

CULTURE CHANGE

WORKSHOPS

BE MORE PIRATE

What is the difference between good and great organisations?

In times of extreme uncertainty, where even the best laid plans will be subject to rapid change, the answer is an organisation that puts people first.

Investing in people creates strong cultures; the anchor from which groundbreaking work stems. A strong culture enables teams to:

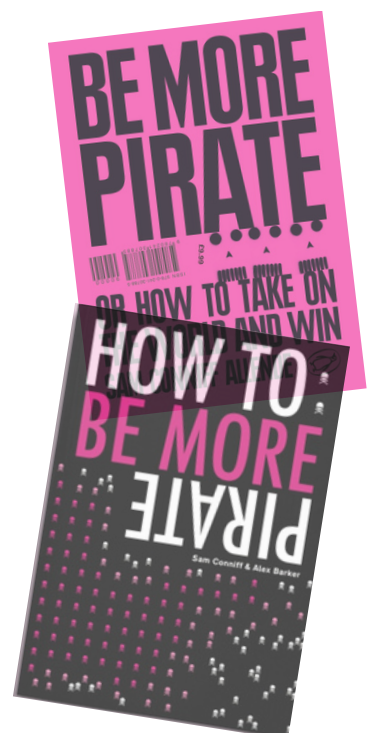
- Realise their individual potential.
- Align around an exciting, shared vision
- Work harmoniously as a group
- Test and pilot new ideas quickly

It might surprise you to know that the best historical example of all the above, is in fact, pirates.

Over the last three years we've worked with hundreds of people and teams using Be More Pirate as a framework to understand and improve their culture. From big tech to the NHS, our framework supports a fundamental shift in mindset, enabling teams to 'rewrite their rules', and pioneer lasting change.

Be More Pirate began life as a book by social entrepreneur Sam Conniff and has since involved into a global network and framework for organisational change. It explores the untold history of the Golden Age of Piracy and reframes the cartoonish villains we love to hate as the social revolutionaries of the 1700s. From rogues to role models, it illustrates how pirates challenged outdated rules and built their own, resulting in the earliest forms of real democracy, fair pay, diversity, social insurance and equal rights. Not quite the story we were brought up with!

Our three workshop programme is designed to facilitate pirate-style change, empowering teams to supportively challenge the status quo.



Session One: Culture and crew

The bedrock of pirate culture was their 'Code' - the principles and behaviours they established about how to work together. It created unprecedented levels of trust, transparency and accountability - creating the conditions that allowed them to fight the Navy with far fewer resources. A definitive David vs Goliath story.

The first workshop starts the team off towards establishing their own pirate code, by understanding what the current culture is. It's only once you've named your rules, norms and practices - explicit and implicit, that you can improve them. We'll look at the difference in what is said and what is practiced, unearth some of the uncomfortable areas and look at how you transform complaints (what you're fighting against), into motivation (what you're willing to fight for).

Outcome: a clear understanding of the current team/organisational culture, what's driving it, and where the tensions are



Session Two: Ambition, courage and imagination

Every pirate has to ask, where is this ship headed? Session two asks the team to establish their shared vision for what great looks like, but pushes them off the edges of the map into the realm of the unknown. Where could we give ourselves more permission to dream and imagine not just what's probable here, but what's possible?

After establishing the ideas, ambitions and a vision that feels motivating, we'll look at what within the current culture is holding people back. There will also be an out of hours pirate practice for every team member to help shift their mindset and cultivate the courage to do something different.

Outcome: a collective, motivating vision for where the team would like to be in one year's time, and an understanding of the cultural and psychological barriers in the way

Session Three: Action and agency

Pirates had no time for hanging around - new solutions were actioned quickly so in the final session we'll focus on practical, manageable steps to realise the whole team's potential and make the idea of their pirate 'code' a lived reality.

A pirate crew looks after everyone, but relies on individuals to put their best foot forward. This is the moment where everyone has the opportunity to be seen for their own talents, and step into a renewed sense of agency.

Outcome: every team member will walk away with a 'plan': a set of realistic, actionable steps they have committed to taking, the confidence to make it happen, and a deep accountability to their 'crew'.

Alex Barker

Alex Barker is CEO ('Captain') of Be More Pirate, and works as a facilitator, coach and public speaker, supporting people to rewrite the rules in their life and work.

She has worked with companies such as Salesforce, Warner Brothers and innocent drinks, as well as local authorities, school leaders, housing organisations and numerous teams across the NHS.

Alex is author of How to be More Pirate and produces the Be More Pirate podcast. Previously she was communications manager at the RSA (Royal Society of Arts).



"Alex was a fantastic facilitator, guiding us through a high energy and thoroughly inspiring team session. Be more pirate has really challenged us to think differently and continues to shape how we operate as a team."

- Louise Stevens, former head of sustainability, innocent drinks