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**Workplace, Career, and Life Advice from
Today's Top Thought Leaders**



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- Stephen M.R. Covey
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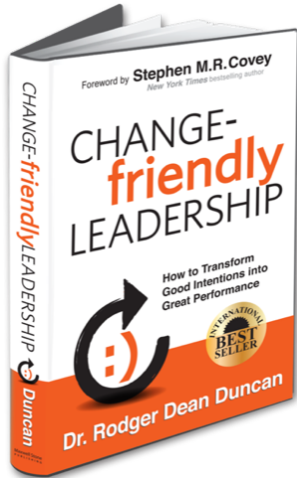


Exclusive interviews by
Dr. Rodger Dean Duncan
bestselling author of

CHANGE-friendly LEADERSHIP

LeaderSHOP

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For practical guidance on managing the changes in your life and your career, see Dr. Duncan's award-winning, bestselling book **CHANGE-friendly LEADERSHIP**

What people are saying about **CHANGE-friendly LEADERSHIP . . .**

“

A truly splendid book. Highly relevant. Tremendously insightful. Remarkably accessible. A user-friendly guide to help buffer the shock wave that often accompanies change.

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“

CHANGE-friendly LEADERSHIP is a gold mine of actionable wisdom. One of the best books I've read in many years.”

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“

Get out your highlighter and prepare to take notes. This book is a rare gem: entertaining, relevant, educational, and immensely practical.

- **Marshall Goldsmith**, recognized as one of the world's Top Ten Business Thinkers and a leading executive coach, author of multiple *New York Times* bestselling books including *The Earned Life*



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- **Jenna Kutcher**, Podcaster, educator, *New York Times* bestselling author of *How Are You, Really?*



CHANGE-friendly LEADERSHIP is both an eloquent manifesto and a practical guide for anyone who strives to create a high-performance workplace.

- **Johnny C. Taylor, Jr.**, President & CEO of SHRM, bestselling author of *Reset: A Leader's Guide to Work in an Age of Upheaval*



Duncan's practical wisdom can make a big difference in helping leaders at all levels create positive change.

- **Stewart Friedman**, Professor, Wharton School of Business, bestselling author of *Total Leadership*



A powerful and convincing affirmation that effective leadership is not about title or position, but about values-based person-to-person behaviors.

- **Bill George**, Harvard Business School Professor, former CEO of Medtronic, bestselling author of *True North*

Preface

As a young boy, I was curious about most everything around me. I peppered the adults in my life with a barrage of questions: *Why won't fish bite on dead minnows? How do you sharpen a saw? Why are cucumber seeds planted in mounds? What makes thunder and lightning? Is anyone older than God?*

My early teachers, especially my grandfather, always had a patient answer—liberally seasoned with a heavy dose of common sense and sometimes a sprinkle of humor.

I carried that inquisitive nature through my school days and into my adulthood. It served me well as a young journalist when I interviewed interesting people like Lyndon Johnson, comedian Jack Benny, Baroness Maria von Trapp, cardiac surgery pioneer Michael DeBakey, historian Arnold Toynbee, pollster George Gallup, and anthropologist Margaret Mead. I later traded jokes with Norman Rockwell and discussed home carpentry with Robert Redford. Of course, I've also talked with thousands of not-so-famous people. They've all had stories to tell and opinions to express. I've learned something every time.



Today, most of my interviews are with so-called “thought leaders.” They’ve earned that appellation because their views are taken to be authoritative and influential. They think big and they say things worth hearing.

The conversations reported in this LeaderSHOP series are with some of the smartest people around. I appreciate their generosity in giving me their time as well as their opinions. I believe you’ll agree it makes for a thought-provoking read.

Without a good question, a good answer has no place to go. So, I’ll keep asking good questions.

Robert Dearduncan



Exclusive conversation with
Marshall Goldsmith

Make the Most of Your Life: Learn to ‘Earn It’



By Rodger Dean Duncan

“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.”

That sage advice on life management is from Dr. Seuss, who brought us *The Cat in the Hat*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, *Green Eggs and Ham* and other children’s classics.

We grown-ups have some sages of our own, and one of the very best is Dr. Marshall Goldsmith.

“Thought leaders” is a phrase that’s thrown around a lot these days. Marshall Goldsmith is actually worthy of the appellation. He’s author of multiple bestselling books like *What Got You Here Won’t Get You There*, *MOJO: How to Get It, How to Keep It, How to Get It Back If You Lose It*, and *Triggers: Creating Behavior That Lasts, Becoming the Person You Want to Be*. He’s been personal coach to hundreds of the world’s top executives. Thought leader? Goldsmith is the real deal.

His latest offering is ***The Earned Life: Lose Regret, Choose Fulfillment***. It’s a *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestseller, and for good reason.

What’s the thesis of this book? Here it is in the author’s own words: “We are living an earned life when the choices, risks, and effort we make in each moment align with an overarching purpose in our lives, regardless of the eventual outcome.”

For many people, that pesky final phrase is a stumbling block: “regardless of the eventual outcome.” That seems contrary to much of what we hear nowadays about achievement and fulfillment.

Our options are endless, but the process of earning remains the same: (1) make choices, (2) accept risks, and (3) expend all the necessary effort.

In *The Earned Life*, you’ll learn:

- How to accept the present with the Every Breath Paradigm.
- The internal and external factors that determine success and fulfillment.
- The Action, Ambition, and Aspiration model.
- How to discover your One-Trick Genius.
- The lost art of asking for help.

- How to close the gap between what you plan and what you actually do.
- How to remove the delay from delayed gratification.



Marshall Goldsmith

Trust me, this is not one of those breathless rah-rah, dare-to-be-great books. *The Earned Life* is chock full of wise—and immediately actionable—advice on how to make the very most of your time on earth. Yes, that’s a lot to ask of a book. But this one actually delivers.

Today you have 100% of your life left. Go out and earn it.

Rodger Dean Duncan: You say “motivation” is one of the more misunderstood—and therefore misused—words in the lexicon of goal achievement. Please tell us more.

Marshall Goldsmith: Everyone is “motivated” to do something. For example, many people might say that they are motivated to look good. The question is, are they motivated to pay the price and work out? Many people might say they are motivated to own a home. Are they motivated to do the hard work required to make the money to buy the home?

Duncan: In what ways can inertia sneak up on people who are not living the lives of fulfillment that could be available to them?

Goldsmith: One of our greatest challenges in life is comfort. When we are making money and have a successful career, it can be very hard to change. Inertia sets in. We start reliving the same day over and over again.

The best career advice I ever received always started with “You can be more.” This helped break my inertia and get me restarted.

Duncan: What role does having a strong support system play in a person’s success in setting and achieving worthy goals?

Goldsmith: A strong support system can have a huge impact on anyone’s success. I have been blessed to be supported by iconic teachers such as

Peter Drucker, Frances Hesselbein, Paul Hersey and Warren Bennis. They not only taught me, they inspired me.

It's lonelier than ever at the top. During the Covid pandemic, my friend Mark Thompson and I spent every weekend with 60 amazing leaders who all supported each other. This type of support is more important today than ever before.

Duncan: What's your advice to someone who wants to make a midlife conversion from one occupation to another? (What can we learn from the Jim Yong Kim example?)

Goldsmith: One suggestion is to look for *adjacency*. Make the switch to a field where your previous knowledge will be very helpful in your new work. This can be much more practical than completely starting over.

Duncan: You say that—wherever possible—you avoid making choices. That seems like an odd claim from a man who's devoted his life to helping other people make wise choices. Tell us about that.

Goldsmith: I try to help great people make important choices on meaningful topics. I encourage them to consider the “agency of no choice” on unimportant topics. For example, President Obama had basically two suits that he wore every day and two shirt colors. Why waste his time on trivia?

Duncan: What have you seen as a best practice in a leader who inspires performance accountability in team members?

Goldsmith: I have never met a leader who was greater at ensuring accountability than Alan Mulally, the former CEO of Ford. His success was amazing. Alan used a process called the “Business Plan Review” to make sure that every leader stayed on focus that the team practiced “working together” to get things done.

‘ The best career advice I ever received always started with ‘You can be more.’

Duncan: In the quest to find purpose and meaning in life, what questions should people ask themselves?

Goldsmith: My wonderful friend Dr. Carol Kauffman, founder of the Institute for Coaching, has the most useful question for me: “Am I being the person that I want to be, *right now*?”

Duncan: You wisely say that deciding *what you do each day* is not the same as *who you want to be right now* is not the same as *who you want to become*. How can clarity on the distinction in those three things help a person live an earned life?

Goldsmith: Our aspirations are who we want to become. They do not have a set target and fixed end date. They answer the great question, “Why?”

Our ambitions are what we want to achieve. They have clear targets and are time-bound.

Our actions are what we are doing *now*. They are immediate.

The more that our achievements are connected to our higher goals and connected to our day-to-day engagement in life, the more satisfied we will be with our lives—both at work and at home.

Duncan: In your coaching, you’ve found that many successful businesspeople can easily identify specific actions that help them achieve a defined ambition, but they often draw a blank when asked to define an aspiration. Why?

Goldsmith: We can easily become so busy and pre-occupied with achieving our goals that we forget the deeper question, “Why am I doing this?”

I recently worked with young students from one of the world’s most highly selective schools. They were unbelievably driven to achieve. As I spoke about life, several started crying. They had no idea why they were working so hard.

Duncan: At its core, you say, aspiration “is an act of privileging your future over your present.” What might that look like in terms of observable behaviors?

Goldsmith: Any form of delayed gratification is “privileging our future over our past.” We are sacrificing today, so that the future versions of

ourselves will have a better life tomorrow. Examples could be saving money instead of spending it, going on a healthful diet instead of eating the tasty food, or working out instead of going to the movies.

Duncan: You encourage people to discover their “one-trick genius.” What exactly is that, and how does it differ from the pejorative “one-trick pony?”

Goldsmith: Our “one-trick genius” is the unique quality that can distinguish us from the pack. Our “one-trick pony” is a repetitive skill that can be over-used.

Duncan: Most people acknowledge that discipline plays an important role in personal development. What do you see as the building blocks of discipline?

Goldsmith: *Compliance* to a set of rules or processes that help us succeed.

Accountability to the standards that we have set for ourselves.

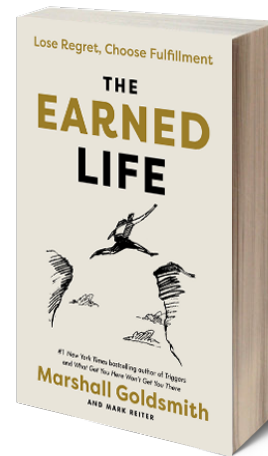
Follow up, which is the differentiator between a real, long-term change and a short-term “religious conversion” experience.

Measurement, which lets us know exactly how much progress we are making.

Community, which gives us the support and inspiration we need to keep going.

Duncan: “*Feedforward*” is a term you use in your coaching. How does that differ from “*feedback*,” and what benefits can a team derive from practicing it?

Goldsmith: *Feedforward* involves asking for ideas for the future, not feedback about the past. The next part of the process involves listening to the ideas and saying “thank you” without judging. I wrote an award-winning article called “Leadership Is a Contact Sport.” It documents the value of practicing feedback on a regular basis in order to facilitate positive, long-term change.



Duncan: How can leaders create cultures where people are comfortable asking for help?

Goldsmith: Lead by example! Let them watch you ask for help, listen and respond in a positive way.

Hubert Joly, led an astounding turnaround at Best Buy. He was an amazing role model as a leader. He asked for—and received—the help of so many people who ultimately changed the company.

Duncan: What have you learned about life from your friends who worked with old people who were facing death?

Goldsmith: Be happy now. Do whatever you can to help people. If you have a dream, go for it!





Exclusive conversation with
Stephen M.R. Covey

For Great Leadership, Focus on These Two Action Verbs: Trust, Inspire



By Rodger Dean Duncan

In the aristocracy of leadership principles, trust is king.

For some, trust sounds and feels like a spiritual issue. It is. And even for people who may not regard themselves as “religious,” trust is an all-important anchor. As Teilhard de Chardin wrote, “We are not human

beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

In this age of fierce competition and rapid-fire change, the benefits of trustworthy leadership are well known. The costs of trust-deficient leadership are also well-known. Think Enron, WorldCom, Tyco, and the numerous other corporate train wrecks caused by dishonest and/or incompetent wannabes masquerading as leaders.

But trust-deficient leadership can be costly in other ways.

Daniel Yankelovich, a leading social scientist, once asked thousands of American workers if they agreed or disagreed with a simple statement: “I put in as little energy and effort as I can get away with without getting fired.”

Want to take a guess at how many respondents agreed with that statement? 5%? 10%?

A whopping 44% of American workers surveyed agreed with the statement “I put in as little energy and effort as I can get away with without getting fired.”

A knee-jerk conclusion might be that American workers are simply lazy and looking for a free ride. My own experience tells me just the opposite. I believe most people want to add value. They want to contribute. They want to feel “connected” to a good cause.

Most people also want to be appreciated. When they are treated as a dispensable commodity rather than as a treasured asset, many people simply “check out.” It’s not necessarily a conscious decision, it’s merely a natural by-product of a respect deficit.

This dynamic can produce what some call the Law of Limited Performance. It works something like this: When people discover the level of performance their leaders will settle for, they gravitate to that level. Leaders then assume that’s all people are capable of achieving. So, they accept anemic performance as an unchangeable fact and quit challenging their people to improve. Each reinforces what the other believes.

It doesn’t have to be that way. In fact, if we want our increasingly interdependent organizations (and society at large) to thrive, those self-

defeating paradigms absolutely must be replaced by a more hopeful and productive view.

Stephen M.R. Covey shows the way in his excellent new book ***TRUST & INSPIRE: How Truly Great Leaders Unleash Greatness in Others***.

As tens of millions of people have come to expect of books with “Covey” on the cover, this one is superb on every level. It will challenge your thinking and expand your imagination of what’s possible in your own leadership practices. With captivating stories of real people operating in the real world of real work, it examines how good leaders can become *great* leaders by genuinely engaging the heads, hearts, and hopes of others. This is not just a “feel good” book. It’s chock full of tried-and-true counsel on behaviors and practices that produce sustainable, high-quality performance.



Stephen MR Covey

Stephen heads the FranklinCovey Trust Practice and is a leading advisor on trust, leadership, ethics, culture, and collaboration. A Harvard MBA, he’s the former chief executive of Covey Leadership Center which, under his stewardship, became the largest leadership development company in the world.

In his groundbreaking bestseller *The Speed of Trust*, Stephen focused on trust as a noun. In this latest offering, he shows the value of trust as a verb. It’s a distinction and combination well worth pondering.

If you’re prospecting for leadership gold, you’ll find a treasure trove here.

Rodger Dean Duncan: In a nutshell, what’s the primary advantage of Trust & Inspire leadership over Command & Control leadership?

Stephen M.R. Covey: In a word: *relevance*. You’ll get far better results in our new world of work—and it’s much better for the people.

All organizations today have two epic imperatives to achieve. The first is to create a high-trust culture that inspires people—what I call “win in the workplace.” The second is to collaborate and innovate in order to stay relevant in a changing world—what I call “win in the marketplace.”

There's always been clarity on the need to win in the marketplace. But Trust & Inspire leaders win in the marketplace by *first* winning in the workplace. Sequence matters. The bottom line is that if we cannot deliver on *both* of these epic imperatives, we won't be able to sustain meaningful success in our new world of work.

Duncan: What do you see as the primary stewardships of a Trust & Inspire leader?

Covey: First let me share a couple of thoughts on the word “stewardship.” I define stewardship as “a job with a trust.” One of the fundamental beliefs of a Trust & Inspire leader is that leadership *is* stewardship. Stewardship means we shift the focus from a leader's rights to a leader's responsibilities. Leaders have three primary stewardships. They are Modeling, Trusting, and Inspiring.

Modeling: Leaders have a stewardship to model credibility and moral authority. In particular, they model three powerful combinations of behavioral virtues. They model humility and courage, authenticity and vulnerability, and empathy and performance. Each virtue brings balance and strength to the virtue it's paired with. While independently important, the combination of virtues matters.

Trusting: Leaders have a stewardship to extend trust to those we serve. *How* we extend that trust, and *why* we do it, makes all the difference. You have to have clear expectations and a mutually agreed upon process of accountability. What makes it truly inspiring is when you're extending trust not just to get a particular result, but also to help grow and develop the person.

Inspiring: Leaders have a stewardship to inspire. We do this by *connecting with people* through caring and belonging, and then *connecting to purpose*. Connecting with people includes finding our own “why” and helping others do the same. Connecting to purpose includes creating and tapping into a sense of meaning and contribution in the work itself.

Duncan: In what ways are those three stewardships mutually reinforcing?

Covey: There is an order to these stewardships. Modeling, Trusting, and Inspiring. They build on each other, and the sequence matters. What's

wonderful about them is that they're all inspiring, and the impact is cumulative. Leaders who model authentic behavior for example, are naturally inspiring. When those leaders extend trust to us, it's even more inspiring, and we want to deliver for them. And when they connect with us through caring and belonging, and, in turn, connect us to purpose and meaning, we find ourselves unleashed—delivering on entirely different levels.

Leaders who embrace all three of these stewardships tap into unprecedented performance. Take Cheryl Bachelder, former CEO of Popeye's Chicken, as an example. When she was named CEO, she walked into a broken system. There was no trust with the franchisees, and the



business was performing poorly. Trust and inspiration were at an all-time low. Cheryl dug in and modeled authentic behavior. Who she was changed the narrative for franchisees who had seen four CEOs in the previous seven years. She was the first in that time to extend trust, and really listen to them. She inspired, tapping into a sense of

purpose for the organization. When she became CEO, the stock price had slid from its peak at \$34 per share down to \$11 per share. Fast-forward eight years and Popeye's market share had nearly doubled, and the stock price had risen to \$79 per share.

A truly great leader, Cheryl succeeded because she was able to both trust and inspire—to unleash greatness in others.

Duncan: How do you differentiate between trustworthiness and trust, and how does that relate to Command & Control leaders?

Covey: There's a huge distinction between trustworthiness and trust. I've worked with a lot of Command & Control leaders who are trustworthy, but who really struggle to grow trust. You need to be *trustworthy* to have trust. But that's not enough. You also need to be *trusting*. I frequently find two

trustworthy people working together, but no trust between them because neither person is willing to extend trust to the other. Trust is reciprocal in nature. You might be trustworthy, but if you don't trust me, I'm probably not going to trust you. The key is not just to be trustworthy, but also to be trusting.

Duncan: In discussing leadership competencies, you cite a study that shows the ability to “inspire to high performance” to be the number one predictor of “being seen as an extraordinary leader.” What does that say about connecting *with* people and connecting *to* purpose?

Covey: Two things. First, people want to be inspired. Not only is that the number one thing they wanted, but it was also one of the very lowest competencies leaders were rated in being able to do. We all want it, but we're not getting it.

Second, too often people tend to tie a leader's ability to inspire to charisma, a personality trait. But you know what? I've known a lot of charismatic leaders who are not inspiring. I've also known a lot of leaders who no one would call charismatic, but who are very inspiring. It's really about connection—connecting *with* people through real caring and belonging, and connecting *to* purpose. That's something *everyone* can do.

Duncan: For both parties in a stewardship agreement, what are the keys to success?

Covey: We could dig into this in great detail, but let me just note the structure of the agreement, and the intent of the agreement.

First, regarding the structure of the agreement, you have to establish clear expectations, and develop a mutually agreed upon process for accountability. These are developed *with* the other person, not dictated *to* the other person.

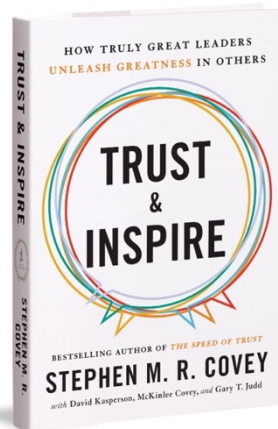
Second, regarding the intent of the agreement, it should be for *both* the results *and* the relationship. Stewardship agreements address both the outcomes we're after and the growth of the relationship. If that's our mindset, and we execute on that, we can build powerful agreements.

If you get the result, but don't develop the relationship, it's going to be just as hard, if not harder, the next time. When you get both, that's real

leadership, and that kind of leadership produces far better results, both now and in the future. An example of this that you know so well, Rodger, is the story my father always told about teaching me to take care of the yard when I was seven. He involved me, he trained me. The result he was after was “green and clean.” But it wasn’t just about taking care of the yard. It was about developing me at the same time. He trusted me, and I was inspired.

Duncan: You rightly point out that a stewardship agreement doesn’t guarantee that things will always go as planned. So, what do you do when someone lets you down?

Covey: View it as a living agreement. The agreement itself should speak to this, and allow for course correction. Let the agreement govern. Like “green and clean” with my dad. At first, I did *nothing*. That’s when most people tend to go “Command & Control.” But accountability was built into the agreement. He didn’t have to micromanage me. We had agreed that we would “walk the yard” and that I would judge myself. He made space for me to do that. He wasn’t the one holding me accountable, he taught me to *hold myself accountable*.



Too often when people have an agreement, and someone lets you down or falls short, the relationship is put on hold, damaged, or in some cases severed, and the boss steps in and takes the job back, takes control. Then that same process repeats itself over and over. But that falling short is vital to growth. And you know what? Growing through that experience, my dad never had to follow up with me on that job again. It’s a far better way to get results! And while this was true in my yard, I’ve found the exact same thing to be true in every setting.

Again, we’re always trying to do two things: get the result, and grow the people. Both are vital.

Duncan: In what ways has the global pandemic increased people’s appetite—and need—for a Trust & Inspire approach to leadership?

Covey: It’s greatly accelerated. In reality, we were already headed this way. I was four years into writing this book before the pandemic hit.

Change is happening at a much faster pace today. Some suggest we've experienced the equivalent of ten years of change in the last two years. The nature of the *world* has changed through technological innovation, including disruptive technologies.

The nature of *work* has changed. It's far more collaborative, innovative and creative than ever before. It's more interdependent.

The nature of the *workplace* has changed. Before the pandemic, only about 6% of all workers were primarily remote. Almost overnight, 57% in management and professional occupations were primarily remote. This opens so many doors for how and where we get work done.

The nature of the *workforce* has changed. There's greater diversity than ever before and as many as five generations at work today, who often have vastly different expectations of their work, of their leaders, and of what they really want. This inherently changes not only the way the workforce operates, but also our society and families.

Finally, the very nature of *choice* has changed. As technology has developed and helped us to respond to all of these other changes, we've moved from a world of multiple choice, where people tended to have a more limited number of options, to a world of infinite choice to live anywhere, work anywhere.

Duncan: You champion the idea that trust is a competency—an actual skill that can be cultivated and improved. Why is that paradigm so challenging for some people to grasp?

Covey: People are deeply scripted around trust. Many tend to feel “you either have it or you don't.” But in the same way we could lose trust through our behavior, we can also consciously, deliberately *create* trust through our behavior. We can build it on purpose. We often experience trust from the outside in, and for that reason we like to blame our trust problems on everyone else. But if you want to grow trust, to really strengthen it, and even to restore it, that's an *inside-out* process. The idea that trust is a competency is really empowering, and when people get that they start to see things very differently.

Duncan: How do you respond to someone who says Trust & Inspire is okay for much of the time, but in some circumstances Command & Control is the only approach that can work?

Covey: This is a great question, and there are really two key things here. First, are we talking about working with people, or with things? Great leaders are strong in both management and leadership. You manage things, and you lead people.

Command & Control is well-suited to managing things, but too often becomes the prevailing paradigm for managing people in the same way. People aren't things, and don't respond well to being "managed." Use yourself as exhibit A.

Remember that with people, fast is slow, and slow is fast. When Command & Control leaders attempt to be efficient with things *and* people, guess what happens in a world where

41% of the workforce is considering leaving their current job? They end up with no people and a lot of things! That's the "great resignation" we hear so much about. People are *whole* people, and no one wants to be reduced to a fungible commodity, a function, or a job.



The second thing is that when people say this, they're assuming Trust & Inspire lacks strength, that it's soft, weak, indecisive, undemanding, or lacks control. But the reality is that Trust & Inspire leaders can be authoritative without being authoritarian, can be strong without being forceful, can be decisive without being autocratic, can be compelling without being compulsory, can be visionary without being exclusive, can be detail-oriented without being distrusting, can be demanding without being overbearing, and can have control without being controlling. In fact, Trust & Inspire leaders have far more control. When they lead, people listen. Not because people have no other choice, but because they've *made* their choice. Trust & Inspire leaders have built the relationship. The paradigm is

different, the relationship is different, the sense of stewardship for all involved is different.

Duncan: What are a couple of the most common reasons people give for resisting adoption of Trust & Inspire leadership, and how do you calm their concerns?

Covey: I'll give you three insights on this.

First, the single biggest barrier to becoming a Trust & Inspire leader is that most people think they already are one! Most people wouldn't self-identify as being a Command & Control leader, and tend to think "if I'm not Command & Control (and I'm not), then I must be what Stephen is talking about." But not being Command & Control is not the same as being Trust & Inspire. It might instead be Abdicate & Abandon.

For example, I'm consulting with a leader right now whose predecessor was Command & Control. This is a great person and performer who cares deeply about those he leads. But he feels so strongly about *not* being Command & Control that he's also not leading. To avoid micromanaging, or being too "hands-on," he's become too "hands-off." It's not enough. Being a "hands-off" kind of leader may not be stifling or controlling, but it's not empowering either—and it's certainly not inspiring.

Second, there are some common barriers that people may encounter when they really start to commit to becoming this kind of leader. While adopting this new style of leadership carries enormous potential, it can still feel like a leap. Some may feel like, "This is great, but it won't work here—not on my team, or in my organization, or in my industry." Others may fear, "But what if I lose control?" or "But what if it doesn't work?" Some of us may have been burned in the past, or may struggle with imposter syndrome. For a lot of us, it's really hard to let go, or the barrier may simply be, "This is my style, this is who I am."

There's truth and validity in all these barriers. But they also constrain potential and limit performance. The good news is that regardless of our circumstances, *leadership is a choice*. Enduring influence is created from the inside-out. So, no matter what is happening around me, my job as a leader is to go first.

April Wensel, who describes herself as a “recovering jerk programmer,” was neck-deep in a cut-throat “old values” tech industry that was heavily scripted in competition, elitism, ego, and being “the Rockstar.” And she was actually thriving in that environment ... until she wasn’t. The wall she hit was a hard one. So, she rescripted, and became a Trust & Inspire leader, first for herself, then for others. She’s a great example of the fact that we are programmers, not programs. It doesn’t matter what kind of program we’re in, or the programming we’ve been given. We can choose to lead out first. Today, April is running a successful and impactful organization called Compassionate Coding, and she’s tapped into a sense of purpose, meaning, and contribution.

The third insight, and where maybe a sense of calm really comes in, is that nobody is perfect. Trust & Inspire leaders aren’t either. I remember traveling with my father for speaking engagements, and occasionally someone would ask him, “Dr. Covey, do you live the 7 Habits?” And he’d respond, “Oh, probably about 80% of the time. But I’m always trying.”

Trust & Inspire is the same way. My father was a Trust & Inspire leader, he was a Trust & Inspire parent. He wasn’t perfect, but he was always working on it, and I can’t say enough about what that did for me. Trust & Inspire is not easy, but it’s far more effective. It brings out the best in people, and today we need people’s best more than ever.

Duncan: There’s a lot of talk these days about “vulnerability.” How do you define that, and what role does it play in a leader’s effectiveness?

Covey: Vulnerability to me means a kind of intimacy. I break down that word “intimacy” to say “into-me-see.” People can experience me not just as authentic, but also as open. The very act of being vulnerable invites others to be the same, to open up. It builds trust, and it inspires.

I love the story of Brad Smith, former CEO of Intuit. He told his board he wanted to do a 360 to get real feedback about himself and his leadership. While 360s can expose strengths, their real value is in exposing weaknesses so we can work on them. But most people would want those weaknesses kept private. Brad not only shared the 360 results with his board, he posted them on the door outside his office for everyone to see. This showed the company what he was working on and it invited his people to help him be accountable to his own improvement. You can bet that people’s trust in him rose and they were inspired to similarly want to improve.

Duncan: What question do you wish I had asked, but didn't ... and how would you respond?

Covey: Maybe it's more of a challenge I run into than a question, but it's around inspiration. And interestingly, it's very similar to the challenge I started to get nearly twenty years ago when I really started writing and speaking on trust—and you know this, Rodger, because you were there with me! It's that people saw trust as this kind of soft, “nice to have” social virtue. Nobody argued with it being a good thing, but it wasn't seen as the performance multiplier it's known to be today.

I think inspiration is somewhat the same kind of thing. Nobody sees it as a bad thing, but for many it's also not seen as vital, or as learnable. But let me say this: our world today is dangerously low on inspiration. People *need* it.

The word “inspire” comes from the Latin word “inspirare,” which means “to breathe life into.” The opposite of that would be to suck life out of. Rodger, the acceptability of the idea that work can “suck the life out of us” in exchange for a paycheck has been the status quo for decades. It's no wonder that the last couple of years have made it blatantly apparent that people are done with this kind of transactional thinking.

People want to do work that matters, that inspires them. And they want to do it with people to whom they matter. Leaders and organizations who can inspire, who can breathe life into those they lead will win in the workplace, and by extension, will win in the marketplace. Inspiring others, like trust, is a learnable skill. This is where the world is going. Inspiring others is every leader's job—so we've got to get good at it!





Exclusive conversation with
Dorie Clark

The Long Game: Success with Purpose and a Plan



By Rodger Dean Duncan

“Remember to dream big, think long-term, underachieve on a daily basis, and take baby steps. That is the key to long-term success.”

Those 24 words by businessman and author Robert Kiyosaki provide a thumbnail tutorial on navigating your current job, your overall career, and your life in general.

Dorie Clark takes it even further in ***The Long Game: How to Be a Long-Term Thinker in a Short-Term World***.

Dorie, who teaches at both Duke and Columbia University, is a big thinker. In fact, she's literally been named one of the top business thinkers in the world. The titles of her previous books—*Entrepreneurial You*, *Stand Out* and *Reinventing You*—provide clues to her primary orientation: helping people make the very most of their lives by leveraging the skills they already have while discovering and developing others to greatest advantage.

Do you sometimes have trouble making smart choices about how to invest your time and energy? Of course, you do. Who doesn't? In *The Long Game*, Dorie teaches you how to create the "white space" that allows for less frenzied thinking.

Do you sometimes feel that you're being held captive by your jam-packed calendar? Dorie shares some practical tools and specific ways to get more comfortable saying no.

She can even help you decide what to be bad at. No, that's not a typo. Making that kind of strategic choice can be surprisingly liberating.

Listen in on my conversation with Dorie. My bet is that you'll decide to challenge one or more of your mindsets. And you'll be better for it.

Rodger Dean Duncan: It's no secret that a lot of CEOs focus on quarterly profits at the expense of long-term growth. Why do many people seem to adopt that same short-sighted mindset in managing their personal lives?

Dorie Clark: Part of the challenge is human nature—*of course* it's nicer to get immediate rewards!

But the problem is that many short-term rewards are shallow and illusory compared to the rewards that can be derived from long-term effort. We have to train ourselves to adopt this mindset.

A particular challenge these days is social media, which makes it easy and instantaneous to compare ourselves to others, both in our immediate social circles and far beyond. That's useful up to a point because we can often be inspired and motivated by what others are doing. But when taken too far, it's a problem, because we tend to wonder—"Why am I falling behind?" or

“Why is success happening more/faster for others?” or “What am I missing?” And that can lead people to cut corners and make suboptimal choices.



Dorie Clark

Duncan: You note that a frequent complaint is the feeling of being rushed, overwhelmed, and perennially behind. How did that deadly combination become so common?

Clark: Many of us are trying—almost all the time—to stuff 120% of activities into 100% of our time, and the math simply doesn’t work. We inevitably feel rushed and pressured because we actually are behind.

We need to train ourselves to make more realistic estimates about the time involved in various commitments, and to be more aggressive about saying no to commitments and obligations that don’t align with our own strategic priorities. One good test is to ask ourselves of any given request, “Would I feel bad in a year if I didn’t do this?” That can often clarify whether it’s important or something that can be declined.

Duncan: The Covid pandemic has certainly forced a lot of people to make short-term adjustments in the way they live and work. What lessons can the pandemic teach about the value of long-term thinking?

Clark: The pandemic was a time that, of necessity, prioritized short-term thinking. We had to pivot, adjust, and adapt—right away. There’s nothing wrong with short-term thinking when we put it in the proper context. But it’s also true that short-term thinking is not a way to permanently live our lives, because it means we’d constantly be reacting and not shaping the agenda. We need to balance it out by reclaiming a long-term vision and determining proactively how we want to live and where we want to go.

Duncan: What is it about busyness that’s so compelling to people—including those who (ironically) complain about being too busy?

Clark: As many of us have intuited—and research by Silvia Bellezza of Columbia University and her colleagues has shown—busyness can be a form of performativity in our culture. “I’m so crazy busy!!!” can translate

(subconsciously) to “I’m so in demand! I’m so incredibly essential and necessary at work!”

We complain about busyness because it’s a little (or a lot) miserable to race around all the time without a break. But in some cases, it fulfills a psychological need. So, we need to be aware of that. If we keep trying and

failing to curb our busyness, that may be one unconscious factor.

‘ In some cases, busyness fulfills a psychological need.’

Duncan: What’s the key to saying no to things that have short-term allure but limited long-term value?

Clark: We all know we should say no to more things. But in practice, it’s hard. You don’t want to disappoint people, and

it can be awkward to know what to say.

It’s even harder to say no to things that have some appealing attributes. I once turned down a free trip to speak in Grand Cayman because I realized I wouldn’t be able to enjoy it properly because I was scheduled to travel the week before and the week after—meaning, I’d be on the road for three consecutive weeks. It’s important to contextualize the offer and really look at the total cost (including physical and emotional) of committing to it.



Duncan: You suggest that it’s good for people to “decide what to be bad at.” What does that mean?

Clark: This is a concept that Harvard Business School professor Frances Frei and Anne Morris talk about in their book *Uncommon Service*. They

studied service businesses, like banks or airlines, to see what made them great (or mediocre). They determined the key was recognizing that you have only so much energy and effort, and you have to both choose what to be great at and what to be bad at—because inevitably, there are trade-offs and you’ll have to give up something.

I make the case that the same is true in our own lives, whether it's letting email slip while you're working on a big project or deciding to order takeout all the time in order to focus on work, or whatever. We can't be great at everything.

Duncan: People can make the most progress, you say, if they “strategically overindex.” Give us an example of what that looks like in actual practice.

Clark: In investing, “overindexing” on something means you make a choice to allocate your funds more aggressively in a certain area, or toward a certain stock. I believe we should do the same with our time—choosing what we want or need to focus on, and then going deep so we can gain traction.

In one example, I realized years ago as I was growing my business that I really needed to enhance my network, and I believed that participating in a certain conference would enable me to do that. So, I signed up to attend four iterations of the conference over a one-year period so I could get to know practically everyone and get comfortable and integrated into that community. Nowadays, I certainly don't go nearly that often, but that's because I put in the time to overindex early on and now I reap the benefit of having a strong connection to that community.

Duncan: “Thinking in Waves” is a productivity framework you recommend. How does that work?

Clark: The key insight here is that we often get in trouble and stagnate professionally when we try to just keep doing the same thing, over and over. We have to move forward and do new things!

I lay out a framework of four common waves in our career—

- Learning (immersing ourselves in a company or field, so we know what's going on),
- Creating (so others can see that we have good ideas and value to share),



- Connecting (so we have a community to sharpen and amplify our ideas), and
- Reaping (enjoy the fruits of our labor).

We have to keep cycling between these so we can stay fresh and keep learning. And most importantly, Reaping isn't a permanent stage. After a while, we need to proactively start the process again and go into Learning mode around a new topic or idea.

Duncan: What are some of the questions people can ask themselves to help sharpen their strategic approach to managing their lives?

Clark: Some of my favorite questions, which can be uncomfortable to ask and to answer, but are so valuable, include “Should I be doing this activity at all?” and “Are my day-to-day activities leading me toward my ultimate goals?” and—most critically of all—“What can I do today that will make my life better tomorrow?”

Keeping these questions in mind helps center us in a “long game mentality.”





Exclusive conversation with
Liz Wiseman

For Best Impact, Play Bigger Than Your Title



By Rodger Dean Duncan

My friend Bill was a superb performer at a nuclear power plant where he worked.

He was one of those guys who—regardless of the assignment—always added value beyond what his coworkers even imagined.

He carefully listened to everyone, regardless of their role.

He appreciated contrary viewpoints.

He challenged the status quo.

He frequently saw performance improvement opportunities that nobody else had noticed.

And Bill did it all with no fancy title, no fancy degree, and none of the other bullet points you'd expect to see on a LinkedIn profile.

What Bill *did* have was a mindset that took him beyond what was merely needed to what was truly useful. While staying faithful to important safety regulations, he constantly scanned for ways to sidestep bureaucratic speed bumps. He quickly adapted to change. He was consistent, proactive, and as reliable as tomorrow's sunrise.

In short—wherever Bill was, good stuff always happened.



Liz Wiseman

Bill was what renowned researcher and executive advisor Liz Wiseman calls an *impact player*. Her views on human performance are not merely theoretical. They are based on years of up-close-and-personal study of workers in innovative organizations like Adobe, Google, Target, Salesforce, Apple, Disney and Tesla.

You likely associate Liz with her previous bestselling books, including *Multiplier: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter*.

Her newest book is ***IMPACT PLAYERS: How to Take the Lead, Play Bigger, and Multiply Your Impact***.

Rodger Dean Duncan: You say two equally capable people may be set apart by mindset and behaviors—one remains a valued contributor while the other becomes a top-performing Impact Player. Tell us more about that differentiation.

Liz Wiseman: The Impact Players weren't necessarily more gifted than their peers, but they thought about problems differently, enabling them to respond in more valuable and impactful ways. The fundamental difference manifested in how they dealt with ambiguity and uncertainty, especially in handling what I call "everyday challenges" of the workplace. These are the problems everyone deals with regardless of workplace: things like problems without clear owners, unclear roles, unforeseen obstacles, moving targets, and unrealistic workload. Here are the ways that Impact Players handle these five situations differently than others:

1. When dealing with messy problems, other people tend to do their job while *Impact Players do the job that needs to get done*.
2. When roles are unclear, other people tend to wait for direction from above while *Impact Players step up and lead (but also step back and follow others when needed)*.
3. When unforeseen obstacles arise, other people tend to escalate problems while *Impact Players move things across the finish line*.
4. When targets keep changing, other people tend to stick to what they know best while *Impact Players learn and adapt quickly*.
5. When the workload feels heavy, other people tend to suffer through while *Impact Players make work feel lighter for everyone*.

Duncan: Impact Players, you say, wear opportunity goggles. What does that mean?

Wiseman: The Impact Players in our study saw these five types of challenges as opportunities to contribute and add value rather than as distractions to avoid. To Impact Players, unclear direction and changing priorities were chances to add value, and to dive into challenges.

For example, when Jethro Jones was interviewing for the job of principal at a middle school in Alaska, he learned that unless there was a major boost in enrollment or a fairly massive transformation at the school, it was on track to be closed within 1-2 years. He took the job anyway. The staff was understandably dejected. He acknowledged the difficulties and told the staff that the situation actually presented a unique opportunity to rethink their practices, and to experiment without the looming fear of failure. They could completely rethink their education programs to be led by students

with teacher supervision. They did this and not only did the school remain open, but the model they built was adopted across the entire district. As a result, when Covid hit the following year, they didn't see the pandemic as a threat, but just as another challenge to push through.

In short, Impact Players see these everyday challenges through an opportunity lens while others are looking at the same challenges through a threat lens.

Duncan: Most organizations have “unwritten rules.” How do Impact Players tend to respond to them?

Wiseman: Impact Players seem to understand the rules of the workplace better than others. They've figured out the unwritten rule book—the standards of behavior that one should follow in a particular job or organization. They tune in to the important needs of the organization and their immediate colleagues; they figure out what needs to get done, and they ascertain the right way to get it done.

‘ Impact players
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This rule book is unwritten not because managers are secretive, but because the rules are tacit for most managers, held at a level below conscious awareness. Through my research, I came to understand what managers need most from the people they lead. I learned why it's easier to entrust critical assignments to certain people, and why they hesitate to fully support the efforts of others. Managers want their staff to make their jobs easier—to help them lead their teams and to be self-managing wherever

possible. They need people who can think for themselves and step up to a challenge. In reality, managers want people to help them find solutions and foster teamwork.

Impact Players can maximize impact when they understand the priorities and values of the organizations and managers they work for.

And, because they decode the *real* values of the organization or team, they can work in a way that garners support and reinforcement, further strengthening their impact.

Duncan: How can Impact Players multiply their influence by mentoring—or at least providing an example for—other team members?

Wiseman: Managers can replicate the mindsets and practices of Impact Players by thinking of their top contributors as “starter” talent that can be replicated- Similar to how sourdough starter is used to produce delicious bread. Once you have the starter—someone on the team with the right mindset—you can bring them into contact with other team members. Some of their attitudes and behaviors will spread naturally as their colleagues observe their behavior and its consequences (e.g., she took the lead, organized a group to solve a problem without being asked, and the boss publicly thanked her for her initiative). Managers can accelerate this spread of positive behaviors by naming the positive behavior, calling attention to it, increasing contact between Impact Players and other members of the team, focusing on the most learnable behaviors, and modeling the behavior in stressful times.

Duncan: You use the term “upward empathy.” What does that mean, and how does it apply to Impact Players?

Wiseman: Impact Players learn what their leaders need and are great practitioners of what I call upward empathy—the tendency to look at managers and see more than just a demanding boss. Instead, they see their boss’s challenges, constraints and best intentions. Most fundamentally, it’s trying to understand what a situation feels like for another person. Upward empathy is looking beyond what frustrates you about your boss to *appreciate* what frustrates your boss, especially if the frustration is you.

Through upward empathy, Impact Players develop a rich understanding of what their leaders and stakeholders see, think, and feel. This awareness can then guide their actions and enable them to make a more focused and valuable contribution.

Practice upward empathy by realizing that other people can experience a situation differently than you do. We can be curious about their experience and imagine what a situation feels like to them. We might ask: What difficulties might this present for them? What makes their job hard? What pressures are they under? What are they worried about?

Duncan: What role does “the naïve yes” play in an Impact Player’s approach to work?

Liz Wiseman: Dealing with ambiguity and messy problems often requires working outside our comfort zone and beyond our current capabilities. Being under qualified can feel intimidating or overwhelming. It’s easy to say no to any added uncertainty and just stick to our jobs. To combat hesitation, practice what I call “the naïve yes,” which means agreeing to a new challenge before our brain kicks in and tells us it’s not possible.

Richard Branson described this attitude when he said, “If somebody offers you an amazing opportunity but you are not sure you can do it, say yes—then learn how to do it later!” Once we’ve said yes, we should acknowledge the gap by admitting what we don’t know and then ask intelligent, informed questions while projecting the image of an “intelligent learner”—someone with high self-confidence but low situational confidence.

Duncan: What can Impact Players do to help transform the organizational culture to be more performance-focused rather than activity-focused?

Wiseman: My research showed that there were five things in particular that Impact

contributors always (or nearly always) did: (1) take ownership and get a job done without being reminded, (2) act with integrity and do the right thing, (3) be easy to work with, likable, approachable, and positive, (4) learn quickly, and (5) apply their strengths to the work at hand. Typical contributors often, but not always, did these things, too.

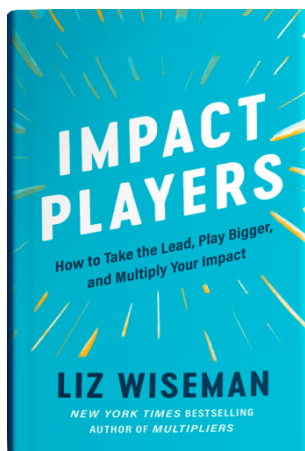


always factor. If someone always performs well, their leader can fully unload responsibilities without worry. If someone delivers only most of the

time, the manager still has to worry *all* the time, which means managers have to continually check on people's work.

Impact Players deliver with such consistency that it, essentially, creates a performance guarantee that their leaders and colleagues count on. Thus, Impact Players get handed the most visible opportunities and they aren't micromanaged by their bosses.

As more people operate with this “performance guarantee” the organization becomes more performance focused. Leaders can then provide the right targets, and contributors can figure out the most effective and efficient way to hit those targets.



Duncan: “Seeing around corners” is a behavior you write about. Give us an example of how an Impact Player might use that mindset and behavior to advantage.

Wiseman: Impact Players don't have some superpower to see through walls or into the future; what sets them apart is their continual anticipation and preparation for challenges that might be lurking around corners. A Stanford Health Care manager described an Impact Player on her team this way: “She is constantly looking for potential pitfalls and takes steps to head them off at the pass. Problems get handled before they arrive.”

When we normalize problems, it's easier to imagine the unpleasant surprises that might be just around the corner. Theodore Rubin captured this, “The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem.”

When we expect unpleasant surprises and normalize challenges, we aren't flummoxed when obstacles drop in our path – we're ready for them. We may even see these roadblocks become building blocks for growth and opportunities to prove our mettle.

Duncan: In what ways do Impact Players typically make the greatest—yes, *impact*—during major change initiatives?

Wiseman: Impact Players deal with moving targets and invitations to change differently than typical contributors. While others see changes in direction as a detour from their existing path or a threat to their current strengths, the Impact Players view changing conditions and moving targets as opportunities to learn, adapt, and grow. Though they appreciate affirmation and positive feedback, they more often seek out corrective feedback and contrary views and use them to recalibrate and refocus their efforts.

So, Impact Players are not only learning and adapting faster than their peers and building new capabilities for themselves, they're helping build new capabilities and agility within the organization.

Duncan: As Yogi Berra famously said, "You can observe a lot just by watching." If we carefully watch an Impact Player's day-to-day behaviors, which two or three seem to make the biggest contributions to organizational outcomes?

Wiseman: While there are a lot of things that Impact Players do well, there are two master skills at the root of these other practices.

The first is *changing your perspective*, which involves getting out of your own head and perceiving situations and issues from another person's point of view.

The second is *changing your lens*, which involves seeing opportunity rather than threat in ambiguous and uncertain situations.

These skills help people understand where and how to create value and make a real impact in otherwise chaotic situations.

Duncan: What are a few of the ways that well-meaning professionals can dilute their impact?

Wiseman: Many professionals who miss the mark are well intentioned but misguided. They are smart, talented people who are working hard and trying hard, but they aren't having the impact they (and their leaders) are seeking. In many ways they are under-contributing because they are over-contributing.

For example, some are working hard, but they are not focusing their efforts in the right direction. Others are over eager. They are trying too hard and playing too big. Their focus is on themselves and their advancement, rather than allowing their reputation to develop authentically as a natural byproduct of the value they create. Some get tripped up because they are playing by the rules and following the process and guidelines of the organization.

The result is that their work gets mired in the bureaucracy. Finally, some are missing opportunities to contribute to the most important work because they are shying away from ambiguity and the uncertainty that often comes with high-stakes situations or new initiatives or changes in direction.

Whether it's working too hard, or trying too hard, or playing by the rules or playing it safe, the important idea here is that we can end up under-contributing by doing great, but irrelevant work.





Exclusive conversation with
Doug Conant

Building Your Life and Career Requires Purpose and Plan



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Have you ever built a house? I have. Well, with a lot of help.

For our current (and I hope last) home, my wife and I started with a vision of what we wanted. We considered the homes we'd previously enjoyed and talked about what we would change to accommodate our future. We

carefully examined dozens of models and listed what we liked. Then we hired architects and other design experts to help us refine the plan and sort through the scores of details to harmonize our tastes and values. Finally, we found a trustworthy builder who rounded up a battalion of subcontractors who produced the “almost finished” product.

I say “almost finished” because, like most people, over the years we’ve made occasional changes and improvements to make our home even better.

Douglas Conant says people should use a similar process for their lives.

Doug—a devoted corporate leadership practitioner and teacher—has the bona fides to say a lot about life in general and leadership in particular. He’s the former president and CEO of Campbell Soup Company, former president of Nabisco Foods, and former chairman of Avon Products. In addition to running his own leadership development firm, Doug is also chairman of CECF—Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose and serves on the board of other organizations that promote excellence in leadership.

See what I mean about bona fides?

Doug’s latest book is ***The Blueprint: 6 Practical Steps to Lift Your Leadership to New Heights***.

The book is part leadership manifesto and part users manual. It details the same six steps that Doug has used on his own transformative journey:

1. Reach High—Envision
2. Dig Deep—Reflect
3. Lay the Groundwork—Study
4. Design—Plan
5. Build—Practice
6. Reinforce—Improve

I visited with Doug about using the six-step framework in a range of personal development challenges.

Rodger Dean Duncan: Many of today’s leaders seem to think “work life” and “real life” are two separate identities. What do you see as the danger of that self-model?

Douglas Conant: Earlier in my career, I was fired from my job unexpectedly. I felt blindsided and it was devastating. It didn’t make any sense. I had been working hard, putting in extra hours, doing everything I thought I was supposed to. I came to realize with the help of the



Doug Conant

outplacement counselor assigned to me—a gritty man named Neil MacKenna whose advice has inspired me throughout my life—that it wasn’t that I was doing anything *wrong*, but I wasn’t doing enough right.

One big insight from working with Neil was that I wasn’t showing up as my true self at work. I had siloed my “work” self and my “real” self and the two were at odds. The face I was presenting at work was reserved. I kept my head down, didn’t make waves, and didn’t fully connect with the organization. My real and truer self was a do-or-die competitor, a fierce former Division 1 athlete with an insatiable appetite for growth. But nobody knew that—because I didn’t show it.

Duncan: What was your take-away?

Conant: The lesson was this: If you want to reach your full potential, you can’t mute part of yourself or keep a substantial part of yourself hidden. Most people have heard a boss, parent, or mentor tell them that they can’t “half-ass” something and get good results. The same goes with bringing only half of yourself to your leadership. The danger is that it won’t work long-term. Maybe it works for a little while, but eventually you will stifle your capacity for impact. You can’t realize the full expression of your leadership if you’re bringing only part of yourself to it.

Duncan: You suggest an “inside-out” approach to personal development. What does that mean, and what does that approach “look like” in actual practice?

Conant: It means two things. One is that you have to lead by example. The other is that to lead by example you are responsible for doing the inner work to become the type of leader whose example people *want* to follow.

The best leaders are fully anchored in who they are—what they believe, their values, what they will do and what they will not do—and that informs how they behave in every moment. Even when things become difficult (as they inevitably will) they can react nimbly and effectively because they have a strong foundation in who they are.

Duncan: How do leaders achieve that level of self-knowledge?

Conant: It's no accident. They have to make a decision to look inward, to reflect on and investigate their life experiences, to study the world around them, to examine their influences, to understand why they choose to lead, and then find a way to express that to the people with whom they live and work. The more you do what you say and the more you earn trust, the more people will emulate the example you set.

Another piece of this is that you can't rest on your laurels. You must continuously practice and improve—visibly. It becomes a virtuous circle. People see your commitment to growth and they want to grow too. The positive behaviors start with you and radiate outwards toward the entire organization—from the inside-out.

Duncan: A person's life story and leadership story, you say, are one and the same. How so?

Conant: My late friend Warren Bennis had a quote that gets to the heart of this—“*Becoming a leader* is synonymous with *becoming* yourself. It is precisely that simple and it is also that difficult.”

For years I worked with a skilled recruiter named Jim Mead. He was the best. Almost 100% of the people he recruited to our organization were winners. The secret to his success was that he interviewed people by having them tell him their life stories—from the very beginning. The executive profiles he prepared were detail-rich stories of candidates' deep and entire lives. Jim innately understood something that it took me years to fully understand—that a person's life story and leadership story are one and the same. Who you are in work is who you are in life.

Duncan: How do you use this with people you coach?

Conant: I often ask leaders to delve into their full life experiences. Sometimes they resist, asking, “what’s this have to do with how I show up for my team on Monday morning?” And the answer is that it has everything to do with how you show up—in every moment. Your life and your leadership are not separate. They are part of the same story, written on the same parchment, unfolding simultaneously. How will you write that story? It’s up to you.

Duncan: You differentiate between two common leadership mindsets—the seat-of-the-pants Incidental mindset that’s haphazard and primarily reactive, and the Intentional mindset that’s anchored in a leader’s beliefs and purpose and is disciplined and nimble. With so much evidence that thoughtful, proactive leadership produces better results, why would so many leaders settle for less?

Conant: Leaders are not consciously settling so much as they’re defaulting to learned behavior in the face of unprecedented stress and complexity. What often happens is that well-meaning people are promoted into leadership positions. They want to do a good job but they haven’t thought much about what that means. Without a game plan, and in the face of many competing priorities, they end up winging it.

‘ *Becoming a leader is synonymous with becoming yourself.* ’

These seat-of-the-pants leaders are not doing a bad job, nor are they intentionally shirking their potential. That’s just it—there’s often no intention to their leadership. They’re just trying to do their best to get through the week without everything falling into disarray. It’s easy to see why they default to this approach in the face of an exponentially growing workload.

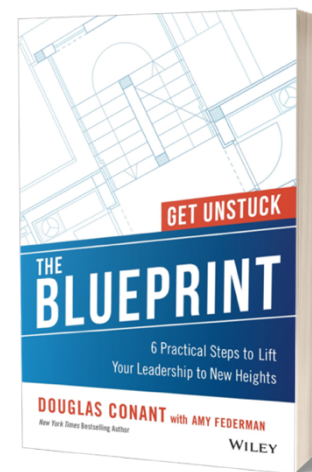
But leaders can and must do better. What they often don’t know is that the first step to leading with more intention and forethought is by *having* an anchoring intention—a purpose. When leaders have a purpose, they start thinking more proactively about how they can fulfill that purpose, and their behaviors become more intentional and effective.

Duncan: The title of one of your favorite TED talks (by New York Times commentator David Brooks) is “Should you live for your résumé ... or your eulogy?” How can that provocative question help a person on a self-discovery and self-development journey?

Conant: This is a fascinating and useful question for leaders to ponder on their journey.

Brooks explains that our résumé virtues are external. They’re the skills we bring to the marketplace. And he says that our eulogy virtues include our character—things like whether we are loving, kind, consistent, committed, etc. He says these two distinct parts of our nature stand in contrast to one another, that they’re at “war.” Often, the résumé virtues represent who we are day-to-day and the eulogy virtues represent our ideals—who we want to become and how we want to be remembered.

I’ve found that these two parts do not have to be at odds. The path to self-development is in finding a way to marry them, to build a bridge between them. If we don’t find a way to join these two, we may find that the gap is ever-widening between the person we envision ourselves becoming and the person we are in the here-and-now. We end up settling for a legacy and contribution profile that is incomplete. But if we find a way to integrate the two into one, we can unlock our potential.



Duncan: So, what’s a good way to integrate the two?

Conant: The way to achieve harmony between our résumé and our eulogy is to discover our “why,” a unifying purpose. By connecting with the larger “why” that drives us, we can uncover the “how” that will allow us to elegantly conjoin the external and the internal. When you do this, you can live more joyously for *both* your résumé and your eulogy. And a more complete vision for your future, and approach for your leadership, can emerge. Then you are poised to take action to bring that vision to life.

Duncan: In our frenetic, hyper-competitive world, what influences people to deliver consistently high performance?

Conant: There is not a one-size-fits-all answer. But leaders should reflect on this question in earnest. The reality is that people have varying temperaments. Some will be motivated by one style and some by another. The trick is practicing centering the other party in more and more interactions so you are able to learn how to get the most out of people, no matter who they are. Some will need a kick in the pants, others a more supportive approach, others something in between. The more you practice, and the better you get at leading, the more you're able to influence people to deliver—across temperaments and styles.

That said, there are some things that help no matter what. You must honor people, you must inspire trust, you must create direction, you must be able to align your resources to deliver on your strategy, you must produce extraordinary results, and you must be ever-improving. When you do these things at high level, you're creating the conditions to cultivate high performance at the granular level.

Duncan: What role does language play in leadership? How does leadership “vocabulary” affect the way people think about, talk about, and practice leadership?

Conant: Words matter. Your leadership vocabulary helps you—and others—understand how you intend to lead. Words create clarity and codify your leadership approach. For example, I have a guiding belief that to deliver high performance, “you must be both tough-minded on standards and tender-hearted with people.” I say this phrase—these exact words—repeatedly, so anybody who works with me knows what to expect from me. They know my standards will always be high. Invariably. And they know that I will always endeavor to treat them with respect. The statement amounts to a promise. If I fulfill the promise, I earn trust. If I don't fulfill the promise, I won't.

There is an axiom that “actions speak louder than words.” Maybe. But in my experience, the truth is that both what you do *and* what you say matter. They matter a great deal and in equal measure. To demonstrate integrity you have to say how you will act, then do what you say. Yes, your actions are crucial. But without words to measure your actions against, they are less powerful. When people have a clear way to assess your character, it's

easier for them to believe in you and follow your lead. And when you've created a leadership vocabulary that's meaningful to you, it's easier for you to stay true to the words in that vocabulary. Words are your compass.

Duncan: You suggest that leaders make better decisions if they realize their spheres of influence extend across three time zones—the Past, the Present, and the Future. What do you mean by that?

Conant: Today's leaders must become "time travelers." Everything you do is informed by the past and affects the present and future. To improve our decision making, we have to be able to transport ourselves to the past, present, and future simultaneously—within the space of a mere instant. If we don't, there can be serious consequences.

Whenever I'm facing a big decision, I have a time-zone checklist that helps me choose the best course of action. It takes only 60 seconds, but the exercise often recalibrates or strengthens my decision-making.

- **Past:** *Have I taken a clear-eyed look at the past and does this course of action reflect what I've learned?*
- **Present:** *Am I thinking clearly in the present and does this course of action honor the expectations of today?*
- **Future:** *Am I compromising the future and, if not, does this course of action pave the way for continued prosperity and success?*

I encourage leaders to try it. When we hold ourselves accountable to the demands of all "time zones," we wield our influence responsibly and with a broader perspective.





Exclusive conversation with
Jenna Kutcher

This Goal Digger Can Help You Tap Your Own Potential



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Jenna Kutcher is crystal clear on what she wants in life, and she's figured out how to get it.

This 30-something Minnesota mom treasures her at-home time with her husband and two little girls. She does the things other moms do—grocery

shopping, struggling with nap time, keeping tabs on house repairs, cleaning up spilled Cheerios from the kitchen floor.

For Jenna, there's nothing in the world more important than the happiness and wellbeing of her family. She clearly embraces the adage that "no other success can compensate for failure in the home."

Stay-at-home Jenna is also one of the best-known social media influencers on the planet.

After buying a \$300 camera on Craigslist, Jenna became an award-winning wedding photographer. She loved that. But she dreamed a different dream and decided she preferred working from her cozy craftsman home in her yoga pants. To provide practical advice to other women entrepreneurs, she launched a podcast called Goal Digger.

That podcast, which now reaches millions of subscribers around the world and is the hub of her seven-figure business, follows a live workshop format. Jenna dispenses practical advice on a range of subjects like getting more done in less time, building your brand, using Pinterest to promote your business, and growing your email list by thousands of names each month. She also hosts prominent guests on the podcast and promises listeners that they can train with the experts on how to dig in, do the work, and tackle their biggest goals along the way.

Yes, that all sounds ambitious. It is. But judging by the relevant metrics, everything is working out A-okay for this work-from-home mom in yoga pants: she's hosting the world's number one rated marketing podcast with 570+ episodes and more than 65 million downloads.



Podcast Magazine

Although most of Jenna's content focuses on how to be a successful entrepreneur, she also serves up commonsense, why-didn't-I-think-of-that advice on managing life in a world consumed by busyness and insecurity. While many influencers project picture-perfect lives of not a hair out of place, Jenna addresses her followers with refreshing doses of realism. In one recent Instagram post, featuring a photo of her with one of her young daughters on the beach, Jenna commented that her children don't care about the cellulite on her legs or her loose tummy that was once their home. She wrote: "When people ask them about their mommy, they don't reference the number on the scale, the size on the tag of my pants, the wrinkle above my lip when I smile, or the stretch marks lining my body. They talk about how mama splashed with them, chased them, held them close, and squealed with delight."

Jenna carries that theme into her new book ***How Are You, Really?*** She writes: "Our bodies aren't personality Tupperware, waiting to be shoved and stacked and squeezed into smaller spaces. Our bodies are soft, uniquely shaped, hairy-legged beings that need wide, vast space to birth dreams. To live long, to leave legacies. To do the work that ignites us in any and every way. To rest and enjoy what we've earned. To heal. To experience life."

Have you noticed? Some people are simply wise beyond their years. Jenna Kutcher is in that club. She rejects the hustle harder mentality and still gets interesting and important things done. In *How Are You, Really?* she explains how to live a rich life outside the quixotic "having it all" cliché.

Rodger Dean Duncan: The notion of "golden handcuffs," you say, is not just about a career with too-good-to-pass-up benefits. It also applies to what might be called consensual entrapment in other areas of life. What examples of that do you see, and what's your advice for breaking free?

Jenna Kutcher: This notion of "golden handcuffs" can show up in our lives and be easily confused for gratitude.

Gratitude in itself is a beautiful practice, but reminding ourselves to be grateful, even when we know something isn't the right fit for us any longer, can keep us tied to jobs, relationships, and various life situations longer than we should be.

Gratitude can be a tool to keep us going, but we can also use it as a means to stay stuck. If you are being reminded of the “benefits” of something, check in with yourself and ask yourself if those benefits truly add value to your life in a meaningful way. If the answer is “No,” then it’s likely time to release the handcuffs and move forward.

Duncan: You quote Maya Angelou as saying that “making a ‘living’ is not the same as ‘making a life.’” Why do so many people seem to have missed that memo?

‘ *Golden handcuffs can show up in our lives and be easily confused for gratitude.* ’

Kutcher: In our productivity-focused society, it’s easy for us to create lives around our work instead of creating work that supports our lives.

As entrepreneurs, it’s not uncommon to abandon our 9-to-5s only to find ourselves working 24/7. Our achieving natures measure our worth through our output and the obsession with efficiency has us working harder just so we can save time to work harder yet.

Duncan: You subscribe to the notion that big dreams happen by going small. How does that apply to entrepreneurship?

Kutcher: Your success as an entrepreneur is impacted directly by your level of confidence and your confidence is impacted by your ability to follow through.

When we take impossibly small action towards our goals, we build up our belief in ourselves to follow through, to get results, and to continue on. Small actions build the muscles required for the big impact, so I encourage people to start small and build your belief in yourself on the path.

Duncan: What are the top two or three most common mistakes made by entrepreneurs?

Kutcher: Number one is believing that things happen overnight. I’m an example of “over-decade” success. Slow growth equals deeper roots, so work in a way that ensures longevity and keep a pulse on how you’re enjoying the journey.

Another common mistake by entrepreneurs is quitting, when really they just need to rest. Entrepreneurship is a lot of things, and one of them is exhausting. A lot of times when people quit, they should have just taken a step back, taken a nap, and rested to come back rejuvenated.

Duncan: What role does intuition play in the success of someone who's working to build a business?

Kutcher: In a world focused on systems and strategies, intuition is everything. In fact, I'd go as far to say it's the most underutilized skill in the field. It's the difference between forcing something and finding flow.

Your gut is guiding you. Listen to it and trust it. When we trust in our knowing, we stay aligned with our truth and it impacts how we show up in life, in business, in relationships—*everything*.

‘*In a world focused on systems and strategies, intuition is everything.*’

Duncan: Most people can list a lot of the negatives of the Covid pandemic. What do you see as some of the pandemic's silver lining—things people have discovered about the art of the possible ... or maybe the art of the *preferable*?

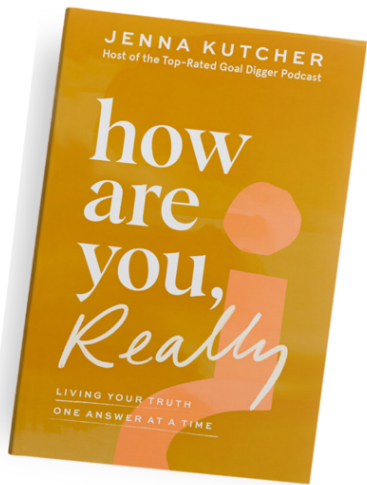
Kutcher: As someone who started, built, and scaled my career from towns with populations of fewer than 10,000 people, the pandemic verified my hunch: entrepreneurs can reach people no matter where they are with a little Wi-Fi and some technology.

I'm grateful that the ability to connect while living and working remotely became more mainstream because there's nothing I love more than connecting with humans digitally and then getting back to life in the flesh with the ones I love most! Not having to travel for work and sleeping in my own bed and being with my babies when they wake is definitely preferable for me in this season of life!

Duncan: You seem to go out of your way to promote self-acceptance. Aside from the obvious influence of advertising and other media, what is it about our society that encourages people to chase unrealistic (and even harmful) visions of themselves?

Kutcher: There's a line in my book that I think about every day. It says, "How you rise up to your battles is linked to the kind of warrior you believe you are."

While the world is telling us that we're not enough or we don't measure up, it's impacting our ability to simply show up and sabotaging our self-belief that we are equipped to make an impact. A lot of our inner dialogue has been adopted from headlines targeting us to get the next quick fix. But we don't need to be fixed. We need to start loving ourselves as whole, imperfect humans who are equipped to make a difference.



Duncan: You write: "Instead of gaslighting your own feelings, or punishing yourself for having a negative thought in the first place, your challenge is to redirect that energy back to what you have learned is true about you." What does following that advice look like in terms of observable behaviors?

Kutcher: As someone who practices meditation, I've recognized the gift of awareness—of simply *noticing*. Noticing our thoughts, our feelings, and our beliefs is where it all begins.

So much of our lives is narrated by these inner dialogues that we've borrowed from other people without questioning or noticing where they came from or if they are true. Once we notice it, we can release or redirect a thought, then rewire the brain with a more appropriate narrative, creating a story loop that we want to replay again and again in the future.

Duncan: Studies show that the people closest to you shape your interests, your outlook, your habits and, therefore, your outcomes. So, where can someone turn for help if living in a family of people who offer little encouragement to chase dreams?

Kutcher: Most of the time, we find that the people closest to us are actually the *last* ones to support us. Isn't that wild? Part of that is because they might see us changing and growing while they might be staying the same, and that sort of change is scary and sometimes unrelatable. It's

important, then, to seek out a supportive community—whether it’s through Facebook groups, organized meet ups, or chats with fellow creatives in your town or city. Having people with you on the journey is imperative to enjoying the ride!

Duncan: There’s a lot of talk these days about how people can “reimagine” or “reinvent” themselves. What do you see as the keys to a person’s positive transformation?

Kutcher: First, get super clear on what success means to you! So often we focus on what success will look like, but I want for you to envision what success will *feel* like—for *you*. Maybe there are aspects of your identity you need to leave behind in the pursuit of who you are transforming into.

Next, I want for you to start small. Build up your confidence through tiny actions that move you towards the version of yourself you are striving to become. With each bit of progress, your confidence will grow!

Lastly, check in with yourself often. Does the pursuit feel good? Are you enjoying the journey? Are you enjoying your life? Asking yourself, “How am I, *really*?” will keep you awake to your progress and excited about who you are becoming.

Duncan: What question do you wish I had asked, but didn’t ... and how would you respond?

Kutcher: Does this FEEL good? It’s easy in entrepreneurship to pursue the shiny things, the things that look good and sound impressive. But those things often leave us feeling exhausted, burned out, or out of alignment. The destination is just a moment, but the journey is our lives. If we want to do work that matters, if we want to be fully awake to our lives, we have to check in with ourselves often and get quiet enough to answer the harder questions.

