fundamental qualities that businesses must adopt in order to be truly smart.

If today the primacy of intelligence is in so-called "emotional intelligence," then organizations must learn first and foremost to be "empathic," that is, capable of adapting to the changing times we are living in, and abandon the rigidity of the Taylorist and Fordist models that most of our companies still swear by.

The time has come for entrepreneurs and managers to review their perspectives and be inspired by new models, in order to adapt to change and survive – and perhaps even thrive – in these complex times.

**DARIO MELPIGNANO**  
CEO NEOSPERIENCE SPA



# Summary

4	Lightness
7	Quickness
9	Exactitude
11	Visibility
14	Multiplicity
17	Consistency

NEOSPERIENCE<sup>•</sup>

# Lightness

“Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness, I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space. I don't mean escaping into dreams or into the irrational. I mean that I have to change my approach, look at the world from a different perspective, with a different logic and with fresh methods of cognition and verification.”



# Lightness

I have been involved in the digital field for over 30 years and the constant in my work has always been to try to take the weight off the structure of technology and its language, because I believe that lightness is a value and not a flaw.

Think about how nowadays organisations regulate, harness, contain and constrain creativity, that is, the expression of the ability that truly sets us apart from machines.

Lightness is the first fundamental value by which we must be inspired to build the future of our organisations and thus of our society.

I am referring to the lightness that comes from agile, flexible operational processes. From customer acquisition – understanding what they really want – to production, logistics and service; the lightness of a digital cloud infrastructure; the lightness of business applications that do not hide data, but instead make it actually available to people.

The lightness that helps our companies become truly agile, following the model of the lightness of Perseus, who in the myth flies with winged sandals without ever turning his gaze to Medusa.

At a time when our country and perhaps our continent seem condemned to the heaviness of stone, I think all of us entrepreneurs and managers should fly like Perseus into another space.

I am not talking about dream escapes, or seeking refuge in social networks, more or less fake metaverse or other virtual worlds. What I am saying is that we must change our approach: we must look at the world from a new perspective, with new logic, new methods of knowledge and assessment.

Because if it is true – as explained by Federico Faggin, inventor of the microprocessor, with a thesis close to that of Giulio Tononi, the leading contemporary Italian neuroscientist and some of the most accredited physicists – that each of us is both part and whole of the entire universe, observing itself from a specific point of view – then it becomes essential to change our point of view and embrace the complexity of the world with lightness.

Because lightness is associated with precision and with determination, with the harnessing of the complexity of reality. A lightness that is not synonymous with vagueness, or with surrender to emotion, or the search for solutions through heuristic processes, but the opposite.

Lightness is the data byte: objective, accurate, but still often ignored in business decisions.

Digital is the point of view outside itself, the non-place where the complexity of the world is expressed fully, and freely.

In order to make informed and timely decisions today, entrepreneurs therefore need an agile infrastructure based on increasingly expressive data, able to suggest, for example, which offer to communicate, to which customer, when, with which touchpoint and narrative approach.

Lightness can therefore be the starting point for a light enterprise, projected into the future.

NEOSPERIENCE<sup>•</sup>

# Quickness

“Mental speed is valuable for its own sake, for the pleasure it gives to anyone who is sensitive to such a thing, and not for the practical use that can be made of it. A swift piece of reasoning is not necessarily better than a long-pondered one. Far from it. But it communicates something special that is derived simply from its very swiftness.”

# Quickness

Not only is time probably not a fundamental entity, it is relative.

There are generations of butterflies that are born every eleven years, only to live for one day. There are bacteria in the ocean depths that, far from sunlight and therefore unaffected by circadian rhythms, live for thousands of years, with reproductive cycles that repeat themselves from century to century.

In short, time is not the same for everyone, but it has a generally very high value for everyone. As a business, it is now more important than ever to make the best use of time.

A good way to do this is to balance the tuning in to the world that is typical of 'Mercury time' and the constructive concentration of 'Vulcan time'.

The swiftness mentioned by Calvino speaks does not mean 'rushing ahead' in a race against time that ultimately proves to be futile and leads to sloppy

results. Similarly, it is not enough to rely on the spirit of the times to guarantee truly innovative products or services.

It is no coincidence that even the latest frontiers of technological innovation, such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, which employ highly sophisticated techniques, have to obey age-old ethical principles.

The empathic enterprise will have to 'hurry slowly' to create its future, by developing systems, applications and technology services in such a way that they are flexible and scalable enough to adapt to different circumstances.

This structural flexibility comes into play when outlining plans and strategies that need to be implemented quickly. By harnessing the speed of execution and know-how acquired over the long term, companies will have time to reflect and rework the data they obtain.



NEOSPERIENCE<sup>•</sup>

# Exactitude

“The word connects the visible trace with the invisible thing, the absent thing, the thing that is desired or feared, like a frail emergency bridge flung over an abyss. For this reason, the proper use of language, for me personally, is one that enables us to approach things (present or absent) with discretion, attention, and caution, with respect for what things (present or absent) communicate without words.”

# Exactitude

Communicating and above all understanding each other, in the age of the technological revolution, gets more complicated every day.

A few days ago, in Las Vegas, was held Re:MARS, the most important world conference on artificial intelligence, which Neosperience had the privilege of attending and where we witnessed new technological applications with infinite potential, which for companies can represent a real paradigm shift.

For example, new systems were presented for analysing time series of temporal data which make it possible to predict the demand for goods and services, or to identify anomalous business trends in advance, with incredibly better performance than the analytics systems available today.

But in telling customers about these revolutions, I have noticed that the language of data is still obscure to most, like a book of spells that fascinates but frightens at the same time:

so how can we communicate data and its benefits in a transparent language, exactly?

The empathic company is able to speak unique and different languages, making itself understood and respecting those who listen to it, using the terms of those who have a clear understanding of what they are talking about.

Entrepreneurs and managers must strive to speak a language that conveys real meaning and does not rely on empty and obscure sales pitches.

Data is neither magic nor formula: it is not objective truth. But it is interpretable and qualitative, because qualitative data analysis requires the human factor that the empathetic enterprise focuses on.

It is therefore necessary to take a critical approach to communication, as well as to the collection and processing of data: this is exact.

## Visibility

“If I have included visibility in my list of values to be saved, it is to give warning of the danger we run in losing a basic human faculty: the power of bringing visions into focus with our eyes shut, of bringing forth forms and colors from the lines of black letters on a white page, and in fact of thinking in terms of images.”

# Visibility

Already in the Divine Comedy, in the circles of Purgatory, Dante is presented with examples of human sins and virtues displayed, respectively, as animated bas-reliefs, visions projected before his eyes, voices to his ear, and finally as purely mental images, the product of the faculty of imagination.

Taking up this passage, in his Six Memos for the Next Millennium, Italo Calvino questions whether individual imagination still has a place in the image civilisation that has arisen in the twentieth century. Decades later, this question is more relevant than ever.

The Metaverse, with its promise of relocating personal and corporate relationships into a virtual space, represents the final stage of the civilisation of the image, in which civilisation itself becomes image.

Within this context from which one cannot – already for generations – disregard, the empathic enterprise must put into

practice insights which allow one to cultivate the faculty of imagination.

This by no means implies a return to the past, but rather a paradigm shift in the use of present technologies and a clear vision of the future.

In the case of Virtual and Augmented Reality (collectively referred to as 'extended reality' or XR), certain types of memory, such as spatial and kinesthetic memory, can be activated through active use of objects in the space created by technological devices.

For example, in Neosperience we put into practice the concept of visual place composition within a Virtual and Augmented Reality experience for our client Haier, the world's largest manufacturer of household appliances with brands such as Hoover and Candy.



In several industries, the implementation of Virtual Reality and Artificial Intelligence systems allows for an empathetic relationship with the user.

One thinks of the medical field or education, but also of interaction with conversational agents, whose purpose is not to get us lost in a virtual "second life" but to help us solve concrete problems in everyday life.

When we go beyond the most sensationalistic examples, we find that the best technology is already human-centered.

The task of the empathic enterprise is to gather these insights and support the imagination, the "anthropomorphic faculty of conjuring images from the mind", which no neural network or artificial intelligence seemingly sentient, but lacking of awareness, is able to match.

NEOSPERIENCE<sup>•</sup>

# Multiplicity

“Who are we, who is each one of us, if not a combinatoria of experiences, information, books we have read, things imagined? Each life is an encyclopedia, a library, an inventory of objects, a series of styles, and everything can be constantly shuffled and reordered in every way conceivable.”

# Multiplicity

The great casualty of contemporary times is called multiplicity.

We are used to hearing that this is the age of individualism, in which everyone's uniqueness is valued. But is this really the case?

Uniformity, masquerading as minimalism, pervades every sphere of our society: from art to literature, from experiences to ideals.

Digital has inserted an additional layer of complexity for companies. It has, yes, enabled a more direct relationship between person and person, and between businesses and customers, but it has blurred out what is appearance and moment and what is reality and infinity.

We are all more or less embedded within clusters defined by interests, features and ideas, targeted by uniforming communications.

The empathic enterprise values multiplicity by treasuring our digital selves, building tailored experiences that take into account the uniqueness of each person, that emphasize emotional engagement and influence their lives through data: crumbs we leave along the way. Data that have so much to say about who we are, if companies are able to collect and analyze them fully through enabling technologies such as Machine Learning.

In order to discover how to treasure each one's uniqueness, it is necessary for entrepreneurs and managers to experience, in their everyday lives, how to be human; to be able to experience that each of us is nothing but the whole universe observing itself.

In other words, as I remember stated by Federico Faggin, that we are all the sum of multiple elements, which together make up our being.

A giant of neuroscience, Giulio Tononi, also argues much the same thing from a medical perspective, in his theory of integrated consciousness.

Like you, I don't know what we are, I don't know what our consciousness is made of; based on what has happened to us humans in the last 100,000 years, I would say that I probably have to resign myself along with you to the fact that I will not find out.

But what I do know is that I have been involved in the digital field for almost 30 years, and I have been hearing about personalization of the digital experience for at least 20 years. But then what I observe is that every website is always the same – same site, same app for everyone, not taking users into account at all.

The time has come to offer our customers a tailored experience that takes into account the uniqueness of each person, emphasizes emotional engagement, and is influenced by customer intelligence data.

Our story of being human is not defined by the need, for example, to buy a pair of running shoes. Digital strategies in the business field must move beyond this alienating approach and seek out the real customer in their three-dimensionality.

My advice is: in your company, treasure the uniqueness of every customer, every employee, every business partner.



NEOSPERIENCE<sup>•</sup>

# Consistency

"How is it possible to isolate a single story if it entails other stories that run through it and 'condition' it and many others, until they extend to the entire universe? And if the universe cannot be contained in a story, how can one detach from this impossible story stories that make sense? "

# Consistency

Collective wisdom suggests that consistency is the secret to a long and prosperous life. It applies to people, and it applies to companies. Unfortunately, we now live in an unwise age in which consistency has lost its empathetic value.

Modern times, often accused of having a poor memory because of digital mutability, are in desperate need of consistency: we see it in the growing disorientation of ideas and concepts that were previously taken for granted.

Consistency does not of course conflict with change, quite the contrary! Change provides richness and new reference points to aim for. The problem is the consistency of change, in a world that never stops changing.

Our lives, after all, are voyages of discovery: without landmarks to hold on to, because there are too many or too few, fear becomes a certainty

of getting lost in the vastness of the universe and in the multiplicity of our companions.

The fear of losing, or not finding at all, our place in the world creates hatred, suspicion and distrust of our surroundings.

The role of the empathic enterprise today is to embrace the value of consistency and to fight for its affirmation in the world.

Giving certainty, answers and values brings those who already have certainty closer together and saves those who are lost in the search for meaning.



To become the benchmark of the empathic enterprise is for Neosperience an both an honor and a burden. It is not easy, but it is the most powerful link and a formula for the success of each one of our clients.

Now is the time for every company to embrace new visions and new business models, adopting for instance a multi-sided platform strategy, and offering digital enhancements to existing digital capabilities, including subscription-based models.

Consistency pays off with the joy of knowing that we are compass and pole star in navigating the stormy sea of technology in the time of complexity, doing everything to make ourselves useful to our clients, with a dedication and love that grows every day.

# NEOSPERIENCE<sup>•</sup>

This is our vision of empathetic enterprise: a constellation that can lead the enlightened company into the future and into success.

If you want to find out how to apply these principles in your reality, contact us: we will lead you toward this new transformation.

[info@neosperience.com](mailto:info@neosperience.com)

[WWW.NEOSPERIENCE.COM](http://WWW.NEOSPERIENCE.COM)

