

## Transcript: bigQUEST Podcast | S1, Ep 03

### Andy Murray on Unearthing Your Single Most Important Outcome

**Andy Murray:** [00:00:00] In the field of human conflict. How do you measure such an astonishing moment in history?

[00:00:18] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:00:18] You're listening to the biQUEST podcast with Andy Murray in a high stakes, unpredictable world. Every day is ripe with blue ocean adventures just waiting to be discovered. You need the mindset, the methods and the motivation to lead with confidence into the unknown. Come along as we talk to today's top leaders known for simplifying challenges, outsmarting variables, and inspiring groups.

[00:00:45] So, hi, welcome.

[00:00:47] **Andy Murray:** [00:00:47] Hey, how's it going?

[00:00:48] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:00:48] Good to see you again as always. You kind of outdressed me a little bit. One of these days, I'm going to show up in a tux and we're going to know what it means.

[00:00:56] **Andy Murray:** [00:00:56] I'll be worried about *Where's the producer?*

[00:01:00] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:01:00] I'm supposed to be the casual guy in this scenario.

[00:01:03] I guess I'm kind of pushing buttons back here, so today we're talking about outcomes. Last time we talked about the [5 Big Questions](#) that every successful right-brained leader uses to create a bigQUEST and to launch a successful bigQUEST. Last time we talked about the big problem that you really need to get your head around and quantify for your team and really clarify that.

[00:01:28] And in contrast to that, Question 2 is going to go to the other end of the spectrum and say, *What's the single most important outcome that you're trying to achieve?* That's what we're going to talk about today. And as I was thinking about that, I was reminded of this article that you and I have kind of traded back and forth.



[00:01:44] It was actually authored two years ago, in 2018. I want to give the name: Ephrat Livni was the author of the article. I found it in Quartz Media. It was basically a new study from Yale scientists that was talking about how uncertainty helps us learn. And I would say helps us think and lead and helps us do work, because that state of learning is so critical to doing good work and doing meaningful work.

[00:02:13] But I thought how prophetic it is that they wrote this article two years ago. And here we are: 2020 comes along with COVID and it's the greatest state of uncertainty we've seen in a while, at least. So the impetus is on us to be able to think like this, and here comes this article.

[00:02:33] And so I want to talk about that for just a minute before we dive into outcomes. But the reason I want to talk about it is because of the reference it makes specifically to outcomes. For example, this one quote here says, "The brain is like a gambling addict. It's always betting on outcomes, predicting what will happen if you make a particular choice. This applies to everything from mundane, daily choices, like what to wear or where to shop, to much more significant decisions, like what studies to undertake for your career or who should be your mate."

[00:03:03] And I would add to that or what Quests you should undertake.

[00:03:10] **Andy Murray:** [00:03:10] Yeah. It's kind of good that science has caught up with ancient mythology because every great story — from the ancient stories forward — has been around the tension between order and chaos.

[00:03:25] And in a state of order the brain thrives to find those patterns quickly and move it forward quickly. That's the way our brains work. We want to make sense out of things very quickly. And actually we don't like uncertainty. But when uncertainty comes along and you're trying to create new outcomes and have new places to go and you can't find a match inside your left brain activity, then it forces you into the right brain.

[00:04:03] And that's what I get excited about on the whole concept of the Quest. It pulls you into spaces of uncertainty and blue ocean areas where you're not going to be able to solve it with your left brain, or if you do, you're going to pull out a pattern that you've seen exists before, and it's probably going to be the wrong solution because you're going into some unknown spaces.

[00:04:11] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:04:11] Yeah. I love the fact that we've talked about, we started with the Big Problem and how important it is, if you're going to do meaningful work instead of just the mundane everyday work, it really helps to start thinking about the biggest problem. I love your reference to story there, because in archeologically the oldest story that we know about is Beowulf, if I'm not mistaken. And so here's this big sort of amorphous monster, if you will, Beowulf, that represents uncertainty essentially from a philosophical perspective.

[00:04:47] There's something about that, and if we don't see our workplace as similar to that, then we're really not activating our brain and we're not doing meaningful work. It's interesting how we have this negative inertia of certainty. Our left brain just loves to be in control and say, okay, we're, we're done for awhile. But I couldn't help thinking of that article.

[00:05:12] **Andy Murray:** [00:05:12] It's a great article and I love the fact that you're finding some reinforcements in unusual places. I read an article recently about the sea squirt and it caught my attention in National Geographic, because it's a really interesting little creature.

[00:05:30] Yeah. It's a sea squirt.

[00:05:35] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:05:35] Is this a SpongeBob reference?

[00:05:36] **Andy Murray:** [00:05:36] No, not a SpongeBob reference. It does kind of look like a sponge. There's probably 2,300 varieties of what they look like, but, they live in tidal pools, and the thing about them that's quite an interesting, very unusual, is that when they're young, they have an active brain in the juvenile state and they use that brain to go search and seek until they find a rock that they think is going to be the best place to attach. And once they find that rock, they stay attached. And they begin to digest their brain because they don't need it anymore. Because they stay attached to that rock for life, and the rest of their life, they spend sucking in plankton and any other organic material that flows by and you don't need a brain for that. That's what happens to them when uncertainty kicks in.

[00:06:27] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:06:27] Yeah. So how many people's careers did you just describe?

[00:06:31] **Andy Murray:** [00:06:31] Exactly.

[00:06:32] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:06:32] You use your brain to get a job and then once we have it, we kind of go, okay, I don't need my brain anymore.

[00:06:37] **Andy Murray:** [00:06:37] Yeah, he just checks out. But then, when the rock crumbles or the tide changes direction of the plankton, it's really hard to jump out and do that seeking thing.

[00:06:48] We don't obviously digest our whole brain. That's impossible, but we probably do see quite a bit of right-brain atrophy.

[00:06:56] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:06:56] Yeah, I'll bet a neuroscientist would say *actually if you look at plasticity and all that, it's all about adjusting the level of active frontal cortex that we need given the moment.*



[00:07:07] I say this to you all the time, but I always think about, from my years with Chick-fil-A, the Dan Cathy quote, “There are two kinds of people. There's people who are living for the brand and there's people that are living off the brand.”

[00:07:21] And that really describes that. I love the dichotomy those images give us, because it really gets to what you're talking about at the bigQUEST Framework. This idea of mindset, that we are either in a left brain, negative inertia mode. And we don't think of it as negative, because we need that kind of certainty in a lot of places, but it really, when it comes to disruption and navigating through uncertainty, the biggest hindrance that we could have is certainty.

[00:07:52] So I'll put the reference to that article in our show notes so people can find it. So let's talk about outcomes here in this part of Question #2. I want to make sure that we understand and have maybe a good definition of outcomes. What do you mean by the single most important outcome?

[00:08:14] **Andy Murray:** [00:08:14] Yeah, well, I think it's good first to define outcome and ask why outcome and how's outcome different than objective? We often hear the word objective and sometimes we get those two words a bit confused. An objective is something you want to achieve. An outcome is something that your customer, whoever that is, whether it's an end customer or an internal stakeholder, how you want to see their life changed, and how it's going to feel when their life is changed.

[00:08:43] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:08:43] Yes. When I've heard you talk about this before, I've heard you say, it's kind of like what you talk about with the space program and the speech that Kennedy made versus the objectives that it created as a result of that. If you could take us through that a little bit.

[00:09:04] **Andy Murray:** [00:09:04] When I talk about defining the outcome, it's first to best understand, I think the difference between outcome and objective, and we get those often confused. Objective is what you want to create to get something done, and an outcome is something that you want to create — is what the customer experience is: what behavior, what change, how their life will be different.

[00:09:27] And I say customer, I mean, any customer or an internal stakeholder or a client, a participant. So it's important to really look at it from that lens. How is the outcome going to change, for that person? And then tie that back to the problem. ACTUAL TIME 10:28 And then most importantly about the subject of outcome is: *How will that make them feel?*

[00:09:47] And we often don't even describe that, but when you do describe outcome in that context of *how does it make them feel — joy, happiness, security, all of those emotions —* you start locking into something much deeper and more interesting because it allows us to enact a part of the way that we really make decisions.



[00:10:09] 85% of decisions are made on emotion. They're not based on logic and rational thinking. And so if we could understand how that emotion is going to be activated, it also then leads into a lot of the design and the solution building that you're going to do to go and bridge the gap between the A, which is the problem and the B, which is the outcome you really desire to have.

[00:10:30] And so when we look at a Quest, it's all about going from A, to B the current state problem that the customer has, and then the outcome you're trying to achieve. And everything else is about getting from A to B.

[00:10:41] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:10:41] That's great. And it makes me want to think — if I'm listening to this, there's probably a moment of epiphany somewhere in your past and maybe in the future for people listening, where that dawns on you through a practical example.

[00:10:56] So when did it first dawn on you that there was a difference between the objective that you're trying to achieve and an outcome state that you're trying to create?

[00:11:06] **Andy Murray:** [00:11:06] Yeah, that's a great question. I would go back to when I worked on the P&G Walmart team, because that was really being born. And Tom Muccio, who was going to be on our show, was leading that effort.

[00:11:19] You had two different companies, big companies, trying to solve some of the same problems, but not a common vision of that problem. It was always the other guy and yet no real clear answer of where's the outcome? And when Sam Walton, who really was the originator of the whole new way of working, came onto the scene, went to Cincinnati and talked about a new way of doing things. He painted an outcome: *What would it look like if P&G treated Walmart as just an extension of their company all the way to the end consumer, would you change things? Would you work the same way together? Would you re-engineer things differently?*

[00:12:00] And so what kept that team and that relationship working was a really clear understanding of the outcome that they were after, which was a new way of working together that created a seamless environment across two parties. That's very different from saying: *Our objective is to jointly grow sales.*

[00:12:22] That might be a path or a step, but describing the outcome was one way that kept the businesses, two companies, focused on overcoming so many obstacles, to get there. And without that painted outcome, the obstacles probably would have been overwhelming.

[00:12:42] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:12:42] Yeah, it makes me think of a couple of historical references. I know the famous quote that you see floating around from Aristotle: "The soul never thinks without a picture." It's this idea that, it's the mental picture of things.



[00:12:58] And I love the fact that one of the pillars in your framework is motivation. And when you engage the soul, which is really what everybody wants in the workplace today, you use a picture to engage the soul and all of a sudden, a different level of motivation emerges.

[00:13:17] **Andy Murray:** [00:13:17] Yeah, I think it's also a visual value proposition and it's how I like to look at it. It's asking how do you put it in visual ways that you can paint the picture with language — language is so important. I remember when Bill Simon, when he was the CEO of Walmart, talked about what he wanted to do with prescriptions and he came up with this “\$4 generics” which painted a picture of the outcome he was after, which was a very powerful word picture. And when you could paint the outcome in that way, it has a lasting staying power and it almost self communicates. It carries with it the energy to go through and make things clear.

[00:13:54] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:13:54] One of my favorite memories from working with the Drucker Institute was this story that I know everybody's read about. It was Peter Drucker's story about the three stonecutters:

The first stonecutter was asked, “What are you doing?” And he said, “I'm working for a living.” The second guy kept on hammering and said, “I'm doing a masterful job of cutting stones.” And then this pedestrian asked the third guy, “What are you doing?” He said, “I'm building a cathedral.”

And it was the picture, the visual value proposition, that sort of soul picture that really just changes.

[00:14:35] That's the essence of a bigQUEST versus just going to work every day. Isn't it?

[00:14:40] **Andy Murray:** [00:14:40] Well, it's also important if you're going through a lot of uncertainty. I mean, there's no question, strategic objectives written the right way against the right type of problem are fine. If you're trying to lower costs and you have to cut resources or those kinds of things that are about scaling efficiencies, then the objective approach is great. But when you're looking at things that are uncertain and you need a lot of other people to participate, with a hearts-and-minds engagement, then you need to start using language that creates a pull, an energy from the hearts and the minds. Because the only way you get creativity is if you give your brain some space to think, and your energy's full and your passion and your creativity is fully engaged.

It's a requirement. It's not an indulgence. It's a requirement in order to come up with fresh ideas at scale that the right brain's engaged, and language engages the right brain in some very powerful ways.

[00:15:36] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:15:36] So I'm going to pull up a statement that I've heard you make before: When there's certainty, you can think about objectives, but when there's uncertainty, that's when you need to think about outcomes.



[00:15:47] **Andy Murray:** [00:15:47] Yes, a hundred percent.

[00:15:50] And actually that's why we've created bigQUEST is to go after the spaces that are more tuned toward uncertainty.

[00:15:57] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:15:57] So I wonder if we could , again, just pull out a few examples, practical examples of any more that come from business, the difference between, the journey and the destination, objectives are a means to an end.

[00:16:11] Whereas the outcome is really the end we're trying to achieve. Are there any other examples that you'd like to share that you could share for people? I love the Sam Walton story.

[00:16:23] **Andy Murray:** [00:16:23] Yeah, that's a great story. Instead I'll give you a walkthrough of a fictitious challenge, problem to outcome, that might make more sense to put the pieces together.

[00:16:35] So a typical problem, and I do a lot of work in the customer center space. A typical problem might be: Your call center is not delivering consistently on service as compared to what you expect for your brand promise in other areas of your brand. There's a disconnect, and it's creating an inconsistency in the call center.

[00:17:02] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:17:02] That's a really common, real world problem, right?

[00:17:05] **Andy Murray:** [00:17:05] It is. And if you look at the outcome you want to have, and you describe the problem as the inconsistency, which creates a distrust in your brand, then the outcome, you could do it a couple of different ways.

[00:17:19] One is you can say: We want to have a consistent delivery of service experience to a potential customer. Or you can say: We want to service customers through our call center that creates a desire in them to share that experience with others, because they're so pleased. Now that is a different outcome and that one has got some emotion in it and it's going to lead you to a different type of idea. Because if the outcome is "just deliver consistency," well, there's a lot of things you could do with that. It will take you into policies and practices that you might want to touch on, like standardization. But if the goal is to create an experience or an outcome that's worth sharing, it really takes you to a different place, a place that has to pay more attention to *What's the real behavior, the end-game you want to have. And how do you want to make them feel?*

[00:18:15] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:18:15] I'll tell you who's famous for doing that exact thing is Zappos. You think about it, their motto is delivering happiness, right? But that happens all the time. I'll walk into a store, I'll buy a product or get home and I'll need to ask a question about it. I dial the number up and it's somebody who is obviously reading a script. They might even struggle to be intelligible over the phone.



I'm not knocking people down, they all need jobs too, it just -- there's an inconsistency there. If you look at it in terms of the objectives, sure it makes perfect sense to offshore your call center and your help desk and everything else, but if you think that in terms of an outcome, it changes the way you approach work.

I just want to bring this back to the whole objective of bigQUEST is, when you approach work this way, it's more meaningful, it's more fulfilling, it's satisfying and for those who need this, it's also more effective. In terms of bottom line profitability and everything else, customer loyalty, so that's fantastic.

Let's talk just a second about this idea of harmonizing. We created a problem last time, we clarified our problem, we identified the single biggest problem. So now we're talking about this outcome and you have this concept of harmonizing. What do you mean by harmonizing those two? Because it really is the key to creating a biQUEST. It's not just asking these questions, but it's really understanding how they fit together.

[00:19:52] **Andy Murray:** [00:19:52] When we put these [5 Big Questions](#) together, it was all meant to be something you have to harmonize and work through. And the truth is, you can have a problem that is a really big problem and the outcome you're trying to describe isn't harmonized, it's not level set. You step back and look at it and say, "Are these two things going to connect at the same levels?" That's often a big challenge.

When you're starting to harmonize a Quest, you have to harmonize it against the different questions you're trying to solve for. But then you also have to harmonize it against the question of whether or not this is aligned with the company objective and company purpose. And so having an outcome that fits the brand purpose, those two things have to be harmonized. Asking, "Is it harmonized with how it's going to fit into the business operation?"

[00:20:35] Those are things that are going to have to do. No Quest is going to stand outside the company's purpose and be successful. No Quest will be successful if it doesn't solve the problem that it's trying to solve. And those are two very important components that we always have to come back to after we do a piece of work and look at it and say, "Are we still on the same page?"

[00:20:58] Are we connected to the right things in the right way? So that it's sequenced and there's a thread that goes through that keeps everything level. And I see mistakes happen quite a bit when we keep chugging through things, linearly. Here's the problem, here's the idea. But then you look at it and say, "What kind of outcomes are really going to give us?"

[00:21:16] It's not really going to give us that joyful sharing of an experience in customer service or whatever that might be.





[00:21:23] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:21:23] So the right way to ask this question about outcomes if it could just reword a little bit is: *What is the single most important outcome that addresses the single biggest problem that we had with Question 1?*

[00:21:36] **Andy Murray:** [00:21:36] Absolutely. Absolutely.

[00:21:38] **Ben Ortlip:** [00:21:38] Thanks for listening to the bigQUEST podcast with Andy Murray. Make sure to head over to [bigquest.com](https://bigquest.com) to download our free [5 Big Questions Checklist & 5-Part Video Series](#) to launch your own bigQUEST. On the website you'll find resources and ideas around the method and mindset and motivation concepts behind the bigQUEST framework.

[00:21:53] If you liked this episode, make sure to subscribe and leave a comment.