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Today's Top Thought Leaders



- Ken Blanchard
- Michael Bush
- Erika Andersen
- Chester Elton
- Susan Fowler



Exclusive interviews
by Rodger Dean Duncan,
bestselling author of
CHANGE-friendly LEADERSHIP

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Exclusive conversation with
Ken Blanchard

Why Servant Leadership Requires Humility



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Ken Blanchard is to leadership development as Bill Belichick is to football and as Oprah Winfrey is to media. He thinks big thoughts, innovates with big ideas, and does it all in a way that makes you say to yourself “Well, of course. That makes perfect sense.”

By any measure, Blanchard is one of the world’s most influential leadership experts. He’s coauthor of the iconic bestseller *The New One Minute Manager* and more than five

dozen other books that have been translated into 42 languages. In addition to heading his international training and consulting firm, Blanchard is cofounder of Lead Like Jesus, a global ministry dedicated to helping people become servant leaders.

Among Blanchard's most recent books is *Servant Leadership in Action*, which he edited with his colleague Renee Broadwell. It's a collection of insightful essays by thought leaders including Marshall Goldsmith, Brené Brown, Stephen M.R. Covey, Jim Kouzes, Simon Sinek, Cheryl Bachelder and nearly 40 others.

I visited with Ken to explore his thinking on servant leadership.

Rodger Dean Duncan: Much of your work focuses on servant leadership. Some people misconstrue that to mean an abdication of responsibility. At its core, what does servant leadership really mean, and what are its benefits?

Ken Blanchard: The reason some people think servant leadership means an abdication of responsibility is that they don't understand the two aspects of servant leadership: Vision/direction, which is the *leadership* aspect of servant leadership; and implementation, which is the *servant* aspect of servant leadership.

Leadership is about going somewhere. All good leadership starts with a visionary role—the *leadership* aspect of servant leadership. This includes setting goals and establishing a compelling vision, which gives people a sense of direction. Once people are clear on where they're going, the leader's role shifts to a service mindset for the task of implementation—the *servant* aspect of servant leadership. This is where leaders turn the hierarchical pyramid upside down to serve their people and help them live according to the vision and accomplish the established goals.

To me, servant leadership is the only way to guarantee both great relationships and great results.

Duncan: How can people with a “command and control” background be helped to catch the vision of servant leadership?

Blanchard: When I ask people whether they'd like to be known as a servant leader or a self-serving leader, everyone says “servant leader.” Nobody wants to be known as a self-serving leader. Yet we observe self-serving leadership all the time. Why? The human ego.

Ego interferes with effective leadership in two ways: one is false pride—thinking *more* of yourself than you should. You push and shove for credit and spend a lot of time promoting yourself. The other way is self-doubt or fear—thinking *less* of yourself than you should. You're consumed with your own shortcomings and spend a lot of time protecting yourself. The foundation for both false pride and self-doubt is low self-esteem. The good news is that there's an antidote!



Ken Blanchard

The antidote for false pride is humility. People who are humble have solid self-esteem. It's been said "they don't think less of themselves, they just think of themselves less." We have choices every day as we interact with other people. Humility tames our judgmental nature and motivates us to support and encourage others.

The antidote for self-doubt and fear is love. Do you have kids? Do you love them? Sure you do. Does this love depend on their success? Of course not—you love them unconditionally. What if you accepted that unconditional love for yourself? You can't control enough, sell enough, make enough money, or have a high enough position to get any more love. You have all the love you need. All you have to do is open yourself to it.

Duncan: You have often written about the importance of feedback. What specific behaviors have you found helpful in creating relationships where feedback is offered candidly, accepted gratefully, and acted upon promptly and proactively?

Blanchard: The problem is that too many people want to *confront* before they *connect*. Years ago, I was teaching a course at a business school when a new dean arrived. He started making all kinds of top-down decisions without faculty participation. Some of the faculty leaders confronted him about his behavior, but none of them had any real connection with him. He essentially threw each of them out of his office in turn.

You need to have a relationship with a person if you want them to accept your feedback. Building a relationship is like putting money in the bank. When you give someone feedback, it draws something from your interpersonal bank account with them. I agreed with the direction the dean wanted to take the school but was concerned about his decision-making style. I decided since I didn't have any position power with him, I'd better build up my bank account before talking with him about the negative impact his style was having.

“Too many people
want to confront
before they connect.”

One day when I saw him in the hallway, I mentioned I was working on a paper and asked if I could pick his brain for writing tips since he was a well-known author. He agreed. When we met, he had lots of helpful ideas. Toward the end of our

second meeting, he said, "Ken, how do you think we should deal with some of the jerks in this school?" The key word in that sentence was "we." Now I knew I had some money in my interpersonal bank account with the dean—personal power—so I felt free to suggest that a change in his style might help. I knew he'd listen without getting defensive.

Duncan: Managing time and focus is a challenge faced by every leader. What's your advice on how to distinguish between "important" matters and "urgent" matters, and how to give appropriate attention to each?

Blanchard: Dr. Norman Vincent Peale taught me we all have two selves—one is external and task oriented and the other is internal, thoughtful, and reflective. If you let your task-oriented self-rule, you might accomplish a lot but you won't lead a very fulfilling life. You'll be so busy doing urgent but unimportant tasks, you won't have time to think about your more important goals.

So how do you focus on things that are important to you, instead of rushing to do urgent but meaningless tasks? It begins with the way you start your day. I like to enter my day slowly and thoughtfully. If I know it might be a challenging day, I'll read my personal mission statement and my values and then decide how I want to be that day. Do whatever works for you to reflect on your upcoming day. Some folks exercise, read, or meditate. It doesn't need to take much time.

At the end of the day, I write in my journal. If you don't want to do that, just think about your day for a few minutes. If you were consistent with who you want to be, give yourself a One Minute Praising. And if you got off track a little, give yourself a gentle One Minute Re-Direct. Soon you'll spot your own positive and negative patterns and be able to move toward your long-term goals.

Spending time with my thoughtful self keeps me focused on the important people and things in my life. I urge you to give it a try.

Duncan: How can a leader help team members have clarity on expectations and accountability?

Blanchard: Open communication between leaders and direct reports is key. All good performance begins with clear goals—so start with clear expectations about exactly what people need to achieve, and by when. Create a crystal-clear picture of what a good job looks like, and remember to check for understanding.

Helping people stay accountable is easy if you hold one-on-one meetings. We recommend you meet with each of your direct reports every two weeks for 15 to 30 minutes. You schedule the meeting, but the direct report sets the agenda. One-on-ones give each person an opportunity to talk with you about anything they choose—work goals, family, performance issues, etc. It's their meeting. One-on-ones create genuine relationships and build trust between you and each direct report—and where there's trust, there's accountability.

Duncan: The more attention paid to a behavior, the more it will be repeated. What are some good ways to increase productivity by accentuating the positive and redirecting the negative?

Blanchard: This is what the philosophy of *The One Minute Manager*® is all about. The First Secret of The One Minute Manager is One Minute Goals. Once people are clear on goals, an effective One Minute Manager wanders around trying to catch people doing things right so they can deliver a One Minute Praising—the Second Secret. If a person isn't performing as well as agreed upon, a One Minute Re-Direct—the Third Secret—is appropriate to point them in the right direction. When effective One Minute Managers deliver praisings and re-directs, they are working for their people to help them win—accomplish their goals.

Duncan: You've said there's nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of unequals. What are the implications of that when a leader needs to coach people to adhere to a uniform set of performance standards?

Blanchard: Thanks for giving me credit for that quote, Rodger—but I believe Aristotle said that first. He was a few years before my time, but I agree with him!

This is the foundation of our SLII® model, where we emphasize the need for leaders to not only use different strokes for different folks, but also use different strokes for the *same* folks on different tasks and goals. Let me explain.

Everyone is at different development levels on their various tasks and goals. Therefore, they need varying degrees of direction and support from their manager to be successful. For example, if a direct report is new to a task, they need to know exactly how to do it—which requires strong direction from their leader. When the same person is doing a task they know by heart, the leader can use a delegating style. If the person is somewhere in between on other tasks, the manager adjusts the mix of direction and support to match the person's development level.

When a manager matches their leadership style to a person's development level on a specific task, they can give that person the right amount of direction and support they need at any given time. This approach helps direct reports develop the skills they need to succeed while it increases productivity and brings results. It's a win/win/win!

Duncan: As you well know, many organizations are lacking in good leadership training. Moreover, a surprising number of people get no leadership training (if at all) until long after they've been placed in leadership roles. If no training is made available by their organization, what can individual contributors do to help prepare themselves for future leadership opportunities?

Blanchard: If no training is available, new and aspiring managers should seek out a mentor—someone who has done the job before with success. Once you've identified a potential mentor, meet with that person. Find out if they're a good match in values and personality so that your conversations will flow. Then agree on what it is you want to accomplish, how you want to achieve it, and when, where, and how often you'll meet.

Most mentor-mentee relationships are win-win, with both parties gaining from the experience. It's worth the time it takes—the right mentor may save you from making mistakes that could set your career back years.



Personal application:

- How can you do a better job of *connecting* with the people on your team?
- How can you apply Ken's advice in the one-on-one meetings you hold with your team members?
- In what ways can you become more specifically aware of people's training needs when you offer coaching?



Exclusive conversation with
Michael Bush

Workplace Matters: How To Make It Great



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Everyone wants a great workplace. An environment where the work is both interesting and challenging. Where people collaborate to promote the worthy cause of terrific products or make-a-difference services. Where careers blossom and the bottom line thrives.

For more than two decades, Great Place to Work has produced annual lists of the 100 Best Companies to Work For. The lists are anything but arbitrary. They're based on rigorous standards backed up by uncompromising research.

By now you know some of the players: companies like Adobe, Salesforce, Mercedes-Benz, Whole Foods, Marriott, American Express, Hyatt, Mars, Aflac, Nordstrom, FedEx. These and others have earned a coveted spot in the workplace hall of fame.

But as the song lyric says, the times they are a changin’.

The implication of change in the modern workplace is detailed in *A Great Place to Work for All* by Michael Bush, CEO of the Great Place to Work organization. He reveals the essential values and behaviors that every organization must follow to thrive in the future.

Rodger Dean Duncan: You say that what was good enough to be “great” 10 or 20 years ago is not good enough now. What has changed?

Michael Bush: It’s no longer good enough to have a great experience for just some of your people.

When I came on as CEO, I knew people at our 100 Best Companies who weren’t having a great experience. So we dug into our data. We found that even at the best, many people were being left out. They were experiencing a different organization than their colleagues.

We recognized the problem and took an approach to make sure that all people—women, people of color, of different nationalities, of different job levels—worked in a positive environment where they can thrive.

We raised the bar so that a company has to be consistently great. It has to be great not just for some, but for all. We did this not just because it’s the right thing to do. But because when a company is a great place to work for all, it brings out the best in everyone. That’s better for business.

Duncan: After decades of surveying tens of millions of workers in scores of industries, your organization added “maximizing human potential” to your measurement standards. What precipitated that change?



Michael Bush

Bush: For one thing, we needed to take stock of the new economic landscape. This is a business climate defined by speed, social technologies and people expecting values besides value. For people to give your organization all of their potential they want respect, fairness, and some form of equity in return. If they aren’t getting these things the organization is getting a suboptimal return. This is the case in the majority of the companies we survey. The organizations that are maximizing this potential growth revenue four times faster than the companies that get less of this potential.

Secondly, we listened to our clients and the Best Workplaces we work with. They made this point too. Cisco’s executive chairman, John Chambers, for example, says the digital

revolution requires companies to rely ever more on those on the front line. “Decisions will be made much further down in the organization at a fast pace,” he told us.

Finally, maximizing human potential is great all around. When all employees are at their best at work, it’s better for businesses, better for people and better for the world.

Duncan: There’s no doubt that trust fuels performance. What kind of behaviors build and maintain trust in the workplace?

Bush: Leaders are key. From executives down to front-line managers, leaders need to demonstrate respect, credibility and fairness to employees. Those are the building blocks of trust. Leaders increase trust every time they listen carefully to employees, live up to their word and treat all people in an even-handed way. The very best leaders—what we call For All Leaders—also cultivate strong bonds with their teams, connect everyone to the mission of the organization, and spotlight team members’ successes.

Another trust-building behavior is providing everyone with opportunities to innovate. A great example is software company Adobe and its “Kickboxes.” These “personal innovation kits” are boxes with guidance inside on developing new ideas, a Starbucks gift card and \$1,000 in seed money. Any employee can get one—no questions asked. About 2,000 Kickboxes have been given out in recent years, leading to new products and internal process improvements. Opportunities to innovate boosts your business and shows employees you trust them to do great things.

Duncan: In companies that struggle with negative public relations issues—Uber and Facebook come to mind—what can leaders do to revitalize the confidence of employees?

“*Leaders need to demonstrate respect, credibility and fairness. Those are the building blocks of trust.*”

Bush: They can start by building credibility and respect by sharing the truth of the problem transparently. They can listen to employees’ reactions and possible solutions. They can include these perspectives as a plan is built for the future. And they can uphold values, even when that’s tough.

One example is the way health care system Texas Health Resources handled an Ebola scare several years ago. The hospital involved suffered a drop in patient visits because of public fears of the disease, but Texas Health CEO Barclay Berdan refused to lay off employees. The organization lived up to its “Individuals Caring for Individuals, Together” promise, and revenue recovered by the end of the year.

Duncan: Not surprisingly, your research shows that work experience tends to be more positive at higher levels in organizations. What can be done to boost work satisfaction at lower levels?

Bush: Respect them. The best way to do so doesn't cost you any money and in fact will increase your revenue: give everyone chances to come up with new and better products, services and processes. Create what we call an "Innovation By All" culture, which taps into the human desire to be creative, to contribute. Our research shows that companies that are most inclusive in their innovation activities grow revenue 5.5 times faster than companies that have the least "By All" culture of innovation.

I mentioned Adobe's Kickbox program earlier. Another example is hospitality giant Hilton. Hilton has a "Make it Right" mantra, which encourages everyone at all levels to take the initiative to solve problems. Front line workers at Hilton don't just make it right, they make it better. One housekeeper told us she learned while cleaning a room that a couple was celebrating their anniversary. So she got room service to give them a bottle of wine as a gift. That makes for five-star service and a happy employee.

Duncan: What should a "For All" organization look for when recruiting new employees?

Bush: First, aim to hire a workforce that reflects the make-up of your community. You can't get the benefits of For All culture—which includes the proven advantages of diverse perspectives—if you don't have "All" kinds of people there in the first place.

Also, look for people who want to learn, who are open to different perspectives. Great Places to Work For All are dynamic, so employees can expect their roles and responsibilities to change over time. And they need to be comfortable being uncomfortable at times. They must be willing to be challenged by people who have different viewpoints.

“*Look for people who want to learn, who are open to different perspectives.*”

Finally, big egos aren't a positive. You're looking for people who are driven by a bigger purpose and ready to collaborate to achieve it.

Duncan: In light of your research findings, what kind of questions should today's job applicants be asking their prospective employers?

Bush: Do they respect employees enough to share information and decision-making? Do they show a commitment to For All by having a diverse set of people in leadership roles? Have they made some tough decisions to stand by their values? Can they tell a story of letting go a top performer who was a cancer on the culture?

Software company Workday did just that. Their CEO, Aneel Bhusri, looked at the data showing that one his lieutenants wasn't creating the collegial atmosphere the company expects. By ousting this leader, Bhusri showed For All Leadership. I'd ask for a story like this.



Personal application:

- What can you do to help make your workplace more user-friendly?
- What cultural elements (systems, processes, protocols) could use a re-examination to ensure that they contribute to employee confidence and engagement?
- How can you adjust your own work habits to increase your value in the workplace?



Exclusive conversation with
Erika Andersen

Important Keys to Developing Your People



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Erika Andersen is an accomplished author, consultant, and coach. But what really sets her apart is her insistence on sustainability. She's not interested in a simple consulting gig. She wants to make a measurable, long-term difference in people's performance (and lives).

Follow through and reinforcement are hallmarks of Erika's work in organizational development and collaborative learning. Erika's clients range from MTV Networks and NBC Universal to CitiGroup and Taco Bell. Her books include *Growing Great Employees: Turning*

Ordinary People into Extraordinary Performers; Being Strategic: Plan for Success, Out-think Your Competitors; and Leading So People Will Follow. I really like Erika. I trust her message and approach. Hers is definitely a voice worth hearing.

Rodger Dean Duncan: You've sometimes used the metaphor of a gardener in discussing the work of managers and leaders. Can you elaborate on that?

Erika Andersen: I find gardening a really useful metaphor for people management, both in the specifics and in the core premise. Here's what I mean: The essential truth about gardening is that you can't *make* plants grow. You can get a plant that's well-suited to the conditions you have in your garden and the role in the garden you want it to play, and you can provide the support (water, nutrients, pruning, etc.) that will best help it survive and thrive. But after that, it's up to the plant.

In the same way, managers can make sure they get people who are best-suited to their organizations, and best able to play the role they want them to play, and provide them with the necessary support (listening, clear agreements, feedback, coaching)—but after that, it's up to them. You can't *make* employees grow and thrive; all you can do is create the optimal conditions and provide consistent support. But if you do that (in either gardening or managing), you're most likely to get great results.

Duncan: What do you see as some of the most common barriers to organizational performance?

Andersen: Poor leadership. Most of the other barriers (a flawed business model, insufficient operating capital, lack of needed talent, over- or under-engineered systems, poor communication) come back, in the end, to poor leadership. People need and deserve leaders who are far-sighted, passionate, courageous, wise, generous and trustworthy. That is, leaders who articulate and then fully engage them in moving toward a clear and attainable vision (far-sighted); who commit honestly and deeply to ideas and initiatives about which they feel strongly (passionate); who make tough, necessary choices and take full responsibility for those choices (courageous); who reflect deeply to make informed decisions and learn from mistakes and successes (wise); who assume positive intent and support their people's success (generous); and who keep their word and deliver on their promises (trustworthy).



Erika Andersen

When an organization doesn't have leaders with most of these attributes—especially at the top, but ideally at all levels of leadership—it's virtually impossible to succeed long-term.

Duncan: A lot of business people use the terms strategy and tactics interchangeably. How do you draw a distinction between the two?

Andersen: Yes, and I'm thrilled that you asked! Helping people understand these two things, so they can use them as the powerful tools they are, is an important aspect of the work we do with clients.

We define being strategic as *consistently making those core directional choices that will best move you toward your hoped-for future*. Strategies are those *core directional choices*. Another way to think of a strategy is as a statement of intention, a way to state, simply and clearly: "This is a path we intend to take to achieve our vision." Tactics are the "bricks in the path"—the specific actions you'll need to take to implement your strategy.

Here's an example from a recent client session with the senior team of an entertainment company. One of the strategies they agreed upon to achieve their vision was *Foster an environment that inspires creative thinking and pride of ownership*—a clear statement of intention about this aspect of their business. Two of the tactics they came up with to execute this strategy: "Establish a monthly cross-departmental meeting to focus on an agreed upon, long-lead topic. At least one idea pursued from each meeting," and "Recommend and execute feasible ways to make the physical environment supportive of creative thinking/ pride of ownership." Both great examples of specific, high-leverage actions to take in order to implement that strategy.

Duncan: Many change efforts seem to create a "culture backlash." What are some ways to manage—or avoid—that kind of resistance?

Andersen: When change efforts don't work (which is, sadly, more often than not) it's generally because senior management tries to mandate the change without really engaging people or acknowledging the impact it will have on them. You cover this topic beautifully in your book *CHANGE-friendly LEADERSHIP*, and our approach is very much aligned with yours.

When we work with clients to shift their culture, we share with them that people will generally change their behavior only if the new behavior *seems to them* to be easy,

“**People will generally change their behavior only if the new behavior seems to them to be easy, rewarding, and normal.**

rewarding and normal. *Easy* means they understand how to do it, feel competent to do it, don't see any organizational impediments to doing it—and in fact believe the organization will support them if they do. *Rewarding* means they see how it will give them something(s) they value. *Normal* means they believe it's something that others like them are willing and able to do, and that it's something that people whom they admire and respect do. If you make it clear to people what the change

will entail, in terms of them behaving differently, and then work with them to make sure those changes are easy, rewarding, and normal *for them*—any "cultural backlash" tends to dissipate.

Duncan: What have you found to be the best ways to help people retain and productively use the learning they acquire in training?

Andersen: Some of what I've noted above applies here, too: before we do management or leadership training in a client company, we help them make sure that the new behaviors will be both easy and normal to do in the organization, once learned. During the training, we focus with the participants on understanding how and why it will be re-warding for them to behave in these new ways, and make the skills as easy as possible to learn and practice.

Finally, after the training, we help build in reinforcement—primarily from making sure there are immediate opportunities to practice the skills, but also through e-learning, check-ins with their manager and/ or learning partners, and follow-up training sessions. The main focus needs to be getting people to a point, as quickly as possible, where they're seeing that the new behavior is working better for them than their previous approach. That's when real growth happens.



Personal application:

- How can you use the gardening metaphor to help guide your work in developing yourself and others?
- What steps can you take to ensure that people in your organization understand the difference between strategy and tactics?
- After you've received any kind of training, how do you reinforce what you've learned (through repetition, practice, etc.)?



Exclusive conversation with
Chester Elton

Creating a Culture Where People Choose to Be ‘All In’



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Engagement—the degree to which people invest discretionary effort on the job—has been all the rage in business circles for years. “Engaged” employees are absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work. They have a sense of psychological ownership of their organization’s purpose and success.

The Gallup organization's Q12 survey has gathered data from tens of millions of people. The good news is that employee engagement seems to be slowly increasing. The bad news is that engagement of U.S. employees still hovers at around 35%.

Maybe double talk is part of the problem. Mind-numbing jargon can render good intentions meaningless.

Think about it. How often have you heard (or said) something like this: "Listen up, folks. We're here to touch base, circle the wagons, get our ducks in a row, and get everyone working on the same page. Let's make sure we pick the low-hanging fruit now so we can leverage everyone's bandwidth. We're going to beat the competition only if we become game-changing paradigm-shifters and go to the next level."

Okay, that may be a bit of an exaggeration (or not). But you get the idea. People are not inspired by double talk. They are not motivated by long strings of clichés bereft of meaning or substance. They need specifics. They need examples. They need concrete models and illustrations.

They need to know that the cause they serve matters. And they need to know that the role they play in it makes a difference and is appreciated.

Those issues are at the heart of the work done by Chester Elton, co-author of several bestselling books including *All In: How the Best Managers Create a Culture of Belief and Drive Big Results*.

I visited with Chester, and came away with insights you'll find both interesting and useful.

Rodger Dean Duncan: For some people, "culture" is still a kind of invisible, hard-to-define concept. But you point out that a great culture "smacks you in the face with its concreteness." Give us a couple of examples.

Chester Elton: A great culture has an immediate emotional connection.

As a *customer*, you can feel it when you walk in the door. One of my favorite cultures is Texas Roadhouse. Love that place! Right as you walk in the door you hear the music, you are greeted by and engaged by the happy staff. Every encounter is focused on their culture of *Legendary Food, Legendary Service*.

As an *employee*, or "Roadie!" as they call themselves, it starts long before the door opens. They are all trained, mentored and know exactly how to deliver a TXRH celebration of food and service. They are there to create a memory for you. Maybe it is a birthday, an anniversary, a first date, or your 1,000th date, they understand emotionally that they make a difference with every customer served. That is a culture that smacks you in the face! And it's so fun! And by the way, *very* profitable!

Duncan: Many business people are talking about “engagement,” and most agree it’s a good thing. But true engagement seems to be an elusive goal in most organizations. Why?

Elton: True engagement starts with the relationship with the immediate supervisor. Most organizations don’t give those leaders enough training to make that happen. The focus is too much on the numbers and not enough on the people.

The funny thing is that it really doesn't take that much time. Good leaders make time to talk to their people about their goals, needs and ambition. Exceptional leaders do it at least once a month or more. Simple conversations like, “Where do you want to be three years from now?” “What do you think your best contributions are to the team?” “How can I help?”

It really is that simple. The hard part is the discipline to do it.

American Express is an excellent example of how they invest in their people in a very disciplined way. They have leadership development, mentoring and coaching for leaders at all levels. They constantly encourage growth and movement within the organization. It’s part of their culture to engage and care about every employee. They attract great talent and retain great talent.



Chester Elton

Duncan: “Motivated reasoning,” you say, makes it hard for people to change their minds on an issue, even in the face of rational information that contradicts their beliefs. What role does “motivated reasoning” play in an organization’s culture-building efforts, and what can leaders do to break the logjam?

Elton: The best way to break the logjam on “Motivated Reasoning” is to get emotional buy-in to the new idea. You can’t change their minds with facts, so you must make the appeal to build on what they believe to take them to a better emotional buy-in.

Having said that, it’s really hard. And sometimes you have to move people to a different role or even out of the company to move forward. That’s a hard thing to change. If you come across any better ways to deal with it please tell me!!

Duncan: You use the “burning platform” metaphor to represent a sense of urgency that can influence people to invest more effort in the success of their enterprise. But most organizations don’t face a challenge as obvious as an encroaching competitor gobbling up huge chunks of market share. How can leaders “frame the conversation” so their people can relate to—and embrace—the need to change?

Elton: You need to always have a culture that embraces new ideas and change. That can be the constant “burning platform.”

WD-40 is an excellent example of a sense of urgency and a burning platform with a very simple product that has been around forever! I'm sure you have at least one of those blue and yellow cans around the house.

When Garry Ridge came in as CEO, the market cap for WD-40 was \$250 million. Twelve years later it is 2.5 *billion*!

How was that done?

With a sense that we can always get better, do more and innovate in a very safe environment. Their motto is, "There are no mistakes, just learning opportunities." It is safe to fail. It won't end your career.

In fact, the name WD-40 means, Water Displacement the 40th try. It was formula number 40 that was finally the one that worked the best. Thirty-nine other versions just weren't good enough. It's baked into the culture that you are going to fail. The question is, what did you learn and how will that make us better? That's what really matters.

Duncan: What are some of the most effective things leaders can do to model commitment to the organization's mission and values?

Elton: I have never seen a great culture, team or leader that didn't celebrate their successes along the way.

The best thing leaders can do is make sure their people know they are cheering for them. Not just the big events like hitting the quota or the year-end holiday celebration. Those are important. What I'm talking about is the day-to-day appreciation of all the little things that are done right to keep the company moving. These are the behaviors that best exemplify the mission, vision and values.

No one feels over-appreciated at work. In 20 years of asking the question, "Raise your hand if you are getting too much recognition at work?" only *one* person ever raised his hand. (I'm pretty sure he was being sarcastic.)

Never underestimate the power of a simple thank you. It's the most underutilized tool in a leader's toolbox.

Carlos Aguilera at Avis Budget Rental Cars is a perfect example of how to create a culture of appreciation that focuses on the right behaviors that put the mission, vision and values into practice.

He puts ten coins in his left pocket every day and sets a goal to have ten positive interactions with his people every day. The simple things he notices could be a clean area, a kind word to a customer, someone going the extra mile for a customer on crutches. A note, a text, a phone call. It all adds up to a culture where people believe what they do matters. Carlos is on the look-out for employees who have "tried harder" for customers. His people believe, every day, that they can make a difference.

And when they do, it's noticed and celebrated. Why? Because Carlos noticed and said something.

Duncan: You recommend that, in the interest of strengthening customer loyalty, leaders should allow key employees to disrupt and innovate. What are some examples of that?

“*Never underestimate the power of a simple thank you.*”

Elton: Bell Helicopter is an example of allowing employees to disrupt the status quo. In fact, their CEO Mitch Snyder believes that harmony is overrated.

What he has done is establish ground rules for disruption. It's a way of keeping the

conversations focused on innovating or solving a problem rather than getting your idea rammed through. The best ideas need to win.

Here are the rules:

- Everyone can ask questions or make suggestions (there is no dumb idea).
- Challenge the idea, not the person!
- We will listen carefully before responding (and ask for clarification if needed)
- Debates are an opportunity to find the best idea. (not to ram home your points)
- No one laughs at someone else's expense.
- Employees have permission to disrupt. It comes right from the top.

Duncan: Many organizations use 360-degree feedback as part of their performance improvement efforts, and you endorse that approach. What are the keys to using 360s to the greatest advantage?

Elton: The 360 is only as good as the follow-up. Leaders must be willing to be totally open and honest about the feedback. If after the 360 there is no conversation, it's worthless.

Three keys for any leader are:

- Courage, to do the survey and share the results
- Humility, to accept that the results are accurate and changes need to be made
- Discipline, to actually implement that change

If that happens, the feedback on a 360 can elevate the leader and the team. There will be more trust and engagement going forward.

Duncan: “Transparency” gets a lot of play in the public dialogue nowadays. In terms of building workplace trust and engagement, where's the sweet spot between openness

with employees and the need to shield proprietary information from the prying eyes and ears of competitors?

Elton: Transparency is the key to trust in the workplace. I love the advice to leaders that goes like this, “You think they don't know. They do!” There really aren't too many secrets in business anymore, so why not get out in front of that and be open and candid about what you do, how you do it, and why?

Having said that, there are things that cannot be discussed openly. Mergers and acquisitions can be tricky subjects. In those cases, a simple message that those subjects are out of bounds helps, and perhaps even illegal. If you have been open about everything else along the way you will have the trust of your people and they will understand that some things are best kept to the few not the many.

Duncan: “What's In It for Me?” is a question asked by most people (at least in their own minds) about their workplace experience. What are some effective responses—explicitly verbalized or otherwise—that a leader can offer to that question?

Elton: Everyone I have ever talked to about work has one thing in common—they want to be happy in their work. They want to believe that what they do matters, that it makes a difference, and that when they make a difference it's noticed and celebrated.

Research by Professor Sonya Lyubomirsky at the University of California shows that if you are happy and engaged at work you are 150% more likely to be happy in your personal life.

That's the biggest pay-off I can think of, the best answer to “What's in it for me?”

All these things work to create a better workplace culture. They also work in creating a better personal life culture too. We shouldn't leave all these best practices at work! We should take them home to the people and culture that mean the most to us.



Personal application:

- How could performance in your organization improve if you and your workmates regarded each other as customers?
- How can the story about the WD-40 company help you and your colleagues embrace continuous improvement?
- How could a tolerance for disruption and innovation help your organization get better performance results?



Exclusive conversation with
Susan Fowler

Your Assumptions About ‘Motivation’ Could Be Wrong



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Corporate hallways and lunchrooms are often festooned with “motivational” wall posters. The idea seems to be that clichés enhance comradeship and performance.

Military drill instructors scream at recruits, apparently assuming that insults and humiliation are inspiring.

Motivation can come from many sources.

A tyrannical manager may “motivate” people to work killer hours that ruin health and family life and actually jeopardize productivity.

Alternatively, a thoughtful leader can engage people’s heads, hearts and hopes in ways that “motivate” them to gladly invest their discretionary effort in advancing a common cause.

What *really* motivates people? Money? Time off? Recognition? Personal esteem? A feeling of being needed?

This whole notion of “motivation” deserves a fresh look. And that’s what we get from Susan Fowler, author of *Why Motivating People Doesn’t Work, and What Does*.

Susan is a senior consulting partner with The Ken Blanchard Companies and a professor in the Executive Leadership program at the University of San Diego.

I visited with Susan and came away invigorated with some ideas you can use.

Rodger Dean Duncan: “Motivation” seems to be a frequent subject for workplace discussion, but it’s often at the superficial slogan level. You say people are always motivated—and that the question is not if they are motivated, but why. Please explain.

Susan Fowler: Motivation is at the heart of everything you do and everything you want to do but don’t. You are always motivated, but you may have a type of motivation that doesn’t generate the positive and sustainable energy required for behavior change or achieving your goals.

Motivation science has validated six different types of motivation. Not all motivation is created equal. Some types are optimal—making it more likely for you to achieve your goals and flourish. Other types are suboptimal, making it a challenge to achieve your goals.

Duncan: You cite research that shows even though people will accept money or other rewards, the only correlation between incentives and performance is a negative one. Can you elaborate with an example of how that plays out in the workplace?

Fowler: People are motivated by external rewards—whether they are tangible such as money, or intangible such as power, status and image. However, these forms of motivation have been proven to undermine the three psychological needs required to thrive and generate the type of energy to sustain your efforts.

For example, if you are motivated by money, your psychological needs for autonomy/choice, relatedness/connection, and competence are compromised. Your motivation based on money tends to control you, rather than your feeling a sense of autonomy or choice. Your focus on money tends to distract you from meaningful alignment with espoused values, empathy with others, or a collaborative approach for the sake of the project or those involved with the project. Your money focus has you keeping your eye on the scoreboard of how much money you’re making rather than appreciating your growth and learning.

Even if you meet performance expectations in the short run, your money motivation will betray you in the long run. Studies show that even in the short run, your creativity, innovation, collaboration, and wellbeing are negatively influenced.

Research on money and motivation reveals that the reasons you want money also matter. If you're working hard by choice to support values meaningful to you such as family, charities or health, your money focus is less erosive of your psychological needs than working hard for money as a means for gaining power, status, or image.

Duncan: Motivation, you say, is a skill—and people can learn to choose to create “motivational experiences” anytime and anyplace. What does this “look like” in terms of observable behavior?

Fowler: Since we are always having a “motivational experience,” I think it's important to clarify that the skill of motivation can be learned to create optimally motivating experiences.

Using the skill of motivation “looks like” identifying the type of motivation you are currently experiencing, proactively shifting by asking yourself pivotal questions to create autonomy/choice, relatedness/ connection, and competence, then reflecting on what's become clear.



Susan Fowler

When you are aware of your shift from suboptimal to optimal motivation, it feels so good that you want more of it. Unlike satiating biological needs that dissipate after you hydrate by drinking water or nourish your cells by eating, when you satisfy your psychological needs by creating autonomy/choice, relatedness/connection, and competence, you want to sustain it.

Duncan: What are two or three things a leader can do to influence people to choose a particular course of action?

Fowler: I encourage leaders to help people create choice, connection, and competence every day. For example, instead of just asking for a status report, they can ask—

Tell me about the choices you made today/this week that you feel good about or wish you could do-over. Why? What are the different choices might you make tomorrow based on your insight?

Did you have an experience or make a decision today/this week that you think reflected your values or the values of our organization? Of the tasks and goals you are working on, what do you find most meaningful? Why is that?

What did you learn today/this week? How will what you've learned inform your work—or possibly someone else's work—in the future?

Duncan: You say that key psychological needs related to motivation are autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Please explain each, and give examples from what you've observed in the workplace.

Fowler: Optimal motivation is the type of motivation required for changing behavior and sustaining the positive energy required to achieve goals. You experience optimal motivation when three psychological needs for choice, connection, and competence are satisfied.

Autonomy/Choice—this is different from “freedom.” We live in a democracy but don't work in one—we don't vote for the CEO, the organization's priorities, or whom we manage or who manages us.

We need to create our own sense of autonomy/choice. We need to perceive that we have choices, recognize and feel we have options within boundaries, and have a sense of control (I am the source of my behavior)

Relatedness/Connection—this may be the greatest opportunity for leaders and individuals to create a thriving workplace. There's no such thing as compensatory need satisfaction. So if people are not getting their need for relatedness/connection met at work when 75% of the time we spend as adults is work-related (getting ready for work, getting to work, working, getting home from work, decompressing from work, etc.), it's likely their need is not being met. This leads to feelings of alienation. A vast majority of executives

“*We need to contribute to something bigger than ourselves.*”

report being lonely. UK appointed a Minister of Loneliness to deal with the issue that has negative impact on individuals and workplaces. It also results in a lack of collaborative spirit, and an over-dependence on suboptimal motivation based on external rewards or

imposed motivation based on fear and pressure.

We need to feel a sense of belonging and genuine connection to others without concerns about ulterior motives. We need to align goals and actions to meaningful values and sense of purpose. And we need to contribute to something greater than ourselves.

Competence—while many may have competence, they may not feel competent. If you don't have the skills to deal with a bully at work, manage the conflicting opinions in a meeting, or keep up with technology, for example, you may sabotage yourself and your organization.

I was called into a Fortune 50 electronics organization to help new hires from Yale, Harvard, etc., learn to cope with not always knowing what they need to know. They were fearful of suddenly not being the best or brightest. They had forgotten their joy of learning. We needed to help them appreciate progress.

You need to feel effective at managing everyday situations, demonstrate skill over time, and experience a sense of growth and learning.

Duncan: A lot of “rah-rah” leaders seem determined to “drive” people to performance improvement. What’s the fallacy—and danger—of this approach to motivation?

Fowler: You can drive golf balls, cars, and cows, but driving people doesn’t work. Driving people erodes autonomy/choice, relatedness/ connection, and competence. Driving people sends messages that undermine your effectiveness as a leader:

The rah-rah leaders to mention are often more interested in results than in people, more interested in their own self-serving values than other-focused values. They may abandon agreed-upon values for the sake of the bottom line.

It may seem ironic, but when leaders shift from what they can get *from* people to what they can do *for* people, they are more likely to get the results they want.

Duncan: What seem to be the distinguishing cultural elements in organizations where workers are highly motivated to perform with excellence?

Fowler: Organizations with high employee work passion—people who intend to stay, who endorse the organization, who perform at above expected standards, who use discretionary effort on behalf of the organization, and who use organizational citizenship behaviors—also tend to have a workforce optimally motivated to achieve their goals.

Motivation is the fuel for employee engagement. Optimal motivation fuels employee work passion, the upper end of engagement. Suboptimal motivation fuels employee disengagement.



Personal application:

- Which of your own assumptions about motivation were challenged by the points made in this conversation?
- Are you now ready to reconsider any of your assumptions about motivation? Which one(s)? Why?
- What can you do with the information gleaned from Susan Fowler?