

## Why do professionals hate change?

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Why do accountants, economists, lawyers, medics, politicians and civil servants all resist the very changes the world needs?

In this video, I explain why top-tier professionals cling to failing systems, defend obsolete ideas, and punish those who challenge accepted wisdom. From currency debates to medical hierarchies, the professions close ranks to protect their status, not the public.

This is about fear, conformity, institutional culture—and the cost we all pay for it.

Real reform requires unreasonable people willing to defy failing norms. Until courage replaces compliance, nothing will change.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qj6ypRt3ekw&si=fptr1T2KLI2y8YJL>

This is the audio version:

[https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=8vb7a-19c2207-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo\\_link=episode\\_page&btn-skin=c73a3a](https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=8vb7a-19c2207-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a)

This is the transcript:

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There's a puzzle, and the puzzle is, why do top-tier professionals always resist change?

Whether they're accountants, economists, lawyers, financiers, civil servants, politicians even, and medics as well, all top-tier professionals cling to norms that they know are failing. Even persuasive new evidence that things have to change is met by them with defensive silence. And this isn't about ignorance. These aren't stupid people after all. It's about fear, it's about habit, and it's about their hatred of the idea that they might lose their purpose.

Why does this matter? It matters because I was told recently that Scotland cannot be independent until all questions about its future currency can be resolved. And the person making the suggestion said that an army of professional people must be engaged in answering all the questions that the Scottish currency now gives rise to, and that must happen before Scotland goes to the poll again, if it does, to ask the question, should it be independent or not?

And my response to that person was that professional people will always answer the question of whether Scotland can have its own functioning independent currency by saying, "No, of course it can't." And the reason why is very simple and it's very straightforward. That's because it hasn't got one at present, and therefore they don't know about it, and therefore they won't be able to advise on it because all the professional person can talk about is what they know already. They can't imagine what is possible.

So why is that? Why are the professions such a problem in modern life to the extent that they are one of the biggest resistors of change?

That is because I suggest professional people define themselves by mastering existing systems, their education, their careers, and their authority rests on knowing the current rules. To admit the system that they know is wrong is to question themselves, and even their personal identity. Change feels to them like personal failure, so they defend the order that exists because that defines them.

And their desire is for institutional conformity. Advancement depends on them never unsettling superiors. Institutions, such as the firms that they work for, reward reassurance and not truth. Creative dissent within such entities risks career death, and they sell sound judgment even when it's obsolete. That's why professional advice is so often so uniform. Everybody is forced to agree with the status quo.

And this is about peer reputation. Among elites, and the professions are an elite in our society, reputation matters more than reality. Soundness is the keyword for belonging. To step outside is to risk exile. So debate narrows to what's safe, and not what's right. Politeness replaces honesty, and my suggestion to you is that we all pay a massive price for that.

Every profession lives in its own small, closed world and uses its own logic.

Accountants trust standards set by the large firms of accountants.

Economists trust their models, in particular, at this point in time, the neoliberal model, because that is the one which you are meant to adhere to.

Lawyers cling to precedents because that is what they know.

And medics live by outdated paradigms, even when the consequence is that people die, and there is clear evidence that that is the case.

Meanwhile, politicians stick to party lines.

Every one of these groups optimises its own behaviour inside its own bubble for its own benefit, and expertise becomes a barrier to understanding.

The medical example is one way of showing this. There are now new insights on mental health, on cancer and disease prevention, and all of them are significantly resisted. Just take that point about disease prevention.

We now know that if we actually cut ultra-processed foods out of people's diets and cut significantly the amount of sugar intake that people have, whilst increasing the amount of exercise they have in daylight, then we would undoubtedly beat most of obesity. We would therefore beat most of type-two diabetes, but the hierarchies of certainty within the medical bodies refuse to accept this evidence. They want to work inside the system they know, and empathy is replaced by procedure. Care for the patient is not as important as compliance with the algorithm. Knowledge might grow, but wisdom shrinks.

And all of this is powered by something else as well. Big Pharma massively reinforces this idea. It wants its existing drugs and solutions to problems to continue to be used because that is the root of their profits. So, as a consequence, they sponsor university education to ensure that their answers to medical questions are prescribed, quite literally. And they do the same with regard to continuing professional education for doctors, whilst they also fund research to perpetuate the status quo. And the journals in which that research is published are sponsored by these companies.

As a result, we have a medical research process that by and large reinforces the status quo of their power and does not give rise to questioning. And if that questioning does come up, then it's published in minor journals and those, by and large, who publish it are pushed outside the hierarchies of power and might even lose their jobs, and there's plenty of evidence of that having happened.

Professional reticence, therefore, becomes normalised by the power of corporate money to maintain corporate protocols and so profits at literal cost to human life.

And everywhere, that is because professionals are frightened of failure. They are the

guardians in their opinion of money, safety, and life itself. And their culture punishes mistakes, but being wrong in their view is okay if done together; being right alone is what they think to be risky and punishable. So collective error becomes the norm in the case of almost every profession, and innovation withers under the weight of caution.

The result is a form of moral disengagement. Bureaucracy diffuses responsibility. The claim, when an allegation of misconduct or error is raised, is that "I followed the standard," and that becomes not just an actual, but a moral defence; they did what they were told to do. Harm as a consequence is treated as collateral; the guidelines were wrong, but it wasn't the professional's fault. And neutrality then becomes complicity. The system absolves everyone, and at the same time, it should absolve no one because the system is, of course, wrong.

There is this fear of disorder, and so professions exist to impose order on complexity, but too much order breeds stagnation, and that is my point in this whole video. Growth needs uncertainty and friction to happen, and professionals fear the entropy of growth because it feels like disorder to them, yet life depends on it. Risk is necessary, and without disorder, nothing new ever emerges.

So we don't need more professionals to solve the problems that we face; we know those problems exist. What we need to solve the problems that we face are more unreasonable people. Those are the people who will take risks. George Bernard Shaw defined the unreasonable person well over a century ago, saying:

*The reasonable person adapts themselves to the world. The unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to themselves. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable person.*

And that remains as true today as it did when George Bernard Shaw said it.

All change is down to awkward people, and yet very few professional people are willing to be unreasonable; only the brave break the rules, and that's the problem that we face. The result is that we have professionals who manage systems, but rarely care. They measure compliance and undertake massive review processes to ensure that everybody is walking in step, but they don't deliver compassion. Real reform means making care the measure of success. Courage, and not conformity, would, in that case, define professionalism, but we're a long, long way from that, and until we get anywhere near it, we're going to be ruled by people afraid of their own intelligence.

They serve power, and they depend on power for their survival. Big firms, big corporations, big government, they all share this same creed, that they must literally walk in line with each other to serve the existing elite hierarchies. And that they define by money, which literally affords them legitimacy and sets the boundaries of soundness. To challenge that order would for them mean literally losing everything.

And there's no greater example of this than within the Big Four firms of accountants. They have become extensions of capital itself. They write the rules to suit big business. They shape regulation. They lobby to achieve the outcomes they desire. And then they advise on how to avoid the regulations they've even consulted. Their neutrality sustains inequality, and that's deliberate.

Real professionalism would serve the public good and not private wealth, but that's not where they're aligned. And until courage returns, the system will remain both elegant in its form and broken in its substance. Until that is, unreasonableness appears, change will not happen.

And that's where we are in a world where nothing can change because the professions want everything to stay the same. You, I, and our health pay the price for that.

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