



## Transcript: bigQUEST Podcast | S1, Ep 05

### Andy Murray on the Exponential Impact of Every Single Day

**Andy Murray:** In the field of human conflict, how do you measure such an astonishing moment in history?

**Ben Ortlip:** You're listening to the bigQUEST podcast with Andy Murray. In a high stakes unpredictable world every day is ripe with the 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 greatness.

Andy, welcome to this podcast episode.

**Andy Murray:** Yes. Hey, Ben, how are you doing?

**Ben Ortlip:** I'm doing good. Hey, I'm excited to wrap up the [5 Big Questions](#), and before we do there are several great books that might be a little under the radar for most people, but they contain some really important, bigQUEST thinking.

**Andy Murray:** Yes, there's been a couple that I've ran across this summer that I didn't realize were out there.

I'm not even sure how I found out about them, but they really have influenced my thinking. One that was published in 2001 is called [Crossing the Unknown Sea: Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity](#) by David Whyte, an Englishman, and it was a great book for a couple of reasons.

One, David is a poetry expert and writer. Everything he writes in the book is done with great language, which I've always found that to be good. And most business books I picked up I really don't end up reading. I just find them to be a lot of sameness unfortunately.

But this book really does a great job of dealing with uncertainty and all of the things that come into play when you set out on a journey or a Quest and have to go through unpredictable adventures. And he's also written it as a business consultant / poet, which is a great combination.

The other book is called [Uncharted: How to Navigate the Future](#) by Margaret Heffernan. She's an entrepreneur, author, and frequent TED speaker. It was published this year, in 2020, in September, and I found that to be very fascinating because she talks a lot about — I always find it hard to put into words — the unreliability of predicting; and it's not quite the science that some would think, and the future is a bit more uncertain than we can predict.

And the models for prediction, whether it's an industry in finance or forecasting or stock-picking, we're just not as good as we think we are. One of her stories talks about how, if you were to pick down the line, Cramer's Top Picks for stocks, you would most likely be broke in about three months. Even the best stock pickers, it's pretty dicey in terms of how they predict the future. Yet we put so much into certainty and put so much into being able to predict the future. And when you really get into the science behind it, it's not as predictable as we think.

**Ben Ortlip:** Yes.

And I even remember back in school, coming up, people talking about mega trends and things like that. And this idea of uncertainty really is taking hold, not only in the day-to-day life, but it's really showing up in terms of leading organizations or leading teams. Leadership is really shifting to embrace the idea that we can't know the future.

**Andy Murray:** Yes, it absolutely is. And I think COVID has only exacerbated that in spades.

**Ben Ortlip:** Change is here to stay.

If you've been with us on the podcast, we've been working through the [5 Big Questions](#) that really help you frame up a bigQUEST (*the [5 Big Questions Checklist & 5-Part Video Series](#) is available for free online at [bigquest.com](http://bigquest.com)*) when you start.

We are covering the final two questions because the nature of these next two questions enables us to cover both on today's episode. But that doesn't mean they're any less important.

**Andy Murray:** No, not at all. It's just, they're easy to understand and easy to get to. And I think, maybe harder to do at times, but as Mark Twain said in the overused quote, paraphrased: If I had more time I would have made it shorter. This is our attempt to make it shorter so that you can grasp it and get on with it.

Question #4 asks: *What is the single measure that moves us toward success?* It's about making sure you have a real clarity around the single most important measure.

Now measures are something that we don't really like to talk about, but today's business demands it, and being able to understand how we are going to measure progress is just table stakes — in trying to get financing or doing anything in the business world today, you have to

have some understanding of where you are going to go and how you are going to get there, and how you are going to measure it.

And that's why I feel like it's important to elevate measurement up to the same level as the other [5 Big Questions](#). The biggest thing you can do wrong in a Quest is leave it to chance, or leave it to someone else's narrative for them to describe how they're going to measure you, because it will happen. The question is: *Do you want to get in front of it and help write the narrative? Or do you want it to be some else's measurement of you?* Those are two different things.

**Ben Ortlip:** Yes. I noticed that when this idea of measure comes up, there's a tendency as a project moves forward, an initiative unfolds, to start measuring everything that you think of. And what I noticed about the focus of the bigQUEST is that it's focusing on the single biggest measure. Why is it so important to have a single measure that you track?

**Andy Murray:** It's important because you can't really measure everything. And if you put too many measures in there, you get a bit of a snow blindness to what's important. You want to find a measure that actually will help drive action.

And when you get too many measures in there, you end up in a space where it's not really clear what the focus is on that will drive the biggest action. It gives you quite a number of outs.

I remember, from my marketing days, we had loads of measures — too many measures — and we constantly struggled with paring those back because it's easy to add more.

And if you don't like what your consistency measure is telling you on brand consistency, you pick cut-through because that means you cut through with something fresh and new.

There's always a measure you can choose to use that will tell you that you're doing a good job when in truth, you may not really know for sure because you're using too many of them.

So I think it's really important to start with one. You will probably over the course of a Quest add more. Don't add them from the start because they're not really relevant to driving the decision of where you have to go.

I realize that it's probably the most difficult thing to do, because, getting back to the kind of world we live in with uncertainty and outcomes — we'll talk more about right-brain thinking — we're also after this area of empathy and the showing empathy, having empathy, being empathetic, that is the business buzzword today. How do you measure that? And when you're also working on an outcome that changes the lives of a customer, you're also looking for: *How do they feel about that outcome?*

So when you start measuring things like feelings, or you need to try to understand *Did that make people happy? Did they make the customer happy?* We're not really good at having metrics that you can put into spreadsheets that measure the effect of an emotional change. We can see behavioral changes, but it's harder to do that. So it does make the difficulty a dive; I won't kid you, a lot more difficult.

Picasso was once quoted as saying, *Everyone wants to understand art. Why not try to understand the song of a bird? You don't have to understand a bird to love its song.* You start measuring emotions — how do you measure love for your child? That's a pretty difficult thing to put a quantitative measure on.

So what we're dealing with is moving into a world where human emotion, human design, is getting to be more top of mind. And yet the way to measure that is increasingly elusive.

So it is a tough thing to do. And if you could get a measure that I like to use, which has its downsides, is Net Promoter Score, which gets down to the most fundamental question: *Was that experience good enough that I'd want to tell somebody about it or recommend it to my friend?* That has built into it some level of emotional satisfaction that you can measure.

And if you're in the content space or publishing, I always like to look at it and say, it's not how many likes you get, it's how many shares you get. Because if it's content, that's a whole different level of an indicator for emotion than it is just how it likes you end up getting.

**Ben Ortlip:** Yes, that's great. And you're not saying don't measure a whole bunch of things.

You're just saying, identify what is the *single most important measure that tracks your success?* I like the way that ties back to the outcome and the problem. There's this singularity that runs through all these [5 Big Questions](#).

**Andy Murray:** Yes. The whole exercise here, and the magic behind it, is to keep it simple.

Life's complicated as it is, we don't need to over-complicate it. And the simpler, cleaner you can tie this thread of simplicity through the problem, the outcome, the measurement, the barrier and what we're going to get to next, the more you can build momentum, the easier it is to communicate and be able to get buy-in and commitment across several different stakeholders.

And so it's a really important point to try to keep it as single as possible.

**Ben Ortlip:** The 5th Question of the [5 Big Questions Checklist](#) is: *What is one thing that everyone can do every single day?*

This question really takes us back to the first four questions, boiling down and asking how are you moving towards the outcome that you desire?

**Andy Murray:** Yes, it's my favorite question. It's my favorite question by far.

That's for a couple reasons:

In any organization, there's a daily rhythm that happens. And if you're not in the flow of that river, the flow of that rhythm of what happens day to day, it's really hard to raise a priority back to the consciousness of an organization in the moment and have real progress made.

As humans, we're just not as good at multitasking as we tell ourselves. So if you have a project that you're not looking at every single day, you won't make great progress. The mindset of "every single day" is like keeping it in the consciousness.

**Ben Ortlip:** That's good. And I know, you practice this a lot. I wonder if you could take us through some of the just wonderful examples, that you've implemented a single thing that everyone does every day and just how it rallies everyone together gets everybody on the same page and keeps them there.

I know there's some great examples that you have, from Asda and from Walmart.

**Andy Murray:** Yes. I can't take credit for implementing them on the examples I'm going to share, but Lee Scott, in, back in 1989, when he launched the sustainability pledge for Walmart, he put out a very big QUEST for their journey.

And then came back and challenged everyone to say, *What could every single associate do every single day to create a personal sustainability pledge?* It might be to walk to work. It might be to clean the retention pond. It really created a focus for everyone to look for those little things because the little things add up to big things.

One of the great stories from that is an associate who was sitting in a break room and thought *I wonder if that light bulb really needs to be on?* So he found a way to get the thing open and unscrewed the light bulb, and guess what? Nothing changed. Sales of sodas and snacks didn't move.

That became something that others became aware of and they scaled that to all stores. And sure enough, you're getting about a \$10 million a year energy savings by that one act. The idea of every single day, it puts it in the consciousness where everyone can think about the problem, look at it and then come up with ideas in a way that — that's what you want. You want lots of ideas from lots of places and people thinking about it in a way that could make progress.

Now it may not have to be the whole organization. It can be just a team, and a team can take on that or something you might want your team to work on every single day. The idea that the core stakeholders you're looking for to have ideas and solutions have something to do to bring it forward, in their life and in their work.

I had a mentee once who had a challenge with trying to keep up with the growth of the organization that he was running. His biggest barrier was that his team needed to up-skill at a faster rate than the growth of the company because they had fallen too far behind in the skills of the team. So he identified upskilling the team as the most important barrier to work on.

And so we created some questions. We talked through four or five questions that he could ask of his team every single day in some form or fashion to reinforce the idea that they needed to get better. So a question like, "Did we get better today? What new thing did we learn today?"

Questions that allowed them to think about skill development as a serious idea, but still in a way that's encouraging and drew attention to the idea that we need to get better and we need to improve and we need to be learning something new every day.

So it was a great example of that.

**Ben Ortlip:** Okay, speaking of one thing that you do every day, we have a very interesting interview coming up with a guy named Mike Bates. Tell us about him.

**Andy Murray:** Yes, the Atlantic Grappler. You'll get to hear about him. He's a guy that has a very big QUEST in front of him to row solo across the Atlantic in 2022.

And it's quite a two-year Quest for him to do that. There's a lot of preparation required for sure, and a lot of challenges, a lot of dragons he's going to slay to get there, and we're catching him probably a quarter of the way through this particular journey.

And one thing that struck strikes me about what Mike's doing is how he has to commit every single day to what will end up being a three-year journey. In some of the routines that he's created for himself to do something every single day is quite impressive.

And his point being — and we'll hear more from him in that episode — that once you're out on that ocean and you're rowing every single day, it's not just about the physical bit, it's the mental bit and what every single day does for him is create mental stamina and resilience, thinking about where he's trying to go with this Quest and how he needs to be thinking about it every single day. It'll take him through the problems and do that mind training now. That's why I think it's so important to do that “every single day.”

One of the things I've seen showing up quite a bit is this desperate need for more right brain thinking. We'll have a chance to talk more about this in future episodes, but right brain thinking is something that's needed when there's a lot of uncertainty, when you don't have all the answers and you're looking for something new. Something new is not going to come from something you've just done in the past.

But to have that kind of skill, to think new and think differently, it requires an exercise of the mind and you have to exercise and build. I've noticed, with COVID, there was a thinking in the early days of *Gosh, I'm going to finally get a chance to think. I don't like being in lockdown, but now I'm going to go do this new thing with my life, I'm going to have a great chance to explore a new hobby, learn to paint, etc.*

For so many people, nothing happens. One of the main reasons is you can't just start from scratch your right brain thinking and take it up to full speed to match how well you exercise the left brain. I think it's really important to have daily exercises where you continue to build that muscle so that you can exercise a right brain at full strength whenever you need it, versus only looking at it as something that's accessible during a downtime. Because when you get to that downtime and you haven't exercised the right side of your brain, it's not going to be strong enough, and you'll sit there wondering *What do I do with this time?*, flipping through a magazine or scrolling through Instagram or Facebook.

There are several things we can do to strengthen the right brain. One of the things I like to do, and I made it in every single day practice, is every day on the way to work, all the way home on the commute — of course I don't commute much now — I would look for one thing, try to observe one thing, see one thing that I had never noticed before and be able to recount that by the end of the day. And you'd be amazed, just absolutely amazed when you intentionally say,

*I'm going to pay attention in a different way, rather than just to put myself on autopilot. The power of observation begins to grow as a practice.*

Practicing paying attention is one of the key secrets of creating new right brain connections. And the left brain loves to just go on autopilot, make life easy for the brain, just gets through it. In all honesty, that's not going to strengthen your right brain. But it's a fun, little simple exercise to say, "Have I noticed anything on the way to work today that I'd never seen before?"

I promise, you put that mindset in place, because I think every single day is as much a mindset as it is a method, and the mindset behind it is the training of the mind to be able to pay attention. The most important piece of being creative is paying attention and making connections between two different things that no one else has seen before. It's not some genius level of ideation capability; it comes through the power of observation. When you put some kind of habit in your life that creates a desire, a need to do observation, that's really important.

One of the best workshop development training exercises for writers — especially beginning writers but even seasoned writers still do it — is take out three sheets of paper and write three sheets of copy as one of the first things you do in the morning. And it doesn't matter what it is, it's whatever's on your mind, just get it down in writing.

And that act of writing could be totally gibberish. It helps you unload the concerns and the ideas and it's a creative process and your right brain is active the whole time. And it lets you put away some of the worries and things that might be distracting you and it frees the mind.

I do that every single day: I take three pages and just write. I don't go back and read them, I don't care to read them, it doesn't matter. It's about getting the brain in a place that it can start to create, but that's a habit and practice that I use to help develop the right brain thinking and the skills that go with it.

**Ben Ortlip:** Yes. And it's interesting how Mike Bates is just naturally, the man who's training to row the Atlantic, he's never rowed in his life. So it's not like he's a rower who's now ready to take on the grand challenge.

I think of you as a pretty right brain person, Andy, even though you're in a lot of situations in your career that are typically thought of as left brain leadership or conducive to left-brain thinkers. What would you say to the person who maybe is a little more left-brained in their thinking and you're throwing at them some of these exercises. Is there the same benefit that they're going to get from trying some of these things?

**Andy Murray:** Yes, I think so. We're still whole-brain people. The right brain's always there, it just gets a bit suffocated from all of the left brain exercises.

The biggest misbelief for heavy left brain thinkers and people that work in a left brain field of work every day is: *If I just get some downtime, I'll be able to do this really well.*

That's not true because it's a muscle. It's a learned practice to use your right brain consistently and to cultivate that so that it can be productive when you get those downtimes. And so the

thing that's the barrier is just the misbelief that: *It's just a matter of being able to get some time off. And I can't get time off because I'm so busy. I'm working so much. I'm so busy and I have time off. Who's got time to sit around and think?*

I'm not talking about sitting around and thinking. I'm talking about your drive to work or the train ride to work or the subway or wherever it is. It's in those routine moments where you can start to practice ways to create observational powers.

And like I said before, creativity and right brain thinking is really about the power to pay attention.

**Ben Ortlip:** That's great. And for the next several episodes, we're going to talk to some people we're going to do some interviews with some of the different people you've met throughout your career, and some of the people that have been writing some of these books that we've been talking about. I think that's going to go a long way toward really showing what these [5 Big Questions](#) look like in action.

**Andy Murray:** We've researched to get to this point. I've been pressure testing and working through and getting some of the best thinking and best thought leaders up against these [5 Big Questions](#). I would hear phrases like *"I wish I had known that back then. Yes, I see how these five things come together as a language and are codified to explain why I was successful at a certain big challenge that they took on."* And you'll get to hear that from Tom Muccio and from Daniel Eckhart.

Many that we've talked to will verify and validate and give stories to back up how the singularity and the clarity of an outcome, the problem, the barrier, the measure, and how that plays such an important role in the habits and practices every day. Those five things are absolutely the compass that will guide you and is so necessary to take on bigger things.

There's a lot more to come around how we slay dragons and all the other elements to that. But these particular [5 Big Questions](#) are super powerful.

**Ben Ortlip:** Yes. so before we close here, you're really on a Quest to help people because you're actually opening up your calendar. I can, I could see the evidence from that. You're actually opening up your calendar to spend time with listeners.

**Andy Murray:** Yes, the whole point of doing this is so others can create bigQUEST opportunities to do meaningful work for themselves, have bigger outcomes and do it for their teams. And so that's the aim for me.

I just found out through my career that a lot of times people get stuck on one big challenge or one question they have, and if you can spend 15 minutes just talking about that one thing to serve as an unlock, then they can go on.

So these are like 15 minute unlocking sessions: together, we'll sit down, try and unpick the lock, figure out how it got stuck, and help get unstuck with probably an insight or an idea, or just the chance for someone to vent out and say, I'm really stuck here, I'm not sure how this works.

So that's what I've done. About 20 hours a week, just dedicated those 15-minute sessions where we can work through something that you're stuck on, because I really do want to see you be successful.

**Ben Ortlip:** And this is for listeners, this is for people listening right now.

If you want to sign up for your slot with Andy Murray:

1. Go to the bigQUEST website.
2. Download and work through the [5 Big Questions Checklist & 5-Part Video Series](#)
3. Submit your completed checklist and follow the instructions to request a 15-minute session with Andy.

That's a fantastic offer. It's a gesture of just where your heart is on this, that you're really trying to help induce this sort of thinking of bigQUEST thinking, using your right brain and leadership, because there's been such a fixation on left brain organizational thinking, that just doesn't really fit with where we're headed, especially coming out of a COVID year.

**Andy Murray:** That's right. A hundred percent, I look forward to it. I hope people do take me up on it. I love mentoring and giving back any way I can to help people get through these stuck moments.

**Ben Ortlip:** That's great. Don't be surprised if you see me signed up for some time with you, too.

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