

Volume

1

# LeaderSHOP

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



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

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# 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, luxury retailer Stanley Marcus, baseball Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew, 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 volume—the first in a 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 good reading.

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

*Robert Deansman*

# LeaderSHOP

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Exclusive conversation with  
**Mark Sanborn**

## You Don't Need a Title to Be a Leader



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Being a long-time student of leadership, I've naturally heard a lot of pithy quotes about the subject. One of my favorites is from Margaret Thatcher: "Being a leader is like being a lady. If you have to remind people you are, you aren't."

Well said, Madame Prime Minister!

And another, by John Quincy Adams: “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.”

I explored this and related issues with Mark Sanborn. He’s president of Sanborn & Associates, an idea studio dedicated to developing leaders in business and in life. A graduate of Ohio State University, Mark is an international bestselling author and a noted authority on leadership, team building, customer service, and change. His many books include *The Fred Factor* and *You Don’t Need a Title to Be a Leader*.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** I often tell people that you don’t need a title to be a leader, and you wrote an entire book by that name. What are the three most important keys to exerting positive influence with others when you have no “position power” or authority?

**Mark Sanborn:** If I ever re-title the book, I’ll call it *You Don’t Need a Title to Be a Leader But If You Do It Right a Title Won’t Mess You Up*. I’ve got nothing against titles *per se*, but they’re often misunderstood. Skills and results make you a leader. Titles should confirm leadership but they can never bestow it.

I’d begin by asking, “Why do you want to lead? What difference do you want to make?” Leadership has become trendy and many want to be “leaders” but don’t necessarily have compelling reasons. Leadership should be borne out of a desire to contribute rather than simply good: followers, the organization, and/or the community. Know why you want to lead because without compelling reasons, you probably won’t be able to pay the cost of developing your leadership abilities and maintain your commitment in the face of challenges.

Next, look for opportunities to lead. Don’t wait for someone to bring them to you. What needs to be done at your organization? What problems need solutions? What opportunities could be seized? What could be improved? Initiative is a pre-requisite to effective influence. Look around. Pay attention. Get involved.

Finally, be willing to do what others aren’t. Work a little harder and smarter, prepare a little more, and study a little more deeply. If you’re asked to do something (lead a project or head a task force), consider it an opportunity to improve your leadership abilities and deliver results that will showcase your abilities and prove you are a leader.

**Duncan:** This is a time when a lot of people feel disconnected from the workplace. What can leaders do to encourage their people to take more personal responsibility for the organization’s success?



Mark Sanborn

**Sanborn:** First, be clear on what those you lead are responsible for. Followers need clear focus on what they're accountable for doing and the kind of results they're expected to consistently achieve.

Second, consider the “fit” between the person and the task. One nuance of good leadership is matching not just the right people to the right job, but the best person to a particular job. “Best” is usually the person with the skills and interest, not just the ability to do the work.

Third, don't overlook a discussion of consequences. People are accountable to the degree they feel they are going to experience a benefit or avoid a negative. If not taking responsibility has the same outcome as taking responsibility, why bother?

**Duncan:** Over the past couple of decades, the economy has had some ups and downs. When it's down, many people feel discouraged about their prospects for the future. What advice do you give anyone facing adversity?

**Sanborn:** In tough times you need both information and inspiration. Information is essential to understand what's going on. Some say, “Don't read the news. It's only negative.” That is shortsighted advice. If there is news of an upcoming storm you need to know so you can prepare. Ignoring it won't make the storm go away. We all need to face reality.

“There is no hopeless situation if you can find something different to try and you are willing to act on the idea.

We also need to be inspired by focusing on what we can do to respond successfully. Neuroscience has shown that we aren't just happy because we are successful, but we're successful because we're happy. Focusing more on the good than the bad, focusing on what we have rather than what we don't have – these predispose us to doing better and achieving our goals.

I like to offer people hope, which I define as having something new to try and being willing to try it. There is no hopeless situation if you can find something different to try and you are willing to act on the idea. Keep searching for new solutions and don't let lack of past success in dealing with a problem trick you into thinking there's nothing you can do.

**Duncan:** Even in times when employment can be very fragile, many people do only enough to “just get by.” What can a good leader do to inspire such people to perform better?

**Sanborn:** Great leaders help people have a larger vision of themselves. Leaders look for the potential in followers that followers often don't recognize in themselves.

Expect more from those you lead and you'll get more. Don't be delusional and expect the impossible or you run the risk of demoralizing those you lead. And know that when you



expect more from others you won't always get it, but you will get more from them than you would have gotten otherwise.

Connect behavior with outcomes. Show followers evidence of how their work impacts others, like customers and colleagues. Create a connection between what they do and the kind of difference they make.

**Duncan:** Some politicians don't seem to understand that being a good campaigner does not necessarily translate into being an effective leader. What leadership advice would you give people who run for public office?

**Sanborn:** The political process is the best and worst example of what leadership should be. Done right it shows how influence, understanding the process, creating support and serving constituents can work. Done wrong it becomes a debacle of empty promises and disappointed voters.

I'll summarize what I think all leaders, and those running for public office, should constantly remind themselves: Leaders don't just tell a better story; leaders make the story better.

Good communication skills are a tool of leadership, not an outcome. Nobody likes spin, hype and exaggeration. We all want leaders who can tell us what they'll achieve and then do it. Campaigning has little to do with leadership. Governing after the election is where a person's leadership is proved or disproved. I believe it was Mario Cuomo who said you campaign in poetry, but you govern in prose. He knew the difference between the rhetoric of the campaign and the results expected of the elected.

Politicians, like all of us, should never write checks with their mouths that their bodies can't cash. The words are familiar, but the strategy is still rock solid: under-promise and over-deliver.



### **Personal application:**

- How can you help foster an atmosphere of personal accountability in your workplace?
- What can you do to take more responsibility for your own success?
- If you overheard some of your workmates talking about you, what would you hope to hear them say?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Anese Cavanaugh**

## You're Contagious, So Make the Most of It



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

You're contagious. And you're surrounded by people who are also contagious.

I'm not referring to a flu bug or a case of measles. I'm talking about how you view your environment, how you respond to personalities and issues, how you live your life.

Have you ever been around someone who brings a dark cloud into the room and rains on everyone's day?

Have you ever known someone who always manages to ask the right questions, always finds a way to lift and encourage, always finds a way to help people focus and collaborate to serve the common cause with purpose and even joy?

Then you understand contagion.

The good news is that you can control the contagion. You can deliberately choose what you “catch” and what you pass along to others.

That’s the theme of Anese Cavanaugh’s *Contagious Culture: Show Up, Set the Tone, and Intentionally Create an Organization That Thrives*.

Anese’s approach to self-management and interpersonal relations can make a big difference in how you choose to influence and be influenced.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** Your approach to organizational culture is rooted in what you call Intentional Energetic Presence, or IEP. In a nutshell, what are some of the behaviors one might see in a leader who practices IEP?

**Anese Cavanaugh:** They’re present. They’re thoughtful about the energy they bring into the room. They take ownership for the tone they’re setting through their intentionality, their energy, and their presence. They stay connected to their intention of the impact they want to have. They’re conscious that they’re contagious and that leadership starts with them, so if the energy is low or people are complaining, they’ll find ways to get curious, name what’s happening in the room, help translate complaints into requests, model the level of presence they want to see, and ultimately shift the tone to something more productive.



**Anese Cavanaugh**

You’ll see them hold time integrity: showing up on time, finishing on time, and honoring time. You’ll see them following through on what they say they’ll do. You’ll see them being honest and naming things others are not willing (or are too scared) to say in service of the impact they’re working to create. You’ll see them turning their complaints into productive requests, and helping others do the same.

You’ll see them being conscious of their language and the impact it has—for example, using words like “richly scheduled” or “on purpose” instead of “busy” or “overwhelmed;” “will” or “intend” instead of “try” or “hope.” They’ll question words like “should,” “have to,” “need to,” and “can’t,” instead reframing them with “want to,” “get to,” “choose not to,” or “won’t.” Words like “worry” become “I’m aware of” or “this is something I want to address.” Language has an energetic and emotional impact. The more present and intentional we are, the more we can feel it and adjust it to support us.



You'll see IEP leaders taking care of themselves and being responsible for their energy—both how much energy they personally have and how they feel, as well as their energetic impact on others and the energy they bring into a room. They take responsibility for making sure they practice good self-care (in whatever way that means for them), hold boundaries, and say real “yes’s” and “no’s” in service of the work, their team, and their well-being.

You'll also see them being conscious and intentional about the impact they want to have on others and the organization, what kind of “contagious” they want to be, how they spend their time and energy, and how they lead their team to do the same.

**Duncan:** Is IEP a framework or a set of behaviors? Or both? Or more?

**Cavanaugh:** It's both. The primary framework is a methodology, The IEP Method® which has three core components—(1) reboot and command your presence in the moment, (2) build a strong energetic field and foundation, and (3) create intentional impact.

Each part of the methodology has frameworks, tools, and behaviors that support us in continuing to up-level our game in each area. The ultimate outcome of the entire methodology, including all frameworks and behaviors, is to have a stronger, cleaner, and more positively contagious, *Intentional Energetic Presence*® which allows us to have more impact *and* feel great doing so. (Not burned out, busy, and overwhelmed.)

**Duncan:** In layman's terms how do you discuss organizational culture? What is it? What affects it? What impact does it have on performance?

**Cavanaugh:** I believe organizational culture is how people feel when they work. It's the “intangible stuff” that impacts how we feel, work together, communicate, and regard each other. I hold “culture” as the energy of the container people create together that enables each to show up well, fully, authentically, on purpose, and as the best of themselves. Or not. Everything I'm talking about in this conversation affects culture.

**Duncan:** How does the notion of being “contagious” apply to what a leader might aspire to do and to be?

**Cavanaugh:** We're all contagious. The question is *how*. Positively? Negatively?

Energetically, people catch our “vibe”—and we catch theirs. Think of a meeting where the majority of people feel great, they're buzzing, they're happy to be there. In that same meeting, you have one or two who are not. They're bringing low/negative energy to the room. Most often, the room will “catch” that vibe and match it. This happens all the time—in meetings, in 1:1 conversations, on an airplane. Everywhere. When we're aware of it, we can protect ourselves from “catching it,” and even shift it. It takes only one person (and that's *you* if you're the one noticing it) to shift the vibe. How? By staying present, holding your state and not getting hooked, and using your IEP to help things go well.

In terms of behaviors, we're also contagious. Complaining is contagious, as is gossip, "busy," overwhelm, entitlement, judgment, and general negativity. Someone starts it, another matches it and before you know it, it's an epidemic. Fortunately, the opposite is true as well. Accountability is contagious, as is requesting and suggesting and looking to be a part of the solution, as is being present, positive, curious, gracious, calm, and being in service of a cause.

As leaders, we have a choice to set the tone and decide what we'll get hooked into and what we'll model. We choose which route—positive/negative, helpful/not helpful, expansive/contracting. With practice, our choices become habits.

**Duncan:** What role does "energy" play in people's engagement in and commitment to their work?

**Cavanaugh:** It impacts everything. It makes things go better or worse. And feel inspiring or like drudgery. If the energy feels heavy, negative, confusing, judgmental, contracted, and not safe, people will not do their best work. Period. You won't get the best from them. Even more, they'll take that energy home with them and out to the rest of their lives, spreading it (unless they know how to manage and clear it before they go).

“As leaders, we have a choice to set the tone and decide what we'll get hooked into and what we'll model.

Not to mention lost creativity, missing work, getting sick, doing the minimum required, and the general impact on collaboration.

To me this is *everything*. If we get the energy right (i.e., present, positive, clear, intentional, in service of), or at least are conscious of it and doing our best to show up well, everything else gets easier, people

feel better, creativity gets freer, people feel safer, relationships build, people show up.

**Duncan:** "Showing up" is a core element of your approach to organizational culture. Please explain what that means.

**Cavanaugh:** I look at showing up in three ways: *How do I show up for myself? How do I show up for others? How do I show up for what I'm in service of?* (My mission, my vision, my "why.")

I have to show up well for myself first, via self-care, having a positive relationship with myself (it's my most important relationship), being in integrity with myself, honoring my agreements, and being accountable for my life and the results I create (good and "bad"). The more I show up for myself, the better I can show up for others and create my intended impact. For me to be and do the most for my organization, mission, and the people I love and lead, I have to show up for me. It's similar to putting my oxygen mask on first on an airplane.

More specific actions of "showing up" in the moment might look like raising my hand when I'm scared, doing the right thing even though it's hard, asking for a seat at the

table, telling the truth, doing what I say I'll do, going the extra mile, being brave, being kind to myself, showing vulnerability, or doing my best at something—even if I fail ... and then showing up, *again*.

**Duncan:** Which cultural elements do the most to reinforce what you call purpose and personal nourishment?

**Cavanaugh:** Having a clear purpose, vision, and values in the organization helps nourish and support the human spirit, tap the *WHY* factor (which reminds us of what we're doing together and that we're in this together), and optimize the collective collaborative energy of a team.

This shared purpose is what attracts people to work with you and stay inspired. The shared vision gives people the larger intention of where you're all going so they have an anchor, they're not distracted by—or lost in—the energy of ambiguity, and you're all rowing in the same direction, building momentum, and focusing on the right things. Shared values speak to what's most important to us, how we'll show up together, and what we stand for.

We all have these things personally, even if we're not conscious of them. Organizations have them, too. The more conscious of these things we are, and the more we honor them, the more nourished we can be individually and as an organization. They work together.

**Duncan:** You underscore the idea that “you are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.” So what kind of relationship influences do you see as most helpful to a leader who wants to maintain positive impact?

**Cavanaugh:** If you hang out with people who complain, blame, and gossip all the time, are negative, don't take care of themselves, and just don't care about purpose or impact—you're likely to “catch” that “bug.” Just as if you hang out with people who are purpose-focused, conscious, accountable, gracious with other humans, care about impact, and are positive. You'll catch that one.

I advise people to have an intentional “Posse.” This is a group of people who you like being with, who *see* you, believe in you, and who want the best for you. These are often people who are playing at the level of game you want to be playing, or higher. You all contribute to each other in your unique ways. The relationships are positive, enriching, challenging, caring, and inspire growth and good.

**Duncan:** Burnout can certainly result from failure to care for one's self. But you say burnout more often results from a combination of other things. What are they?

**Cavanaugh:** In my experience, burnout is definitely impacted by our self-care. It's also significantly impacted by losing connection with what I call the *Four Ps*. *Presence*—being here in the moment (versus worrying about the past or future), present to what's happening in my life/relationships/organization, present to gratitude, and being present

to my needs (self-care, what a real “yes” and “no” is for me—and my criteria for it, and other things that will support me in being my best).

*Purpose* is being clear about *why* I do the work I do and my *intentions*.

*People* is being connected to the human beings I’m with, the humans I’m being in service of and intending to impact, surrounding myself with a good “posse,” and remembering I’m not alone and I can ask for help.

And *Pain & Pleasure* involve allowing myself full permission for authentic emotion, the painful and the pleasurable, the good and the bad, and letting myself have all of it (versus pushing it down, avoiding it, ignoring it).

There are more Ps, but I find if we can open up these four, the other P’s (and self-care) are easier to manage.



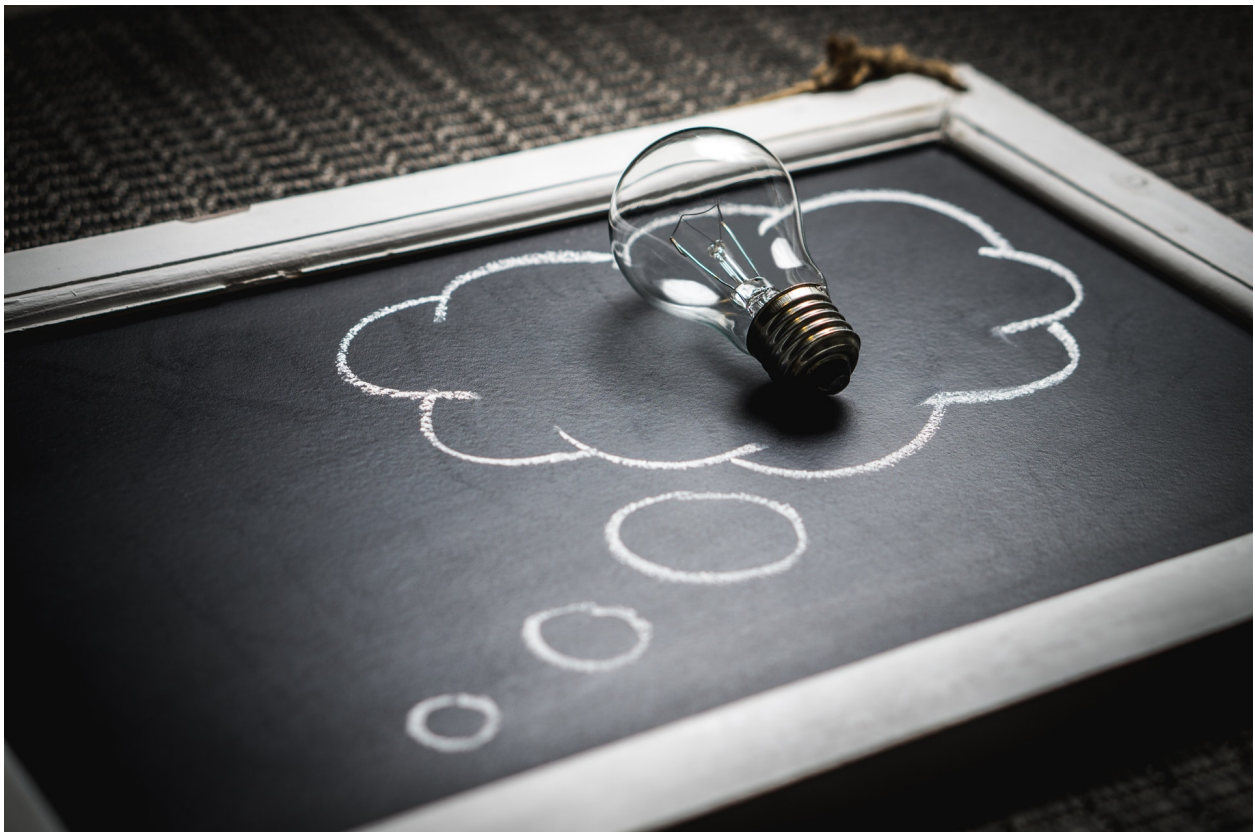
### **Personal application:**

- What can you do to be more “present” in your work with colleagues and others?
- How can you ensure that your own “contagion” has a positive effect in your workplace and in other areas of your life?
- Which of your relationships are most nourishing to you? Which are least nourishing? What does that tell you?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Bradley Staats**

# You Want to Stay Relevant? Never Stop Learning



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Continuous learning has become a mantra for everyone from college newbies to seasoned C-suite veterans. Trouble is, most of us are bad at learning. Supremely bad.

That's the conclusion of Bradley R. Staats, an operations professor whose research examines how individuals, teams, and organizations can learn to improve their performance.

Staats, who teaches at the University of North Carolina's business school, outlines a framework to help you become more effective as a lifelong learner. The steps include:

- Valuing failure
- Focusing on process, not outcome, and on questions, not answers
- Making time for reflection
- Learning to be true to yourself by playing to your strengths
- Pairing specialization with variety
- Treating others as learning partners

The framework, based on the most recent behavior science, is the core of Staats' book *Never Stop Learning: Stay Relevant, Reinvent Yourself, and Thrive*. He explains how to overcome the challenges to our own learning.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** We live in a time when learning is arguably more important than ever. But you say most people are bad at learning. Why is that? What's the behavioral science behind people's difficulty with learning?

**Bradley R. Staats:** Learning is hard. It takes time, things don't work right the first time, we have other things to get done, the list goes on. Becoming a dynamic learner is not a one-step process. There are lots of things that we need to do—incorporate failure, focus on the process, ask questions, reflect, play to our strengths, and learn from others. These elements don't come naturally as we have developed tendencies that help us in the short-term, but really can hamper us in the long run. We have a number of biases against learning. We need behavioral science so we can identify these biases and then identify new strategies to address them.

**Duncan:** Some successful entrepreneurs seem to adopt the "Ready-Fire-Aim" approach to innovation. You suggest reflection and relaxation better serve the dynamic learner. Can you elaborate?

**Staats:** "Ready-fire-aim" is a great strategy to learn in uncertain environments. It embraces the idea that we need to experiment and try things in order to learn and determine a path forward. Unfortunately, for too many people the strategy ends up playing out as "Fire-fire-fire." In other words, we never take time to stop and think about what is happening and how we should adapt.

We don't learn from our misses. Part of the problem is that we have an action bias. We want to be seen doing things, so we equate action with progress. Great research on soccer goalies and penalty kicks highlights how this plays out. The researchers found that goalies almost always dove either to the left or the right on a penalty kick. Only 6% of the time did they stay put in the middle. However, almost 40% of kicks actually go right down the middle. Goalies' chances of stopping kicks would improve dramatically if they just stayed put and reacted. Why don't they? They want to be seen doing

something. No one feels much regret with a face full of dirt after diving and giving their all.

Taking the time to reflect—both before and after we do things—gives us a chance to learn. We make connections, we build confidence, and we course correct.

We worked with a company in its training operations and found that by adding 15 minutes at the end of the day for reflection performance improved at the end of a six-week program by almost 25%. So by all means—engage in ready-fire-aim to try out new ideas. Just make sure to follow IBM’s former CEO Thomas J. Watson, Sr.’s advice to “Think.”

**Duncan:** Consultant Tom Peters famously said the winning strategy for organizations is WTTMSW: “Whoever tries the most stuff wins.” What do you see as some of the challenges of learning from failure?

**Staats:** Peters is right. Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, said “In a world that is changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks.” Long-term success requires trying new things to see what will work as the world changes around us. The difficulty is that when we try new things, some of them won’t work. Although most organizations give lip service to a desire to “fail fast,” it’s often just that: lip service.

So why is it so hard to learn from failure? First, failure is unpleasant. Our bodies experience failure just like any other high stress situation—we feel embarrassed, or ashamed, or anxious. We respond to failure like we respond to physical pain. The same part of the brain is activated.



**Bradley Staats**

But that’s not all. We overemphasize the bad things that might happen to us when we fail. We think our future suffering will be so bad that we don’t even try something. But research finds that we actually adapt quite well—once we’ve been willing to take the risk. Failure is a regular part of life.

In addition, we might discover something new. For example, when Pfizer developed drug UK-92480, they were hoping to treat heart disease. Although the trials failed on that front, they discovered an interesting side effect: participants’ sexual activity increased. The scientists failed their way into a billion-dollar blockbuster: Viagra.

The final challenge to note is that because of our fear of failure we may miss that failure occurs. We have an instinct for self-preservation and so we may not be honest with ourselves about what really happened. We end up blaming our failure on bad luck rather than our own actions. We may even change the standards so we can tell ourselves that no failure occurred rather than emotionally adapt to it. As Richard Feynman, the Nobel Prize–winning physicist,



said, “The first principle is that you must not fool yourself—and you are the easiest person to fool. So, you have to be very careful about that.”

**Duncan:** Although many people focus on desired outcomes, you say “outcome bias” can be dangerous and that focus on process can help a person become more effective as a lifelong learner. Why?

**Staats:** We tend to evaluate ourselves based on the outcome we achieve. A good outcome means we followed a good process and that a bad outcome means we followed a bad process. But lots of things go into the outcome. In a sales process we have other companies that are fighting to get the deal too. Maybe we won because of our great product and sales pitch, or maybe we won because we went to school with the key decision maker.

Think of it this way. If I play roulette and hop twice on my left foot, spin around, while chanting “red, red, red” and then I win—should I really take any learning lessons away for my gambling process going forward? No, clearly not. But we often do just that in other contexts. If we want to learn, we must focus on the process that can get us there. Identifying the key inputs, the relationships, metrics of success and eventually focusing on the learning, not the performance outcome.

**Duncan:** What are the keys to unlearning our less helpful learning practices?

**Staats:** It starts with understanding why we’re doing those less helpful things. Research shows that if we want to change behavior it’s better to start at the high-level—with the

“If we want to learn,  
we must focus on the  
process that can get  
us there.

why—before we get into the what that needs to change. This is why looking at behavioral science is so important. Once we understand why we run into trouble with different parts of learning then we can build up the right practices. The why and then what approach is a powerful way to drive change.

**Duncan:** The old saying is that you should be yourself because everyone else is taken. You suggest that “being yourself” can accelerate learning. How does personal authenticity help a person learn?

**Staats:** First, it motivates us. We engage more when we are our authentic selves. My colleagues and I ran a study with a large technology firm. We randomly assigned workers into an individual condition where they were encouraged to be their authentic selves, as well as an organizational condition (focused on the strength of the company) and a control group.

For the first two we simply took an hour on the first day of work and highlighted the individual or the organization and then gave the workers a fleece sweatshirt with their name or the company name, respectively. That was it. What we found was that when

individuals were their authentic selves, they were more likely to stay at the firm, more likely to be engaged, and more likely to perform at higher levels.

The second reason being yourself helps with learning is that it engages positive emotions. We actually change how we learn when we experience positive vs. negative emotions. With positive emotions we follow a “broaden-and-build” approach. We think more diversely about what is going on and see broader connections which help us learn. When you are yourself, rather than just imitating someone else, your learning improves.



### **Personal application:**

- What kind of things do you need to learn (and continue learning) to keep your career on the path you want?
- What can you learn from some of your failures?
- How could some occasional “unlearning” be helpful to you?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Mary Abbajay**

## Why ‘Managing Up’ is a Skillset You Need



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

You’ve heard it said and you know it’s true: People don’t quit jobs, they quit bosses.

For many people, the primary ingredient in job satisfaction is not the quality of food in the lunchroom. It’s not the office layout or equipment. It’s not even the workload, salary, or benefits. It’s the relationship with the boss. In fact, one study showed that 65% of workers surveyed would choose a new boss over a pay raise.

Working for a troublesome boss can be nothing short of miserable. A less-than-competent manager can depress your morale, deflate your productivity, and flatten your motivation.

Many organizations still promote people because of their technical success rather than for management skills. To compound the problem, many new managers receive little or no training before jumping into their new roles. This makes for unhappy campers in the workplace.

But you don't have to feel helpless. And looking for another job doesn't have to be your go-to option.

You can improve your situation by working better with the boss you already have.

That's the premise of Mary Abbajay's book *MANAGING UP: How to Move Up, Win at Work, and Succeed with Any Type of Boss*.

A seasoned leadership development consultant, Mary offers tips on how to deal with some of the most perplexing challenges in the workplace.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** There seem to be countless books, TED talks, workshops and YouTube videos on how to lead and manage downward. But your book provides one of the few treatments on how to manage upward. Why is there such an imbalance?

**Mary Abbajay:** The simple truth is that in America, nobody wants to think of himself as a "follower." We are obsessed with leadership. It's part of our cultural and sociological narrative and identity. We talk incessantly about leadership. We teach it, we preach it, we spend more than \$14 billion a year on it. But we rarely spend much time discussing or validating the other (and equally important) side of the relationship: followership.



Mary Abbajay

Many of us resist being a follower because we think being a follower is being a patsy. We confuse followership with powerlessness. We conflate it with passivity and submissiveness. We think followership robs us of agency. Nothing could be further from the truth. If we reframe followership from a power construct into a relational construct, we open up a wide world of choice and agency. In a relationship, everybody has agency. So, while we might dislike the idea of being a follower, the truth is that the majority of us spend more of our working time following than leading. Even a CEO must be a follower, too. Everybody has a boss.

**Duncan:** Most every leader was once a follower. What are the two or three key things a follower should learn (and practice) in preparation for being an effective leader?

**Abbajay:** Leadership in the 21st century is much more about influence than authority, so learning to appreciate and adapt to people with different perspectives, priorities, and personalities is a key skill to develop.

Managing up allows you to practice navigating and influencing people who approach work differently than you. Learn how to look beyond your own needs and perspectives and consider the needs and perspectives of others. If nothing else, by managing up, you will learn what kind of manager you want to be and what kind of manager you don't want to be.

**Duncan:** For some people, the notion of “managing up” sounds like manipulation or becoming a sycophant. You use the term to mean taking charge of one's workplace experience. When you teach people that this kind of empowerment is a choice, what kind of push-back do you receive?

**Abbajay:** People push back for a myriad of reasons. Most of these reasons come down to three things: ego, fixed perspective, and resistance to change.

“Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is much more about influence than authority.

Ego shows when we get caught up in the need to be right—e.g. we say things like “my boss should...”, “my boss needs to...”, etc. Our ego prevents us from widening our perspective. We get trapped in our own view, needs, wants.

Our fixed perspective prevents us from considering alternative choices and we may

find ourselves trapped in our own cloud of bitterness. While we actually may be totally right, the truth is that your boss isn't going to change. All we can do is change our reaction and our interaction.

Which brings us to the last reason, resistance to change. Managing up requires us to adapt and change our approach. It requires extra effort and moving out of our comfort zone. Change is hard. Most of us would prefer the other to change!

**Duncan:** When organizations promote people for technical skills instead of managerial skills, the unintended result can be a technical expert who's a total bust as a manager. What are some proven strategies to “manage up” an incompetent?

**Abbajay:** Whether it's due to poor people skills, inexperience, or a lack of managerial aptitude, an incompetent manager doesn't have to derail your career. While specific strategies depend on the individual situation, consider the following approaches:

**De-escalate your anger:** Having an incompetent boss can be infuriating. But when we operate from a place of anger and resentment, our reptile brain takes over and clouds us from making smart and strategic choices. Let go of the anger and replace it with empathy, compassion, or even humor. Put yourself in your boss's shoes. How would you feel if you were elevated into a position that you weren't qualified for? How

would you want your team to treat you? This perspective will enable you to make strategic choices.

**Diagnose the incompetence:** Try to figure out exactly how the incompetence shows up. Does she lack experience? Does he have poor emotional intelligence? Is her decision-making poor? Does he not hold people accountable? Is she really incompetent or does she just do things differently than you? If you can pinpoint and *prioritize* the problems, you and your team can create targeted strategies to address the deficiency.

**Compensate and cover:** Once you've pinpointed the major deficiencies, make and enact strategies to compensate. Yes, this requires extra effort. No, this isn't fair. But letting an incompetent boss derail your career isn't fair either. Look for opportunities to shine by doing great work and becoming your boss's biggest asset. Find opportunities to compensate for your boss's weakness. Offer to cover for her when she is out. Proactively provide information that will help him. Offer to take on more responsibility and projects. Use your interactions to help teach them what they need to know.

**Take the long view:** Try not to worry if your boss gets the credit for your successful projects. Success gets noticed, and in organizations that usually means the team and/or department gets noticed too. Make your boss and your team look good and you will look good as well. Plus, people aren't stupid—everyone probably already knows that you are the success engine behind your incompetent boss.

**Learn what you can:** If your boss is technically competent, take the time to learn about her technical expertise. Use this opportunity to hone your technical skills.

**Duncan:** You've identified ten types of difficult bosses—ranging from the Energizer (lots of enthusiasm but weak follow through) and the Evaluator (driven to producing high-quality work but painfully slow and methodical) to the Narcissist (superficially charming but self-absorbed, power-hungry, and attention-grabbing) and the Impulsive (a whirlwind of ideas but unable to stick to a plan). Yet you say the Micromanager is the most common problem boss. Why is that, and what are some good strategies for dealing with a Micromanager?

**Abbajay:** Micromanaging is a common dilemma because it pits two basic human neuropsychological needs against each other: autonomy and control. When our need for autonomy clashes with our manager's need for control we bristle and label it as micromanaging.

Navigating this tension is about building trust. In order to gain trust from a micromanager, we have to provide them with what they crave: information, inclusion, and control. Strategies to consider:

**Anticipate their needs:** The more you can learn about and anticipate your boss's wants, needs, and expectations and proactively address them, the sooner you can remove the need for them to micromanage.



**Keep them (overly) informed:** Provide regular updates, and status and progress reports before your boss asks for them. This could look like a daily email that lists all your projects and their status, or regularly cc-ing them on emails. Keep them in the loop.

**Adopt their standards:** Micromanagers often want things done a certain way. If this is the case, then align your work to their preferences. Learn what markers of quality your boss wants/needs and deliver on them. Find out what "right the first time" actually means. If your boss hates the oxford comma, then for goodness sake, drop the oxford comma. Building trust with them means to instill a sense of confidence that you can and will deliver high quality products--aligned with their standards--each and every time.

**Assess yourself:** If you are the only person being micromanaged, then take a good hard, honest look at your performance. What are you doing or not doing that is preventing your boss (not any boss--this particular boss) from trusting you?

**Duncan:** In this #MeToo era, what's your counsel for women trying to "manage up" a male boss?

**Abbajay:** Assuming that your male boss isn't sexually inappropriate or predatory, then his gender or "maleness" just becomes another piece of his personality puzzle. Don't make gender an issue if it isn't. Keep your interactions professional. Ensure your boundaries are clear. Be sure you don't inadvertently wade into the grey areas, yourself.

## “Don't make gender an issue if it isn't.

This can be a confusing time for male bosses who are trying to do the right thing. So if you have a good relationship with your male boss, this can be an opportunity to initiate an open

and candid dialogue about the #MeToo movement, its implications for working relationships and teamwork at your organization.

**Duncan:** You suggest that most people can learn to work well with the boss they have. But what are the signs that it's simply time to move on?

**Abbajay:** Nobody should ever work for a boss that is abusive, tyrannical, unethical, or cruel. Nor should you continue to work for someone who doesn't value you or stay in a situation that compromises your health or career. I'm a big fan of knowing when it's time to "grit" or quit. Signs that it's time to move on include:

- You wake up miserable every day and dread going to work.
- Your physical and emotional well-being are being damaged.
- You feel unsafe (physically or emotionally) at work.
- Your stress level is permeating your entire life.
- You spend more time and energy thinking about office politics or strategizing to survive your boss than you do on your work.
- Your self-esteem and self-confidence have plummeted.



- You've tried to make it work, and nothing makes it work.

Remember, when faced with a difficult situation, we have three choices: 1) change it; 2) accept it; or 3) leave it. Sometimes leaving is really the best option!

It's your career and you have the responsibility to make the choice that's best for you.



### **Personal application:**

- Regardless of your own work title, what role does “followership” play in your career success?
- If you feel you have a “problem boss,” which of the strategies here are most likely to help you operate productively in your work environment?
- What are the chances that someone needs to “manage up” with you? Which of your behaviors might cause that person to feel such a need?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Carmine Gallo**

## The Art of Persuasion: Why Less Really is More



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

You have a great idea. It's fresh and innovative. It meets a need. You know it will work.

Your "it" could be a recommendation, a proposal, a design, a procedure, or a tangible product. Whatever your "it" is, you're seriously pumped. Your solution is so awesome people will gasp in wonder. You built it, and surely they will come.

Don't bet on it. Good ideas don't sell themselves.

Venture capitalist Michael Moritz was approached by a couple of Stanford grad students. They were in search of funding for their idea. Moritz had seen a long line of boring PowerPoint presentations, and he expected the worst. But to his surprise and

delight, the two young guys could summarize their idea in fewer than ten words: “We organize the world’s information and make it accessible.”

The idea proposed by Larry Page and Sergey Brin was something called Google. The rest is history.

In an age of information overload, good communicators stand above the crowd. But they aren’t freaks of nature. They’ve learned how to persuade, and they practice. A lot. They deliver dynamic presentations and share compelling stories that sell products, grow brands, and inspire change.

Communication coach Carmine Gallo sat down with me to discuss some of the learnable practices that top communicators make seem so natural. His latest book is *Five Stars: The Communication Secrets to Get from Good to Great*.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** You make the bold statement that the ability to communicate persuasively is the single greatest skill that will set someone apart in the next decade. Why is this skill so disproportionately critical?

**Carmine Gallo:** I didn’t come up with the theory. I’m the messenger. It’s the opinion of historians, scientists, and business leaders a lot smarter than I am. For example, University of Illinois at Chicago economics professor Deirdre McCloskey says that at least 25% of America’s total economy is based on persuasion—changing minds. That’s for the total economy, but for business professionals in many categories, persuasion takes up 75% or more of their daily activity.



Carmine Gallo

McCloskey’s research has been replicated by economists in other countries. It makes sense. With each technological transformation (agrarian to industrial, industrial to digital), we do less work by hand. The new jobs are in occupations that reward communication, collaboration, and leadership skills. Mastering the art of persuasion is the secret to thriving in the world of automation and artificial intelligence.

**Duncan:** Communication skill has always been important, but in today’s world of data overload it’s more valuable than ever. What effect have social media had on the way we process information?

**Gallo:** I consider social media platforms as valuable exercises in learning to communicate more effectively. For example, Twitter (now X) gave us the 140-character message. It’s since expanded to 280 characters, but I recommend sticking to 140.

Here’s a great exercise for anyone with an idea, product, or service to pitch—explain it in a sentence short enough to fit in a Twitter post. In Hollywood pitch meetings, it’s called the “logline.” A screenwriter must be able to convey the gist of the movie in one sentence.

I've heard the same tactic used in venture capital meetings. An entrepreneur should be able to summarize an idea in one short sentence. Otherwise, it hasn't been thought through.

**Duncan:** Neuroscientists say people form an impression about a speaker in as little as 5 to 15 seconds. So how should a speaker handle that all-important first quarter minute?

**Gallo:** Like it or not, the research is clear—we make judgments about people before they say a word. First, dress a little better than everybody else in the room (about 25% better). Then, stand straight, give a firm handshake, make eye contact and smile. Research shows that even hardened financial analysts will judge a CEO's perceived competence largely on these nonverbal gestures.

**Duncan:** At IT giant Cisco, top leaders believe communication skills are the “lubricant of execution” that gives the company its competitive edge. If that's true, why?

**Gallo:** Cisco executives provided one of the most fascinating insights I learned in my research. Every manager and executive receives a score for their presentation skills. Although the company doesn't reveal this publicly, it's common knowledge among insiders that people who have below-average or even average communication skills are unlikely to get promoted. That's why it's critical to receive a 4 or a 5 (the maximum score) in every presentation. Five-star persuaders stand out. It doesn't matter if Cisco's data shows its products can outperform competitors. If a sales manager or executive cannot explain it well, they've lost an opportunity to grow the company.

**Duncan:** You say storytelling is not a “soft” skill but is the “equivalent of hard cash.” What role do stories play in a good communicator's tool kit?

**Gallo:** As a writer and journalist, I appreciate the power of story. But during my research, I learned that storytelling is a far more lucrative skill than you might think. At Google, for example, I met a data analyst whose unofficial title is “Chief Storytelling Officer.” He conducts workshops to teach Google salespeople data storytelling. Collectively, the salespeople who have taken his class are responsible for billions of dollars in annual revenue. Google has mountains of data that can help customers achieve their business objectives. But if a customer cannot understand how the data will help, it doesn't matter. “Storytelling is a powerful way to get our customers to think differently,” he told me. Stories inform, educate and inspire. Storytelling is our best verbal tool to make a heart and mind connection with another person. It works for Google.

**Duncan:** Many speakers commit the crime of assault by PowerPoint. What do you recommend for visuals to reinforce a speech or presentation?

**Gallo:** I agree with you. Most PowerPoint presentations are an assault on the senses. PowerPoint is not the problem; the problem is the speaker. I've seen marvelous PowerPoint presentations. They're marvelous because they have more pictures than words. The neuroscience literature is clear on this—pictures are superior to text on a

slide if you want your audience to recall and act on your idea. Bullet points are the least effective way of transferring information.

I recommend an exercise that I call the “10-40 rule.” No more than 40 words in the first ten slides. I learned this trick after studying Steve Jobs for a book I wrote about his presentation skills. Most slides have 40 words per slide. Jobs didn’t reach 40 words until about 10 slides into his presentation. That approach forces you to think about a narrative—the story. It forces you to be more creative.

I also recommend experimenting with different tools. I use Apple Keynote when I have a lot of video because it incorporates video clips seamlessly. I use Prezi when I want to show the relationship between concepts (you can zoom in and out of the presentation and jump around instead being boxed into a linear template). Above all, replace words with pictures as much as possible.

**Duncan:** You use Pope Francis as an example of a speaker who effectively employs “the Rule of Three.” What exactly is that rule and how does it work?

**Gallo:** The rule of three is the most powerful concept in communication theory. It’s well established in the research that we can carry only about three or four points in short-term memory. Great writers have known this intuitively for centuries. Thomas Jefferson gave us three unalienable rights—not 18. In popular fables Goldilocks saw three bears,

“Storytelling is our best verbal tool to make a heart and mind connection with another person.

Scrooge saw three ghosts, the hungry wolf encountered three little pigs. You get the idea. Breaking things up into thirds is simply how our brains are wired to mentally categorize information.

Pope Francis has said he learned about the rule of three in seminary. Today, in every major speech and sermon, Francis delivers his ideas in groups of three. In business, give your customer

three benefits of the product. Give the hiring manager three reasons to hire you. Give your students three things to remember about the lecture. The rule of three. It’s simple and it works.

**Duncan:** What can we learn from watching TED talks? What common denominators of communication success should we look and listen for?

**Gallo:** TED Talks are the gold standard of public-speaking. There are TED-like elements that everyone should include in their presentations. First, tell more stories. In my research, I found that stories comprised 65% or more of some of the most popular TED talks. Second, don’t use bullet points on a slide. Ever. Third, practice more than you ever have.

I spoke to a scientist, Dr. Jill Bolte-Taylor, whose TED talk has been viewed 23 million times. She told me she practiced 400 times. When is the last time you practiced a presentation even 10 times? It’s like a champion athlete who visualizes the event for

hours or who practices thousands of three-foot putts. When the pressure is on, they rely on muscle memory and their training takes over. It's the same with presentations. The more you practice, the more comfortable you'll feel when the pressure is on.



### **Personal application:**

- Explain your big idea (for a product, process, or something else important to you) in a dozen words or fewer. What does that exercise tell you about the need for more clarity and precision in your thinking and in your communication?
- Watch five TED talks on a wide range of subjects. What common elements do you notice in the way the speakers deliver their messages? How can you use those observations in your own communication?
- In your next important communication, how can you effectively use the rule of three?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Dawn Graham**

## Suffering Career Doldrums? Be a Switcher



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

There once was a time far, far away, when people spent most, if not all, of their careers in a single organization.

That kind of professional journey is now as rare as typewriters in an Apple store.

A steady paycheck is nice, yet it's not enough for most people. They want intangibles like meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. But the workplace is falling short. A Forbes survey reported that more than 52% of Americans say they are "unhappy at work." Only 30% say they feel "engaged and inspired" by their work. Some studies report the number of dissatisfied workers as high as 80%.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, many of today's workers will hold more than ten different positions during their careers. In fact, the new normal is not only to switch job but to switch careers.

This growing trend is chronicled by Dr. Dawn Graham in *Switchers: How Smart Professionals Change Careers and Seize Success*. Career Director for the Wharton School's MBA Program for Executives, Graham has built a brand as the career coach for



some of the world's top business professionals. She also hosts a weekly show, Career Talk, on Sirius XM radio. Many of her callers ask questions about how to switch careers.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** You suggest that to be successful at being a Switcher, a person must operate under the four general mental themes of Responsibility, Reality, Risk, and Resilience. Why these four, and in what ways are they mutually reinforcing?

**Dawn Graham:** *Switchers* offers a clear roadmap on how to change careers, and I'm pretty forthcoming about the fact that these steps take courage and the right mindset to be effective. That's why I lay out these essential mental themes at the very start.

In an existence where we've come to enjoy one-click service and immediate gratification in many areas of life, I want to be clear that while a career switch is completely achievable, success hinges on what the job seeker brings to the table in terms of the 4 R's.

Responsibility is about being the absolute driver of the process. Reality is recognizing that the hiring process, like many things, is unfair. If you get sucked into trying to fight it, you'll get off course and your energy will be spent in something other than in service of your goal. Most changes involve risk, and the amount of risk for a Switcher will depend on how big of a change you're making. Lastly, you must be resilient. Rejection, mistakes, and failures pave the course when pursuing a lofty goal. When you expect these hurdles at the outset, you're better prepared to deal with them when they show up on the way to your switch.

**Duncan:** To what extent is a Switcher likely to enjoy more professional success than someone who adopts a low-risk, stay-in-place approach to career management?

**Graham:** That would depend on the definition of success. However, for those professionals who have a long runway of work ahead of them, "switching" is going to become the new normal.

At the speed of change today, it's likely automation, technology, globalization and other economic factors will lead to major changes in many functions and industries, so those who are able to adapt will be the most employable.

I recommend that all professionals continue to do three things to remain agile in their careers: (1) expand their skills (expertise has a shelf life), (2) build their brand (ensure your career story aligns with the changing market), and (3) create an evolving network (people who will go to bat for you), even if a planned change is not in the near future. This will create a foundation for mobility, and the statistics show that it's only a matter of time before you'll be in your next job search. Staying in place is actually the riskier move today because you lose your agility.



Dawn Graham

**Duncan:** What are some of the common job search killers that Switchers should avoid?

**Graham:** One of the biggest job switch killers for a career Switcher is trying to engage traditional job search methods such as applying online. I get it—this is seductive because you feel like you’re being productive by sending off multiple completed applications in minutes. However, Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS), programmed algorithms and a host of new technologies are standing between your resume and a human. As a Switcher, you likely don’t have the keywords, titles or specific credentials that a robot is looking for when assessing applications. This means you’re left eagerly awaiting an invitation to an interview that will never come.

This brings me to another common job switch killer, which is ignoring your network. Despite decades of consistent data showing how effective networking is in a job search, many still opt to engage less effective methods. Switchers don’t have this option since they will have a tough time getting past the HR technology that is designed to weed them out.

Your network is what will enable you to get past the hiring bias and get considered as a viable candidate. A trusted referral will give you a 1 in 3 shot of landing an interview. When applying online, the odds drop to 1 in 10. The truth is, hiring managers have a day job, and it’s not hiring. So, they dislike the search as much as candidates—it’s time-consuming and every day someone isn’t at the empty desk causes a loss. If a trusted contact refers someone to the role, this will be a lot more appealing to the hirer than sifting through 250 resumes of unknown candidates.

**Duncan:** When considering a job (or profession) change, how can a person best find the intersection of interest, expertise, and market?

**Graham:** Self-reflection is a lost art since we’re so distracted by our smartphones and other technology. However, this is a major aspect of being successful in a job search. You need to be crystal clear about your Plan A—which essentially is the intersection of your interests, expertise and the market—or others won’t take you seriously.

“Your network is what will enable you to get past the hiring bias and get considered as a viable candidate.

There are exercises in Switchers to help individuals figure this out, but my mantra is that clarity comes through action. You need to get out of your head and try things on to see if they fit. Talk to people. Join a team. Create a project. Hang out with professionals who do the work you’re targeting. Basically, immerse yourself in the world you want to be in. If you’re still unsure, hire a career coach. An objective professional can be an invaluable resource to

help you sift through the noise and clearly articulate your Plan A, which will positively impact your job search by helping you avoid wasted time flailing in ambiguity.

**Duncan:** What counsel can you offer an absentee Switcher—someone who voluntarily left the workforce for several years to raise a family, to follow a spouse’s career, or for

some other reason? What strategies can help this person revive—or create a new—career?

**Graham:** Due to how quickly things change, if you step out of the workforce for several years a great first step is assessing how the market has changed, how your interests have evolved, and where your strengths apply currently.

Nailing down a clear Plan A before you dust off your resumé and begin to network will enable you to look prepared, confident, and savvy. Depending on how long you've been absent and the strength of your network, this may be a challenging time to make a double-switch (e.g., changing both industry and function). So, if that's your goal, you may consider a steppingstone career where you re-enter a similar industry or function with the goal of switching after you've rebuilt your brand value and contacts.

Another option might be a boomerang career, where you return to a former employer. These can be a great place to start since you've previously built contacts and credibility there.

Lastly, an underutilized path is temp-to-perm or contract work. Usually there is much less competition and scrutiny when hiring for these roles, so it's a great way to get your foot in the door to re-launch your career.

**Duncan:** What role does personal “brand” play in a professional's career management? And how can the brand be best positioned in a specific job search?

**Graham:** Brand is critical, and we all have a brand, whether we're consciously building it or not. So, it's worth paying attention to.

“Nailing down a clear Plan A before you dust off your resumé and begin to network will enable you to look prepared, confident, and savvy.”

Your brand in a career search is essentially your reputation and what value you bring to an employer. And it determines a lot—who shares information with you, who associates with you, what projects you get selected for, how much you get paid, and if someone refers you for the job.

Switchers usually have a brand that's associated with their previous role, so it's critical to re-brand and start to identify with where you're going, not where you've been. For example, if you work on the

clinical side of pharma but would like to switch to the business side, leading with your biology PhD may hurt you. It's not what your audience wants to see. Your advanced degree might be a great differentiator when you make it to the final round of interviews, but initially it screams “I'm not what you're looking for.” Match first, stand out second—that's the magic formula for a Switcher. So, find those aspects in your background that most closely align with your target audience's needs, then present those first. It doesn't matter if these are from three jobs ago, or a volunteer role. Experience is experience and you have a short window to get the attention of the hirer. Match first, stand out second.

**Duncan:** There seems to be a myth that headhunters find jobs for people, when the reality is that search professionals find people for jobs that need to be filled. When searching for a new job, what's the best way to make yourself known—and attractive—to a headhunter?

**Graham:** If you're a Switcher, chances are headhunters won't be interested in you because they're looking for someone who has deep experience in a specific function and industry, which is the exact opposite of a Switcher.

Headhunters also fill far fewer roles annually than most people think—about 5% of all jobs available—and these are usually highly specialized or executive level roles. Headhunters are experts at using sites like LinkedIn, Google and other social media to find candidates who will be of interest to their well-paying clients. So, if you're interested in being found, you'll want to make sure you have a consistent, clear brand value across your social media platforms. And of course you need to be a match for a job opening they are trying to fill at the moment.

**Duncan:** How can a Switcher make best use of his or her network, and what's the best way to grow a helpful network over time?

**Graham:** A robust network is incredibly important for a Switcher, and may not be as hard to build as you might think. It does take time, investment and generosity to build relationships, so it's not an overnight process. But a healthy network is the cornerstone to any successful career.

The best place to start is with the people you know. Do they understand what you do (or want to do if you're switching)? And I'm not talking about your title or company name, but do those people in your life who care about your success—your family, neighbors, friends—know specifically what value you add to your customers or company? Probably not, which means you're missing an opportunity for them to make important introductions, relay interesting information they come across, and keep an eye out for opportunities.

One of the best ways to cultivate your network is to be curious. Often the best opportunities come from our second-level connections (the contacts of our friends, family, colleagues), and it takes only one conversation to open the door to an introduction that just might change everything.



### **Personal application:**

- What roadmap can you prepare for the possible (likely) event that you'll need to switch jobs—or even careers?
- What are you now doing to build a strong personal brand? If you're doing nothing, what plan can you develop?
- What steps are you taking to build a strong network—not just names of strangers on your social media platforms, but people who might be able and inclined to help you?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Ira Chaleff**

## How to Say ‘No’ Without Getting Fired



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Early in my career I worked for a prominent company on Wall Street. I was asked to engage in a practice that, although not illegal, I regarded as clearly unethical.

I pushed back by pointing out that I was successful in my work without using the questionable practice. While acknowledging that was true, my boss told me that in order to advance in the company I would need to teach the practice to others. I couldn't get him to see the disconnect: Why would I be willing to teach others a practice that I regarded as wrong?



We were at a stalemate. So, I quit. It was a scary time. I had a wife, a 2-year-old, a newborn baby, and no job. The good news is that this decision was a springboard to professional opportunities I'd never dreamed possible.

Not every situation like this has such a happy ending.

Executive coach Ira Chaleff offers some excellent counsel in his book *Intelligent Disobedience: Doing Right When You're Told to Do Wrong*.

Chaleff uses the metaphor of the guide dog. If a blind man inadvertently walks too close to the edge of a train platform, his guide dog will pull him decisively away from it. This is known as a "counter-pull." It might be a good term to use when a leader is about to step off the edge into unknown danger.

There are ways to say "no" without being insubordinate. In fact, smart leaders and smart followers adopt practices that enable honest conversations to navigate their relationships.

To explore some of those practices, I talked with Ira.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** What's the best way to say no to a directive you regard as wrong (dangerous, duplicitous, unlawful, immoral, etc.) without coming across as insubordinate?

**Ira Chaleff:** First, let me emphasize that not all orders to which we should say "no" are ethical matters. Often a senior executive will issue an order before having the full picture, not realizing that the order is incorrect for the current situation. It's the responsibility of those receiving the order to fill in the correct picture and save the executive from making an expensive or embarrassing mistake.

Regardless if the matter is ethical, operational, or a matter of public image, it can be difficult to get the executive to give it the attention it deserves. They are focused on priorities that have a large impact on the future of the company and resist distractions. This is why those around executives need to develop the art of getting their attention *before* trying to correct their information.



Ira Chaleff

You do this by linking the matter to what is already important to them. If shareholder value is their top concern you might say "There's something I need to inform you about that could impact shareholder value." Once you have their attention you can say why you should not do what was just ordered and present an alternative suggestion.



**Duncan:** How can a leader encourage intelligent disobedience without undermining the need for compliance and order in the workplace?

**Chaleff:** There is no dichotomy between intelligent disobedience and the need for compliance and order. The operative word is “intelligent.”

*Intelligent Disobedience* is the term used in training guide dogs for people who are blind. After the dog learns how to obey all the commands it needs to support the individual, it is taught how to disobey if obeying would result in harm to the team of human and dog. That is exactly what leaders need from their own teams. Leaders can inadvertently create a climate that does not encourage intelligent disobedience, in which case they put themselves and the organization at risk.

“Leaders can inadvertently create a climate that does not encourage intelligent disobedience.”

One strategy is for leaders to always present their ideas as first drafts instead of immutable orders and ask “Am I missing anything?” When team members answer this

question candidly the leader must resist the inclination to defend his or her draft. Instead, be genuinely curious. Ask follow-up questions to help build an understanding of what team members see that you don’t. This prevents issuing dangerous orders in the first place.

**Duncan:** How can parents and teachers use the principles of intelligent disobedience to help children protect themselves from people who might do them harm?

**Chaleff:** My research on the dangers of blind obedience took me into the way children are socialized in the educational system. There is tremendous emphasis in schools on having children know and obey the rules and do what they are told by teachers, administrators, coaches, etc. This programming then extends to all their relationships with authority. While abuse of these positions is rare, when it occurs it can be devastating.

The antidote is a little bit of age-appropriate practice in intelligent disobedience. Many parents already tell their kids not to get into cars with strangers. Extend this type of awareness to known authority figures. Set up a role play of what to do if the coach tells you to intentionally hurt the opposing team or if the camp counselor tells you to touch him in ways that make you uncomfortable. This is like doing fire drills even though you hope there is never a fire.

**Duncan:** What’s the key to maintaining an appropriate balance between respect for an authority figure and knowing when it’s time to disobey?

**Chaleff:** The key is to hold yourself accountable and never think it is okay to say “I was just following orders.” If what you are being told to do is likely to result in harm, it is your responsibility to speak up and, if necessary, to disobey. It may be difficult to do

this. It's often more difficult to live with the consequences of having followed a bad order.

**Duncan:** Many people have no particular problem identifying when an authority figure's directive violates their conscience. But then they don't know how to push back without jeopardizing the relationship. What's your advice?

**Chaleff:** Speaking up may jeopardize the relationship and you may need to do so anyway. There are a number of ways to speak up while minimizing the risk of causing damage. A key element is to find a time to speak without publicly embarrassing the authority and by being clear that you are not rejecting their authority, just the problematic order. If at all possible do this face to face where you can see and respond to reactions, which you cannot do in an email or text message.

There are a range of voices one should know and be able to move between. Often you can start with a diplomatic voice: "I see why you would ask that. Here's another way to achieve this with less risk." You also need to be able to use an assertive voice when warranted. "I can't support that as it poses ethical problems and significant risk to you and the company. Here is what I *can* do."



### **Personal application:**

- What are some of the "little compromises" in your workplace that deserve the attention of an honest and courageous person like you?
- What can you do to encourage others to practice "intelligent disobedience" when working with you?
- How can you hold yourself accountable to high standards in a way that other people will notice but will not cause you to come across as self-righteous?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Elizabeth B. Crook**

## Buck Your Barriers: Discover Your Yippee!



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Not everything French novelist Marcel Proust wrote was fiction. One of his observations could be the call to action for any 21st century resident seeking personal reinvention. He said, “the real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.”

Elizabeth B. Crook has made a career of helping people find their new eyes. As head of her own company called Orchard Advisors, Crook helps CEOs and entrepreneurs think and act strategically to grow their companies and enjoy greater personal satisfaction (also known as fun!).

She's shown countless people—Gen Yers to Boomers—how to invent and reinvent themselves. Crook holds degrees from Vanderbilt University and Tennessee State University. A mother and grand- mother, she lives on Music Row in Nashville. She's author of *Live Large: The Achiever's Guide to What's Next*.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** How did you begin your journey of helping people discover what they really want to do and be?

**Elizabeth B. Crook:** Really by accident. I was working, as I still do, as a business strategist with entrepreneurs and business owners. People frequently called saying, someone told me you are great at helping folks figure things out. Can you help me? I began with an interview so I could understand who they were and what they wanted. Then, depending on their goals, we moved on from there. After working like that with a number of people, I realized three things:

- I was skilled and effective in helping people.
- I loved the feeling of giving people fresh perceptions and possibilities.
- I had actually developed tools and processes that allowed people to get amazing results!

**Duncan:** A lot of people feel trapped in their work. They're either bored silly or they're just putting in time. What advice can you give them?

**Crook:** The first advice is get curious.

- Look at the activities you do at work—write each one on a Post-It note.
- Sort them. Which ones energize and which ones leave you feeling drained?
- Is there a theme or pattern? Take note.
- Identify which activities you could delegate or streamline.
- Identify how what energizes *you* adds value to your company—and be specific—increases customer retention, reduces accidents, reduces turnaround time, reduces waste, increases productivity etc.
- Schedule a meeting with your boss to talk about how you can add more value.  
Hint: you will be adding more value if you are doing something you care about.

**Duncan:** What are the two or three most common barriers that hold people back from discovering their own Yippee?

**Crook:** The single most common barrier people have are their own beliefs—which may or may not be true! Just because people believed the earth was flat didn't make it so!

Your beliefs may have been true at one point in your life but no longer. You may not have been good at math, or there was a sneaky kid in your neighborhood, or you did experience discrimination. This doesn't mean that's still true now.

Yet if I believe it's risky to trust others, then I avoid connecting which will limit my opportunities for new assignments or promotions. This only re-enforces my belief.

If I believe my gender, race, or education level is a barrier that can't be overcome, then I may not even try. Without trying, the barrier that existed in the past or in my mind becomes real.

**Duncan:** What advice can you give leaders for creating a Yippee-friendly work environment?

**Crook:** Marcus Buckingham, the author of *First Break All the Rules* and a host of other books, says focus on your strengths—those things that make you feel stronger or energized. As a leader, know what gets your people jazzed and juiced, then find a way for them to do more of that. They will bring more passion, extra effort, and value to your company.

**Duncan:** As you coach people to perform at the next level, how do you help them discover and cultivate gifts they didn't even know they had?

**Crook:** *No pain, no gain!* How many times have we heard that in our lives? It's true about some things like losing weight and saving money—two of the most popular New Year's resolutions. But it's not true for everything. Yet the prevalence of this thinking can make us blind to our own gifts and talents.

We come to believe that unless something is hard, it's not valuable. The truth is when we are using our talents and gifts it feels easy. We tell ourselves that what's easy for us couldn't possibly be valuable. But it is!

At a family gathering I met a cousin, a neuro linguistic researcher, who has spent significant time overseas including China and Saudi Arabia. As she told several of us about the patterns of cancer and other conditions spanning multiple generations, I asked how she was able to figure all this out? She shrugged and replied, "It really wasn't very hard".



Elizabeth B. Crook

Of course it wasn't hard for *her*, because she has a gift of seeing patterns and she can apply that in many fields from language to health!

In order to find your talents and gifts, make a list of the things you know how to do—for example persuade people, organize a project, research a topic, write a report or a story,



coordinate an event, see the big picture, take care of the details. Then ask yourself, which of these are energizing for you. In other words, you enjoy doing them.

Our gifts are found at the intersection of what energizes us and what we know how to do. Hint: it's probably something you've been doing in one way or another all your life!

**Duncan:** Your father, a pediatrician, reinvented himself as a successful author when he was in his seventies. What did that teach you about self-discovery?

**Crook:** In my mid-forties, working in a fast-growth software company, I realized I wanted to make a change. But to what? How could I change direction at that point? Wasn't that something only younger people could do? Then I remembered my father.

“ Our gifts are found at the intersection of what energizes us and what we know how to do.

He was an energetic and beloved pediatrician in my hometown, driven by a desire to help people, especially children, be healthy. That purpose informed everything he did, from opening an innovative clinic, to writing a national health column, to speaking at conferences all over the country and abroad.

As he got older, he wanted to write about health topics that were not getting addressed. Over the course of years he wrote and published more than a dozen books that changed people's lives. Thirty years later people still tell me my father's books

saved their lives and his books still sell!

His purpose was the same; he was merely expressing it in a different form. Plus, he was in his seventies and still going strong doing what he loved.

My 40-something self realized I had plenty of time. And so do you!

Regardless of your age and life stage, your deep purpose and gifts will point you in the direction of all sorts of possibilities for re-discovery.

**Duncan:** You talk about the “Triple J” of limiting beliefs and negative self-talk. What is that, and what effect does it have on personal growth? What's the prescription for overcoming it?

**Crook:** That would be too risky. You're not experienced enough to take that on. What makes you think they would hire you? Don't even try.

We all have a voice in our head that discourages us, puts us down, scares us or makes us believe we can't be or do all that we can. I call that voice the Triple J—Jury, Judge and Jailer. It passes judgment, sentences us to be less than we are, then locks us up.

The voice expresses the limiting beliefs we have about ourselves and the world. The voice may be the voice of a parent, teacher, coach or someone who was perhaps just trying to protect us from disappointment or even danger when we were young. Or it could be the voice of someone who was threatened by our success. What the voice ignores is that we are competent, responsible adults able to make our own assessments and decisions. But the voice makes us doubt that truth.

So how do we stop the Triple J from “locking us up” and preventing us from achieving our goals? First take a breath and become aware of what the voice is saying—even write it down. It helps to know your enemy. Then start asking yourself questions like these—

1. What am I trying to accomplish? or What do I want to happen?
2. What am I afraid of? Getting clear about this may help you see what’s really holding you back. Sometimes it’s fear of failure, being embarrassed, or having to face you’re not perfect.
3. What resources/support both internal and external do I have?
4. Am I willing to face my fears?
5. What would my wisest inner self say? Listen to *that* voice.
6. Then go forth and do!

**Duncan:** As people progress in their careers they sometimes lose enthusiasm for their work. How can they rekindle interest in their previous “Why” or discover a new “Why” that brings fresh exhilaration to their lives?

**Crook:** As our lives and careers evolve we may find ourselves losing the interest and drive in our work that once fueled us. As the saying goes, our get up and go got up and went.

What to do? Discovering or rediscovering our “Why” or purpose is an important first step and it’s easier than we think.

Try this. On one side of a sheet write all those jobs or assignments you enjoyed or found fulfilling in some way. Remember this can include volunteer or unpaid work. Opposite each one write why it was satisfying.

When you’ve finished, look at the Whys running down the page. What are the words or ideas you see repeated?

There may be several words that repeat. A clear statement may emerge or words that hold meaning for you. There is no one right way.

Once you know your purpose, you can use it to guide you to where you can fulfill that purpose and use your gifts and talents while you do so. Now *that* is exhilarating.





### **Personal application:**

- What are the things you're most curious about? Is there a theme or pattern in that list from which you can draw conclusions about possible changes in your life?
- What's at the intersection of what energizes you and what you already know how to do?
- Is there a "Triple J" operating in your life? If so, what can you do about it? What will you do about it?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Jon Acuff**

## Don't Quit Your Day Job: Secrets to Finding Work You Really Love



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Let's face it. Most adults spend the vast majority of their non-sleeping time at work. Not with their loved ones. Not with their hobbies. Not at the beach building sandcastles. At work.

So, doesn't it make sense to find work that is truly satisfying?

Jon Acuff, one of today's most compelling voices in the personal development arena, has some good ideas for you. He's the author of two bestselling books on the subjects of work and jobs. His first was *Quitter: Closing the Gap Between Your Day Job & Your Dream Job*. Then came *START: Punch Fear in the Face, Escape Average, Do Work That Matters*. And many others.

Let's see if Jon's advice can help in *your* journey to a work life that's more satisfying than ever.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** In previous generations, people often stayed with the same job their entire careers. Today, it's not uncommon to see a brainiac high performer change jobs every three to five years. What are the key differences between a serial quitter and someone who frequently changes jobs for genuinely good reasons?

**Jon Acuff:** I think the key difference can be clearly seen by looking at two things: attitude and relationships. The times I was a serial quitter, I ended up getting bitter at the job I was currently at. I didn't jump to a better opportunity, I escaped from what I thought was a bad one. At other times, my jump wasn't driven by my ego or my frustration. It was driven by genuinely good reasons, as you mention, and that made all the difference.



Jon Acuff

So, I tell people: If you're thinking of jumping right now, I dare you to look at your attitude before you do. The second aspect of a good jump versus a serial jump, which sounds like it involves Lucky Charms, is the state of the relationships you leave behind. It's common for there to be hurt feelings whenever you leave a job. That's natural, but did you burn bridges? Is it impossible to ever work with whole groups of people again? Serial quitters tend to leave smoldering bridges behind them.

**Duncan:** In assessing what may be a person's "dream job," you recommend using a Magnifying Glass, a Kaleidoscope, and a Telescope. What does that mean?

**Acuff:** I recommend that you focus on the telescope approach. Most of the times when we think about jumping to a dream job, we look through a magnifying glass or a kaleidoscope.

The magnifying glass blows all our fears up out of proportion as we obsess over worse case scenarios that might never come to fruition.

The kaleidoscope throws all your fears together in a jumbled mess. It's not just about changing jobs, it's about your identity, self-worth and entire life.

With a telescope, though, you can see the concerns from a distance. You don't ignore them. You view them for what they are, far off possibilities, and then you plan for them accordingly.

**Duncan:** You advise people to “fall in like” with the job they don't love. How does that help move you closer to a job that you do indeed love?

**Acuff:** People who are miserable all week have a hard time hustling on the weekend. If you're going to spend 40-50 hours a week doing a job, you set yourself up for failure if you refuse to make it as good as it can be while you're there. It's not about falling in love with it. It might always be a job you only like. That's okay, but don't accept “misery” as the only option you have until you find your dream job.

Sometimes, changing your attitude and expectations about your current job can even help you see there might be a dream job hidden at the company you're already at.

**Duncan:** For most people, there's a gap between good intentions and actual performance. What are some behaviors that help close the gap?

**Acuff:** Get up early. Watch less TV. Put in the work. The list of possible behaviors is long, but the more time I spend helping people the more I realize one of the biggest keys is having strong relationships.

We need people who will encourage us and challenge us. Fear always tries to put you on an island, as if you're the only one hustling on a certain situation. That's simply not true. Find a friend and be brave enough to be honest that there's a gap between your intentions and your performance. We're not meant to chase dreams alone.

“Don't accept  
'misery' as the  
only option you  
have until you  
find your dream  
job.”

**Duncan:** It's possible that a lot of people reading this conversation will demonstrate symptoms of the Yeah-but Syndrome—as in, “Yeah, but that advice doesn't apply to me” or “Yeah, but my situation really is different.” What dose of reality can you prescribe?

**Acuff:** Those are both fantastic excuses to stay stuck. If none of this advice applies to you, find some advice that does. There are a lot of authors like me writing about this topic. Find one you connect with more.

Just don't be like the young college graduate I met. I asked her, “Who is doing the kind of dream job you'd like to do someday? Who can you learn from?” She said, “No one is doing what I want to do.” I immediately thought, “Sure, you went zero for 6 billion. There's not another human alive who you can learn from.” I don't think every bit of advice fits every situation, but I promise there's someone out there who has some you can apply to your career.



### **Personal application:**

- If you're thinking of changing jobs, what careful analysis have you applied to your motives? Are you sure you're not about to burn some bridges?
- How can you use the idea of a magnifying glass, a kaleidoscope, and a telescope in honestly assessing your thinking about a different job?
- If you don't love your current job, what can you do to "fall in like" with it? What could be the advantage of that?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Julia Tang Peters**

## Which Pivotal Decisions Can Make (Or Break) Your Career?



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Leadership, it's been said, is the capacity to translate vision into reality.

Of course, that assumes a willingness to make decisions. Not just any decisions, but the kind that make a positive and lasting difference.

Leadership consultant and coach Julia Tang Peters has made a career of studying such decisions. Her clients range from global corporations to entrepreneurial companies. In



her practice, she doesn't focus only on "the management stuff," although her degree from the Kellogg School of Management and decades in business certainly qualify her to do so. She focuses on what makes leaders "tick," informed by her background in clinical psychology. In particular, she focuses on specific behaviors that produce successful leadership.

Julia's book is called *Pivot Points: Five Decisions Every Successful Leader Must Make*. I am intrigued by her approach. So, here's a conversation that should interest anyone who appreciates leadership and/or is looking for some solid tips on career advancement.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** What led you to write this book on leadership and careers?

**Julia Tang Peters:** In my work with senior executives, I find that most executives want ideas for how they can be better leaders. But they don't want trendy formulaic approaches that ignore nuances unique to each company, culture, situation, and personality. Seeing the need for a different approach to leadership, I sought out industry-changing leaders, proven but without the swagger of self-importance. Then I had probing conversations with them about how they did what they did.

What I've learned from these leaders is that leadership is about making decisions to change the story—changing the course of events from how it will likely go if you don't take bold action, and having a vision for *how you want the story to go if you took bold action*. And there are five pivot points on the leader's journey. That means five opportunities where you make the story instead of the story making you.

**Duncan:** You talk about "pivot points." What are they?

**Peters:** Pivot points are the decision points when you can change your story. I don't mean changing how you tell your story. I mean changing the actual story. The term "pivot points" has several meanings, and all apply to how you can change the course of events and your career.

First, pivot points is a term used in financial analysis that calculates levels of support and resistance that are often turning points for the direction of the price of a stock, up or down. These leaders instinctively assess levels of support and resistance and recognize a pivot point.

Second, in basketball, pivoting is the foot action when holding the ball that enables you to scan the court and decide your next move. In this sense, pivot points focus your attention on what's going on and your next game-changing move.



Julia Tang Peters



Third, entrepreneurs talk about pivoting as experimenting to learn what works and doesn't work. It's about being flexible and agile in order to make course corrections. My book offers a roadmap for that evolutionary process that is a journey of learning about what works and what doesn't for you, your leadership effectiveness, your career, and your business.

Ultimately, pivot points help you focus on the things that really matter.

Whether a leader is made or born, whichever you believe, we see how leaders evolve, one pivotal decision at a time. Five pivotal decisions, each building on the previous, together determine the career trajectory and define achievements.

**Duncan:** How do we know when we're at a pivot point?

**Peters:** At times in your career you realize, "This is not going the way I expect or want." And sometimes the situation is in your favor and you say, "This is a good time to make this risky move while we have momentum." Either way, you believe it's time to do something that changes the status quo. You're gripped by the need to change how the story goes from here.

Here are some examples. Bud Frankel turned his boss's rejection of his idea into an industry-changing marketing company. Or, it can be a sea change in your market niche, like for John Rogers who heeded the wake-up call and built a leadership team that took Ariel Investments to new heights. Or, it can be a merger gone awry, like for Al Golin who turned a culture clash into a clear strategy for building a global communications and public relations firm. It can be a volatile stock market, like for Glen Tullman who turned a devastated business into a healthcare leader. Or, it can be a personal need for renewal, like for Dale Dawson who turned a loss of passion for his successful financial career into a personal renaissance.

You see the pattern here: successful leaders make pivotal decisions that change their story. Pivot points as triggering events can be career building or career stalling—it's what you do with it, or more accurately, what decision you make and how you go about making your decision.

“Successful leaders make pivotal decisions that change their story.

**Duncan:** What are the five pivotal decisions every successful leader must make?

**Peters:** The five pivotal decisions are really about the five questions everyone should ask about their work and career. These decisions stand out because by making them, you are holding yourself accountable for what matters to you. Because of that, pivot decisions can unleash a surprising

reserve of energy and leadership potential and end up producing outcomes exceeding your goals.

Here are the five:

1. The **launching** decision makes a commitment to master a subject and do more than your job. So, every young person needs to ask, “What do I want to be great at that is worth the commitment of massive amounts of my time and energy?”
2. The **turning point** decision acts on an important opportunity or problem that creates a bold new direction. The question here is, “What problem do you want to solve, or condition do you want to improve that gives you the verve to pass this test?”
3. The **tipping point** decision, involving significant risk, breaks through a fundamental barrier. Ask yourself, “What fundamental barrier stands between me and a tip- ping point, which I want to break through to get to the next level?”
4. The **re-commitment** decision focuses on purpose-driven leadership and sharpens the vision, moving the goal posts further out. Everyone after about 20 or 25 years of work asks, “What’s next? Do I keep at this, and if so, what do I want to accomplish? If not, how do I need to recommit to myself?”
5. The **letting go** decision facilitates new sustainable leadership, and moving on. There comes the time when we all need to ask, “How do I both leave a legacy and personally move on?”

In working with clients, I have found that this five-pivotal-decisions framework inspires a whole new perspective and offers hope—hope to thrive, rather than just survive, the inevitable ups and downs. It offers hope in the belief that you can change the story.

**Duncan:** Is there any empirical basis for this five-pivot-points model?

**Peters:** Yes, I conducted a study of 500 college-educated people in professional careers. The study validates pivot points as a common experience. It also shows that certain decision-making behaviors make decisions that are leader building and other behaviors make decisions that are career stalling. My book identifies the decision-making behaviors that produced successful and unsuccessful experiences, and the career stages when people need the most help.

**Duncan:** You write about five industry-changing leaders. Why did you pick the five in your book?

**Peters:** I handpicked people who are focused on getting the job done rather than on their own fame and fortune. They offer a great deal of insights about the leadership journey that cuts across all industries. At the same time, no matter which industry you are in, everyone will learn from Bud Frankel about marketing, Al Golin about public relations, John Rogers about stock investing, Dale Dawson about investment banking as well as nonprofits, and Glen Tullman about healthcare.

**Duncan:** You say leaders continually recreate their jobs. What do you mean?

**Peters:** Pivotal decisions define what you hold yourself accountable for and what others should look to you for and what they should not look to you for. Ultimately, pivot points help us lead our career and life—whether it’s your business, career, or relationships. My book offers a framework to stimulate and inspire, and respects that it’s your life and your story to make and tell.



### **Personal application:**

- Which pivot point decisions have you made that had a positive impact on your career?
- Which pivot point decisions do you need to make? What’s holding you back?
- How could paying more attention to opportunities for pivot point decisions help you keep your career on the path you want?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Arthur Brooks**

## Build Strong Relationships: Learn to Disagree *Better*



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Our current environment is sometimes touted as the age of tolerance. Consider how many company rosters now include positions like “VP of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.”

But the reality signals something else.

Each Thanksgiving, the Internet is abuzz with advice on how to avoid letting dinner table discussions devolve into a Turkey Day brawl. Thousands (millions?) of people

report abandoning social media because they can't stomach the vitriol. Universities are "uninviting" speakers whose views might offend the fainthearted.

Our politics, which once had at least a modicum of respect and consensus, has become a ritualized cycle of outrage and denunciation. Running for office seems to be more of a performance art than an exchange of ideas.

But there's hope. Occasionally we can find a voice of reason.

I found one such voice in Arthur C. Brooks. He's former president of the American Enterprise Institute and author of *Love Your Enemies: How Decent People Can Save America from the Culture of Contempt*.

Arthur doesn't suggest that people stop disagreeing with each other. He simply offers excellent advice on how to disagree *better*.

It's advice that's relevant at home, at work, and in the public square

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** Research shows that insults actually intensify people's opposition to contrary viewpoints. So why are insults so common in our public discourse?

**Arthur C. Brooks:** It's certainly strange to see something so obviously counterproductive play a leading role in American public life, but our habit of insulting others is driven by two fairly straightforward factors.



Arthur Brooks

The first is that this kind of behavior is modeled by public figures in many different arenas, which together comprise what I refer to as the "outrage industrial complex." People have a tendency to imitate the behaviors of their leaders, which we are doing in this case to clearly destructive ends.

Less frequently acknowledged is our own role in driving up demand for this kind of leadership. Acrimonious and pugilistic figures dominate the airwaves because we give them our time and attention—a genuinely bad habit we should break by putting the outrage industrial complex on mute.

**Duncan:** Why has our society become so incompetent at listening?

**Brooks:** We're terrible at listening because of the culture of contempt that has developed in recent years. Rather than seeing our opponents as merely incorrect in their views (but perhaps worth trying to persuade), we now mostly view them as worthless, undeserving of any consideration.

With this kind of attitude, why would you listen to someone on the “other side”? And so the contempt we have for others has caused us to fall out of practice when it comes to listening.

Given the state of our culture, recovering an ability to listen will require that we reject the notion that our fellow citizens have no value as people, even if their *ideas* might merit scorn.

**Duncan:** You quote an old African proverb that says, “When elephants fight, it’s the grass that suffers.” How does the pandemic of contempt in political matters affect the workplace?

**Brooks:** When the loudest voices foment a culture of contempt, it bleeds into all areas of life. Because it’s now so common to hear that *we* are right while *they* are stupid and evil, it can feel as though even our places of work must be turned into battlegrounds. So rather than focus on building a good product or serving the customers in our communities, our professional interactions have become consumed by national politics.

But placing Washington at the center of everything leads to serious breakdowns in trust, cooperation, and creativity—a clear consequence of the broader culture of contempt.

**Duncan:** What can business leaders do to help their people deal productively with their disagreements?

**Brooks:** The first thing business leaders can do is promote disagreement!

In our culture today, we far too readily assume that conflict and disagreement are harmful for us, emotionally and even physically. They’re not, of course. A competition of ideas improves outcomes, builds resiliency, and sharpens our thinking. But disagreement must be facilitated in the right way, with a spirit of warm-heartedness and an eye toward mutually shared ends. Leaders should take it upon themselves to encourage this kind of disagreement.

“When the loudest voices foment a culture of contempt, it bleeds into all areas of life.

**Duncan:** One of my favorite lines from Harper Lee’s iconic *To Kill a Mockingbird* is when Atticus Finch delivers a dose of paternal wisdom to his young daughter: “If you just learn a single trick, Scout, you’ll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.” Atticus wasn’t suggesting sympathy, which connotes agreement. He was talking about empathy, which is about understanding. I sometimes ask myself “Where’s Atticus Finch when we need him?”

But of course we can reach back even further for help. What can we learn from Aristotle about the relationships between friendship and disagreement?



**Brooks:** Aristotle understood that disagreement wasn't something to avoid in our relationships. Indeed, the highest form of friendship for Aristotle was one based on shared virtue, not utility or pleasure. So, if healthy disagreement can bring our understanding of virtue into greater focus, it plays a critical role in cultivating friendship in its highest form.

**Duncan:** How can disagreement actually strengthen a friendship?

**Brooks:** Disagreement for its own sake is not inherently valuable. It must be directed toward some greater end. If we build consensus with others about shared moral ends—say, increasing opportunity for those at the margins of society—our friendships are strengthened through our disagreements about how to accomplish our shared objectives.

By testing our ideas with our friends and asking for their points of view, we are able to come to a better understanding of the best ways to achieve common moral ends, and come closer together in virtue, the chief end of friendship.

**Duncan:** You advise people to use their values as a gift, not as a weapon. In the workplace, what would that look like in terms of observable behaviors?

**Brooks:** If you have a significant point of disagreement with a colleague (e.g. he regularly goes out of his way to criticize coworkers), there are usually two ways you can go about addressing the issue.

“Disagreement for its own sake is not inherently valuable. It must be directed toward some greater end.

The first is to tell your colleague he is a moral reprobate or an idiot for treating others as he does. The second is to be a model of the kindness you'd want him to express, and share how offering encouragement or more constructive feedback has helped you achieve better outcomes in the workplace.

The latter example uses your value of kindness as a gift—something special and worth emulating—while the former weaponizes the value of kindness, making it less attractive to others.

**Duncan:** You strongly believe that love is a verb—that love, the feeling, is a fruit of love, the verb. How can that philosophy be put to good use in the workplace—or in any other relationships?

**Brooks:** We allow far too many of our actions to be governed by our feelings when, in fact, most research shows that this relationship works in the opposite direction.

So, do you want better friendships with your colleagues (even the ones who don't vote like you)? A happier workplace? More love in your life?

The answer isn't to allow your contempt for other people to dictate the way you treat them. Instead, take proactive steps to be a kinder, more loving person, even when you don't feel like it. A great many studies show that this makes us not only more successful at the office, but happier as people.

**Duncan:** "Escape the bubble" is something you recommend. Please explain, and tell us about the benefits of that.

**Brooks:** Many of us live in intellectual silos, "friending" and following only the people and sources we already agree with. While it's comforting to hear that you're right all of the time, it skews our perspectives in a dangerous way, first by keeping our own ideas safe from any challenge and second by allowing perceptions of our political opponents to be shaped by caricatures of the people with whom we disagree, not the people themselves. In this way, we live in a dangerous unreality, which is why escaping the bubble is so important.

What does escaping the bubble look like? If you read the *New York Times*, pick up the *Wall Street Journal's* op-ed page every now and then. If you listen only to conservative talk radio, try NPR's Morning Edition once a week. Or better yet, befriend someone who doesn't vote like you. When we escape the bubble, it humanizes those we would otherwise view and treat with contempt.

**Duncan:** What do you regard as the most helpful three or four "rules" for maintaining healthful relationships with people of opposing viewpoints?

**Brooks:** My first rule comes from the renowned psychologist and marriage counselor John Gottman, who established what he calls the "5 to 1 rule": for every negative or critical thing you say about your partner (or friend in this case), offer five positive or encouraging re- marks. Adhering to this rule makes a world of difference when we talk to those with whom we disagree.

The second rule is not to insult or assign ulterior motives to people who disagree with us. We all have unique stories that have brought us to our current beliefs, and by assuming the worst of others, or directly insulting them, you will almost always preclude the possibility of persuading them to see an issue as you do. No one has ever been insulted into agreement.

The third rule is to start with your *why* rather than your *what*. Most people who disagree talk about specific policy beliefs ("Increase the minimum wage!") rather than the principles that motivate those policy beliefs ("We should enact policies that make work pay, especially for the poorest Americans."). But by starting with your *why*, you can establish common cause with those who might have a different *what*, but are willing to hear you out because they know you want to achieve the same things. It's the common *why* that allows us to disagree better with others rather than disagree less.

**Duncan:** You equate thoughtful listening with missionary work. How can that analogy help someone exchange contempt for respect and even appreciation and love?

**Brooks:** When it comes to serious political disagreements, I'll often ask people what their goal is with respect to those on the other side of an issue. Do you want to exile them? Jail them? Silence them? Almost everyone says, "No, of course not!" Most people say they just want their ideological opponents to think and behave differently—the goal of many missionaries.

So how do you win people over? Not by pouring scorn on those who think differently, but by expressing your own values with love and kindness. This is what missionaries do, and it will make you a magnetic force for your side of an argument. So, in addition to being the morally right thing to do, listening and responding in a spirit of love ends up being the most pragmatic way to bring people to your side.



### **Personal application:**

- Which of the ideas from Arthur Brooks was the greatest challenge to your own thinking? What will you do now?
- What disagreement do you currently have that could most benefit from the approaches suggested here? What will you do now?
- How could the “missionary approach” be helpful to you in dealing with people who have perspectives different from yours?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Sarah McArthur**

## Isn't It Time to Love Your Work?



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

My grandfather, one of my first heroes, was an uncomplicated man. He had very sparse formal education, but he was gifted with other kinds of smarts that I always admired.

For one thing, he had a strong work ethic. To the very day he died he had a constant list of projects. When other people might have thought their chores were finished, Granddad could always find something that needed to be fixed, cleaned, tuned, tightened, moved, painted, or otherwise improved. He loved work and he loved people. Most of all, in his quiet and unassuming way, he loved serving.

In my own career I've worked with and observed thousands of people from the boardroom to the factory floor, from the White House to the small office with no window. The most effective—and happiest—people I've known labored with a sense of purpose in the causes they've served.

That's the theme of *Work Is Love Made Visible*, a collection of essays about the power of discovering your purpose.

This fine book, featuring nearly three dozen essays by today's top thinkers and writers, addresses a range of subjects that are critical to people wanting to be happy with what they have while working for what they want.

The book was shepherded by leadership legend Marshall Goldsmith, Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient Frances Hesselbein, and leadership coach and author Sarah McArthur. I spoke with Sarah about the project and some of the key takeaways.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** You've asked some of today's top thought leaders to reflect on the question: "What is it you see when you look out the window that is visible but not yet seen by others?" What do you believe is so compelling about that question? typically evoke in people?

**Sarah McArthur:** The fascinating story behind this question is that it's based on an answer that the "founder of modern management," renowned teacher, writer, and "guru" Peter Drucker, gave during an interview with *Businessweek* magazine. The interviewer asked Peter to explain his uncanny ability to describe the future of management. Peter's response was, "I never predict. I just look out the window and see what's visible—but not yet seen."



Sarah McArthur

Frances Hesselbein, who Peter said is the greatest leader he had ever known, re-phrased Peter's statement as a question, which she often asks casually in conversations over lunch. It's not a casual question though! This question invites us to examine our view of the world and formulate it into a purpose, a call to service, an area on which we concentrate that only we see and which we feel compelled to share with others.

I find that most people are at first stumped, even a little shocked by the question as it causes us to reflect deeply on what really matters to us and what we want to share with the world. Personally, I found this question so fascinating that I wanted to hear the answers of some of the world's great thought leaders think and I wanted to share those answers with readers.

**Duncan:** The title of your book—Work Is Love Made Visible—may run counter to the mindset of many of today’s success-at-all-cost business people. How do you clarify the role of “love” in the modern workplace?

**McArthur:** The full quote from which the title of the book is taken is from Kahlil Gibran, and it is: “Work is love made visible. And if you can’t work with love, but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of the people who work with joy.”

This is our hope, that by finding our purpose, we can abandon the mindset that we “have to” and go to work with love as a “get to.” Because when we love what we do, no matter how difficult things get or how successful we are, our days are filled with the joy of doing what matters most to us. And that is a truly amazing feeling!

**Duncan:** Alan Mulally, former CEO of Boeing and Ford, says one of the life lessons he learned from his parents is “It’s nice to be important, but more important to be nice.” What do you think would be the result if more leaders adopted—and practiced—that principle?

**McArthur:** Alan Mulally is such a fantastic leader, a great role model, and a marvelous person. In his foreword, he shares that as a young man with his very first job he became acutely aware of the power and advantages of “working together” with all the stakeholders. He says, “I looked at each ‘work’ as service and I loved serving! I loved asking my customers what they wanted and valued the appreciative smiles on their faces for my service. I loved learning and growing and exceeding their expectations!”

My favorite among Alan’s working together principles is “love and be loved, in that order.” When we adopt such principles and live by them, everything changes. Our work, relationships, and outlook go from being centered in “self” and getting (or not getting) what we want to being centered in “we” and working together for the greater good. Focusing on being important is never satisfying, focusing on being nice reaps such wonderful rewards in goodwill that once you start you won’t want to stop!

**Duncan:** Frances Hesselbein says leadership is a matter of how to be, not how to do. What are the observable behaviors of “how to be” leaders? And what advantages do these behaviors provide over “how to do” leaders?

“Focusing on being important is never satisfying.

**McArthur:** Leadership is not about title or destination. It’s about our character. Good leaders have strong characters. Rather than focus on getting things done, great leaders focus on how to *be*.

For instance, Alan Mulally led Boeing and Ford with his working together principles. These principles have little to do with how to do specific tasks or accomplish the bottom line. They have everything to do with how to be. “To serve is to live” and “People First,” for instance, are about how to be so we can work together to make the most positive contribution to the most people. “How to do” leaders



may get things done in the short term, but without a clear focus on how to be, the result is often fleeting.

**Duncan:** Like Pavlov's dog, many people seem easily seduced by things that feel urgent rather than by less exciting things that have longer-term impact and value. How can people learn to identify—and then focus on—what is truly most important to the goals they profess to treasure?

**McArthur:** When we answer the question posed by Frances, “What do you see when you look out the window that is visible but not yet seen by others?” we identify what is truly most important to us. Then we have found our call to service, our purpose. Our answer is our gift to the world. It's what we see that we can help others to understand if we stay focused.

Staying focused can be difficult because “urgency” is such an easy trap to fall into. Today, we are faced with the astounding speed of communication technology which is, in fact, exponential. With that, what was important two minutes ago may not be important two minutes from now. For instance, that “urgent” email in your inbox at 10 AM will likely be buried with other “urgent” emails by 10:15 AM.

Reminding ourselves of our purpose every day, doing as Alan Mulally did and printing our purpose and our principles on a card for our wallets, and choosing to work together at every turn are some things that can help us stay focused on the goals that are truly most important to us.

**Duncan:** Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. famously said, “I wouldn't give a fig for simplicity this side of complexity, but I would give my life for the simplicity on the other side of complexity.” How can a simplicity-oriented approach be helpful in coaching and mentoring others?

“ ‘Urgency’ is  
such an easy  
trap to fall into.

**McArthur:** Anyone who has ever met or learned from Marshall Goldsmith will likely tell you that what he teaches is so simple to understand, yet so hard to do. He will even tell you that himself!

Marshall is the master at simple and it comes across in his writings, teaching, and coaching. He learned from Alan Mulally to accept that he is not an expert at everything and it's okay. For example, Marshall was once asked if he could be a coach to a medical doctor. Marshall asked the board member who was looking into coaching what the medical doctor's challenge was. The board member said, “the doctor is not up to date on the latest medical practices.” Marshall said, “neither am I!” and declined that opportunity to coach.

Keeping it simple, focusing on what we know, on what we see out the window, is how we can be most helpful in coaching and mentoring others. If I try to help you with something that I know nothing about, the chances of my advice leading you down a bad

path is great. If I coach you in something that I know and understand well, the chances are that my coaching will help you—and that is what we want!

**Duncan:** How does a sense of “belonging” affect organizational culture and performance?

**McArthur:** Bestselling author, coach, and advisor Mark Thompson shares with us a story about Charles Schwab. Schwab was nearly thrown out of college because he had difficulty reading and writing. He later discovered this was the result of dyslexia. What his reading disability taught him was how to recruit a talented, trustworthy team of supporters. He learned that nobody does it alone.

Another example of the power of “belonging” and its effect on organizational culture and performance comes from Garry Ridge, CEO of WD-40 Company. Garry shares with us that truly inspiring transformative leadership “requires the wisdom to understand that the overarching role of business is to serve people. To give them what they need to do their jobs ... to even ease their loneliness and isolation.”

This sense of belonging is at the core of employee engagement. The benefits are two-fold: for the employee, it can lead to greater self-esteem, personal purpose, and emotional healing. For the company it’s the path to improved business performance. Says Garry, in summing up the sense of “belonging” everyone feels at WD-40, this is “the workplace gift to individuals as they seek the personally restorative, healing, growing benefits of simply showing up every day to rejoin their tribe in the mission of getting the job done. This is the gift of belonging.”



### **Personal application:**

- What “love” do you find in your work? If it’s not immediately obvious, what can you find in your daily tasks that clearly link to the things you value most?
- What can you do to help other people in your environment “catch the vision” of discovering love in their work?
- How can you simplify your work in ways that make it both more effective and more personally meaningful?