

Volume

2

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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Published in the United States by Maxwell Stone Publishing, dba Duncan Worldwide.

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Exclusive conversation with
Victoria Roos Olsson

6 Practices to Help You Be a Better Manager



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Are you a first-level leader? Do you manage a team of individual contributors who don't have direct reports of their own?

Then you know some of the challenges of making the leap to management.

You really want to be a good manager, but your training for that role may be light or even non-existent. You really want your team to succeed, but you may not have the resources and support you'd like.

My best advice? Avoid the temptation of trying to do too much at once. Focus on a handful of tried-and-true practices that will bring simplicity, clarity, and success to your work.

An excellent guide is *Everyone Deserves a Great Manager: The 6 Critical Practices for Leading a Team*. Written by leadership consultant Victoria Roos Olsson and two of her colleagues (Scott Miller and Todd Davis) at organizational performance firm FranklinCovey, the book highlights the best practices of leaders who earn trust, build strong teams, and consistently produce top results.

The six practices include:

1. **Develop a Leader's Mindset**—Learn the critical mindset shifts from those of an individual contributor to those of a leader.
2. **Hold Regular 1-on-1s**—Conduct these conversations effectively to increase engagement of team members, better understand team issues, and help team members solve problems.
3. **Set Up Your Team to Get Results**—Learn to create clarity about team goals and results, delegate responsibility to team members, and provide the right level of support.
4. **Create a Culture of Feedback**—Give and receive consistent, honest feedback to build confidence and competence.
5. **Lead Your Team Through Change**—Take specific actions to help team members navigate and accelerate through change to improve performance.
6. **Manage Your Time and Energy**—Use weekly planning to focus on the most important priorities.

I interviewed Victoria Roos Olsson to dig deeper into the mindsets, behaviors, and practices that enable leaders—and their teams—to perform at peak levels.

Rodger Dean Duncan: You cite *Harvard Business Review* research showing that people often assume their first leadership roles at about age 30 but don't get their first leadership training until more than a decade later. What do you see as the implications of that?

Victoria Roos Olsson: That research shows a gap of 12 years in which new leaders are trying to “figure it out” on their own. Unfortunately, there are many organizations in which people are left to struggle their leadership roles without proper support.

As someone who consults with organizations to create great business results, I'm amazed that so many organizations are prepared to take the risk of not developing their first level and unit leaders. These front-line managers have become even more critical to the success of businesses today.

As multiple layers of leadership in organizations have collapsed, with this new flat management structure the vast majority of people are reporting to managers who now assume unprecedented influence and responsibility. And with this change, they are managing more people—the majority of the workforce. They have a significant influence

on the quantity and quality of the work their team produces, some of which includes the entire customer experience.

Duncan: What are the most common challenges faced by first-level leaders and new managers?

Olsson: I often ask first-level leaders and new managers: (1) what they enjoy the most about their leadership role, and (2) what they find most challenging. All around the world, two very common responses to the question are: (1) they love to help their team grow and develop, and (2) it's frustrating for them when their team members don't have the same level of engagement for tasks as they do. This is understandable, as many new leaders loved the job they had before they were promoted. Their engagement was very high, which was the main reason they got promoted into leadership in the first place. But now in their new role they realize that not everyone on their team is as engaged. And suddenly it's not enough for them to *be* engaged. Now, they need to help *others* become engaged as well. That's the key to success.



Victoria Roos Olsson

Additionally, if you have the common mindset of achieving results on your own, it's important to accept once and for all that your work is no longer just about you. It's about your team. It's time to let go of your past successes. You earned the leader's chair because you performed at a superior level. Take a victory lap. Now, let it all go and focus on the job ahead.

Duncan: What are the two or three skills that are most helpful in addressing these challenges?

Olsson: The key is to start with your mindset. It might sound easy. But very often when we want to succeed in something new, we draw from our past experiences, which for many new leaders is what they did in their previous roles. They were the excellent salesperson, the best customer service representative, the most talented engineer. But now, there are new leadership skills which will make them succeed. In my experience, this mindset shift makes all the difference.

Secondly, leaders create culture in every interaction, email, meeting, speech, or text. They can also destroy it in those interactions by talking about people behind their backs, using an inappropriate tone in an email or a text, failing to give people credit, ignoring someone in the hallway, or complaining about company policies.

Because you're a leader, you're noticed. Every time you communicate, every time you open your mouth, you create culture. And, 1-on-1s are arguably the best way to create the conditions for high engagement and ensure your team members are connected to you as their leader. And holding them regularly and effectively will help you ramp up quickly in your new role.

And if you're a leader of other leaders, you need to be there and support your newly promoted managers. You need to coach them and celebrate their success in their managerial assignments, rather than uplifting their individual contributions.

Duncan: Many people find it difficult to transition from the role of individual contributor to a manager role. What are the most common speed bumps along that journey?

Olsson: When high-performing, driven people are promoted into leadership roles and realize they must now fundamentally change their approach from individual contributor to leader, embracing a new, more appropriate mindset will help them earn early wins and avoid some pitfalls along the way. Here are some of the appropriate mindset transitions:

- I achieve results on my own ... to I achieve results with and through others.
- I hold 1-on-1s to monitor people progress ... to I hold regular 1-on-1s to help people get and stay engaged.
- I tell team members what to do and how to do it ... to I help team members get clear about the “why” behind the “what” and support them in the “how.”
- I give feedback so I can fix people's problems ... to I give and seek feedback to elevate the entire team.
- I control and contain change for my team ... to I champion change with my team.
- I am too busy to take time for myself ... to I must manage my time and energy to be an effective leader.

Duncan: You recommend six specific practices for leading a team. How was that list compiled?

Olsson: The six leadership practices are based on our organization's decades of research and hundreds of leader interviews into what makes managers successful, as well as on tens of thousands of assessments that have been distilled down to the practices that yield the greatest results for first-level leaders. Additionally, our company has field-tested the principles and practices with thousands of managers around the globe. We've simplified the bewildering world of first-level leadership to these six most critical practices for leading a team.

“1-on-1s are arguably the best way to create the conditions for high engagement.”

Duncan: What is the most important step or paradigm shift involved in adopting a leader's mindset?

Olsson: The most important shift in adopting a leader's mindset is to realize that your team's success is *your* success. It

might sound like a cliché, but it's the key to your achieving the results you want. You don't want a highly successful sales manager and team of mediocre sales reps. Your role as the sales manager is to lead and coach those sales reps so they become highly successful.

Duncan: How can a leader best model the practice of *giving* helpful feedback?

Olsson: I try to see giving reinforcing feedback in the same way: you are voting for the behavior you want to see on your team. So next time you see someone on your team getting it right, rather than just thinking to yourself “yes, we are (finally) starting to get it right!” immediately give that behavior “your vote” or during the next 1-on-1, share with team members what you saw and why it makes a positive difference.

Duncan: How can a leader best model the practice of *receiving* helpful feedback? And why does it matter?

Olsson: I wish it were as simple as just asking for it. Of course, that’s a first and helpful step. But what many leaders don’t realize is that as they become more senior, people around them find it difficult, even intimidating, to give feedback. To receive valuable feedback, you need to create a safe environment that invites it. And you might even have to be creative in order to get the feedback going.

After my team went through a turbulent time, I decided to do an internal workshop with the team to discuss the current status. To do this creatively, I had everyone draw pictures of how they saw the team at the moment, illustrating our communication, execution, team spirit, goal achievement and more. This activity put people at ease immediately, rather than sitting around discussing difficult topics. My team *loved* it and got right to work. And, to my horror, one team came back with a picture of all of us on a frantic, high-speed flight, with me as the captain wearing a turquoise scarf (that I apparently wore way too often) and with the team members performing crazy duties in a chaotic environment. That picture will forever be instilled in my memory.

While I didn’t feel great at the time about the picture, I was proud of my team for being

“To receive valuable feedback, you need to create a safe environment that invites it.

so candid. Now that our issues were out in the open, we could tackle them. And while they checked my reactions while sharing the picture, once they realized I *wanted* their feedback, creating a culture of feedback on our team had begun. And by the way, it also became a lot easier for me to give feedback to them.

If you don’t really get any feedback, or get only positive, general answers to your

questions, you should take it as a sign that it’s time to work on the culture of feedback on your team.

Duncan: Leadership can be exhausting. What’s the key to managing personal energy?

Olsson: If you do leadership well, it takes both time and energy.

I find that most people really do know what they need to refuel their energy. They just don’t do it. From my experience, a spectrum of reasons exists. Some managers

deprioritize their own health out of nobility, putting their own needs last in order to be a great leader. Others ignore everything else because they feel so passionate about their job, or fearful they'll fall victim to the next round of cuts. And, some make the mistake of recharging their energy for a reward rather than a necessity.

As a leader you should expect “seasonable unbalances” when things are hectic and when you might need to drop certain habits. But the trick is to know when the season is over, and when it's time to get back to those habits.

Do a personal energy audit and see how you are doing with managing your prime sources of energy. Where do you come up short and where can you commit to improve as it relates to these five energy drivers: sleep, relax, eat, move and connect. Continue to evaluate yourself on a regular basis to check in how you are doing.

Duncan: What will be the most important practices for the future?

Olsson: All of the 6 Critical Practices are vital for the success of a new manager. But I see two practices that we will need even more of in the future. With the speed of change in today's world, a manager needs not only to love change, but have the ability to take his or her team through change, to champion it.

The second one is that it's not enough to manage your own time and energy. You need to coach your team on how to do it. With 40% of the jobs as we know them today being replaced by AI, our competitive advantage as humans will be our brains and our ability to be creative, innovative, and intuitive. This means that it's your team members' minds that will make a difference, not their bodies. And by managing your energy, you nurture your brain to do all that.

Finally, the rate of burnout is higher than ever. You can model a healthy lifestyle and be mindful of when you're depleting your team's energy levels with relentless demands for overtime, unrealistic deadlines, and saying *yes* to too many projects. You'll have a greater influence on their energy and avoid team burnout if your behavior becomes the standard for everyone else.



Personal application:

- Which of the six practices do you think can help you most?
- What adjustments in your mindset(s) could help you perform better?
- How can you use what you've learned here in coaching your team?



Exclusive conversation with
John Izzo

Are You Part of the Purpose Revolution?



By Rodger Dean Duncan

There's a revolution going on, and it's growing faster than you might imagine. In fact, you may even be part of it.

It's a revolution of purpose.

More than ever, people are making purpose-based decisions as employees, consumers, and investors. They want their work and money not only to provide for their own material needs, but simultaneously to help create a better world.

That's why 40 years ago I enjoyed working at Campbell Soup Company, known for its corporate citizenship programs that help countless underprivileged people around the world. That's why my wife and I avoid shopping at a major retailer known for poor treatment of employees and suppliers. That's why we long ago told our financial advisors to forego investing any of our money in funds that include manufacturers of tobacco or alcohol products.

We are certainly not alone. Some demographers estimate that aspirational employees, consumers, and investors may represent more than a third of the global population. That doesn't mean all these people think about higher purpose every time they sign on as an employee, buy a product, or make an investment. But it does mean a growing number of people are saying they want to help make the world a better place when they make decisions in the marketplace.

We live in an age of disruption and differentiation. While the purpose gap is a threat to some companies, it's a compelling opportunity for others.

Dr. John Izzo was a pioneer in the corporate social responsibility movement. Today he's a prominent voice on shifting expectations among employees and customers. I visited with John about his book *The Purpose Revolution: How Leaders Create Engagement and Competitive Advantage in an Age of Social Good*.

Rodger Dean Duncan: What are some of the more common mistakes companies (and their leaders) make when trying to get on the "purpose" bandwagon?

John Izzo: There are two seemingly opposite mistakes. The first is not taking purpose seriously enough. In this case, companies decide that purpose creates competitive advantage with employees, customers and investors. But the changes they make are not pervasive so there is no real opportunity to differentiate. Stakeholders see through the nice paint job and well-crafted story about making a difference. Truth is, the efforts are not inspiring enough either to truly differentiate in the marketplace or make a big impact on society.



John Izzo

The other danger is that the company takes purpose very seriously and tries to do too much. Even a genuinely purpose-focused company cannot solve every social or environmental ill. It's generally better to tackle fewer issues that your company is uniquely qualified to address. Make fewer large initiatives while really engaging your employees and customers to move the needle.

Duncan: How can leaders ensure that their efforts to create a purpose-driven culture are not mistaken for just a public relations or marketing ploy?

Izzo: This is a real danger because employees and customers have every reason to be skeptical. Volkswagen touted their clean diesel as good for the planet while lying about true emissions. Wells Fargo told their customers we will be there for "all your journeys"

as they opened accounts without client permission. The best way to ensure this doesn't happen is to make purpose part of your decision-making process. As Walter Robb, the former Co-CEO of Whole Foods, told me, "Be sure your purpose is in the middle of every decision you make."

People are looking to see if the company is willing to live its purpose even when its self-interest is made vulnerable in the short term. A great example is when Whole Foods banned unsustainable seafood from its shelves. This bought a lot of cred from their team members. Or when CVS decided to get rid of tobacco because they wanted to be a company whose purpose was creating health. So, they walked away from millions in

“ People are looking to see if the company is willing to live its purpose even when its self-interest is made vulnerable in the short term.

revenue. As a customer, the CVS decision showed me they were serious about their purpose. Of course, you won't be perfect, so the real test for customers and employees is what happens when you don't live up to your high ideals. Wells Fargo chose slick ads telling us they really *do care*. But talk is cheap and the ads don't ring true to most people, given the company's serious breach of trust. Starbucks, on the other hand, reacted with authentic regret about their incident and closed the whole company for racial-bias training, because they believed it was needed.

Duncan: What best practices do you recommend for fostering authentic employee engagement with organizational purpose?

Izzo: It begins with understanding the role of purpose in good employee engagement. In *The Purpose Revolution* we share solid research showing that people who work from purpose are more engaged, more committed, productive, and loyal. But what's interesting is that people are mostly motivated by their own personal purpose when they get to live it at work.

Many companies spend significant effort trying to convince employees to be proud of the company's actions, but then do little to help people define and activate their own personal purpose. If you really want people to work from purpose, give them tools to identify their purpose, train leaders to coach (and recognize) purpose, and amplify the real difference people make every day. In the book we talk about "line of sight," which is showing employees the difference they make in customers' lives. A large Molly Maid franchisee I know uses testimonials from elderly clients and their families to show the house cleaners that their cleaning services make a real difference in the lives of real people, especially elderly clients who often have fewer social contacts.

Duncan: You advise leaders to write a personal purpose statement. What's the benefit of such an exercise and what ingredients do you recommend? Can you offer an example?

Izzo: Everything begins with leaders and entrepreneurs having their own purpose and learning to communicate it to others. This inspires team members and increases connection to the company.

Leaders identify their purpose by asking questions like: What is the legacy I want to leave behind at my company or in my team? What would employees and customers miss if I were not a leader? What is the real difference our products and services make (and why would it matter if our company ceased to exist)?

Dolf van den Brink shared his purpose when he became the CEO of Heineken Mexico. His purpose is to be “the gardener ... and grow a better world,” something he discovered when he worked in the Democratic Republic of Congo and realized that his company could give back and positively impact an entire society. His personal purpose helped inspire the Heineken executive team to create a new vision which was to “win big for a better Mexico” by tackling some of the country’s biggest challenges such as gender-based violence. His own purpose helped inspire the team to think much bigger.

Duncan: You say employees are a company’s best purpose ambassadors. You call this “branding from the inside out.” Give us some examples of how this works.

Izzo: Research shows that people believe only 16% of what a company says about itself but 70% say they believe what an employee says. People are also up to ten times more likely to share social media feeds from an employee than one from the company.

One of the most interesting findings—the top reason that people will be great ambassadors? It’s when they feel they are making a difference in their own jobs. That’s why helping people identify and live their purpose is key.

When it comes to “branding from the inside out,” there are three steps. First, constantly communicate why your team’s work matters and what makes your company truly different. Second, empower employees to tell their story of how they make a difference (and let them do it in their own way). Finally, let them know why they are the most

“Research shows that people believe only 16% of what a company says about itself but 70% say they believe what an employee says.”

believable asset and then ask them to help spread the word—but only if it’s authentic and they believe it. CISCO asked employees to honestly tell on YouTube “Why I love CISCO” without controlling the brand message. It had a huge impact.

Duncan: What can leaders learn from the example of Steve Jobs as the brand ambassador of Apple Computer?

Izzo: People often think Apple’s success is just a product story. But they’re wrong. What really helped Apple take off was that people bought into a set of values—to be a trailblazer, to dare to be different. Steve Jobs embodied the very purpose of the brand itself by being different—from the sweater to insisting that employees sign their names like artists on the inside of the computer. He wanted to drive a brand that oozed passion for making things better.

Duncan: Does purpose really make a difference for a business and for us personally?

Izzo: Purpose sounds like a soft, almost ephemeral thing. But it has research-proven impact. Unilever found their brands like Dove and Seventh Generation that have a purpose connection with customers and employees grow about 35% faster than other brands. Having a personal purpose also makes employees more engaged and more productive. They even call in sick less often.

At the personal level, having a personal purpose makes us happier and can even increase our lifespan, according to research on Blue Zones across the globe.



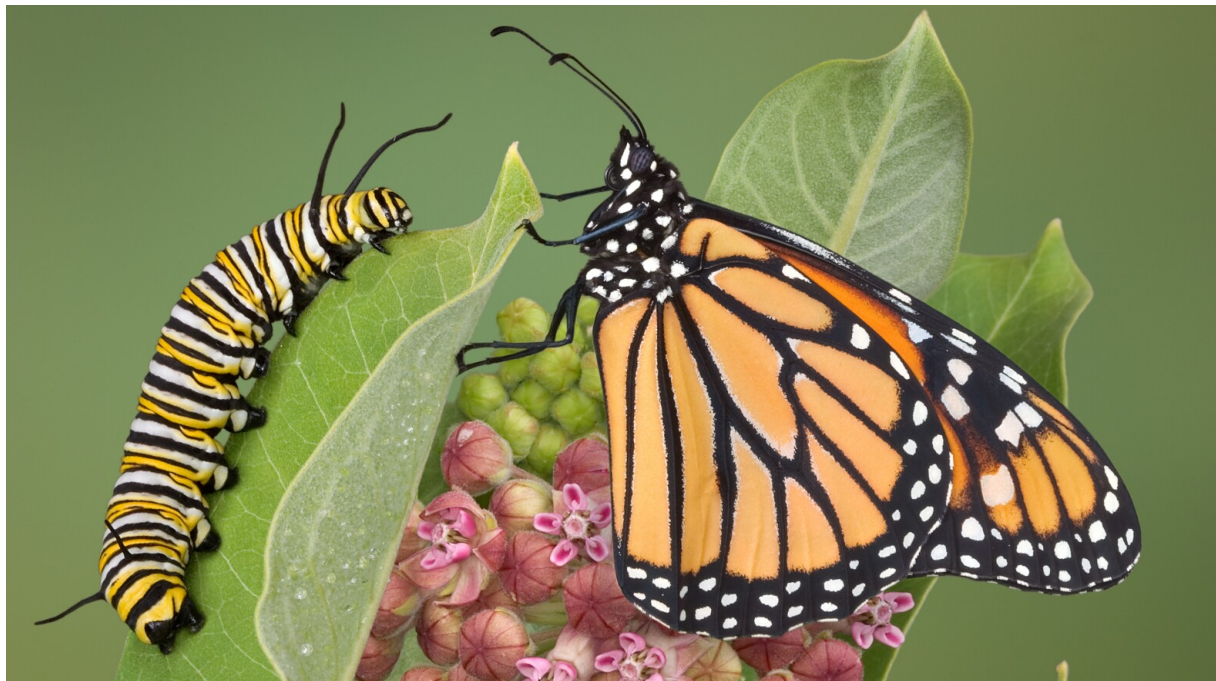
Personal application:

- Have you written a personal purpose statement? If not, give it a try. It can help you focus on work that's truly meaningful to you.
- Does your team or organization have a purpose-driven culture? If so, what is the evidence? If not, what can you do to help create and maintain such a culture?
- How can you and your colleagues be more effective “purpose ambassadors” to your stakeholders?



Exclusive conversation with
Dorie Clark

Reinventing You: What Future Can You Imagine for Yourself?



By Rodger Dean Duncan

My friend Tom Pulliam was a modern-day Renaissance man. He had multiple careers, sometimes overlapping, because he learned how to shape his gifts to match the needs of others.

For many years, Tom worked as a manager at a food manufacturing company in Oklahoma City. He made lunch meat. In his off-hours he liked to do crossword puzzles. He got very good at it. So good, in fact, that when he ran out of puzzles to solve he started creating his own. Then he got so skilled at creating new puzzles that he began to

sell them. That was decades ago. Today, if you want one of the best books on the subject, pick up a copy of *The New York Times Crossword Puzzle Dictionary*—by Tom Pulliam.

Oh, yes, Tom also made a name (and a fortune) for himself as an actor, doing voiceovers for a wide range of TV and radio commercials. Tom would insist that he was no smarter than the next guy. Maybe not, but he definitely took a cue from Albert Einstein, who advised that we should live out of our imagination rather than out of our memory. Tom's sound thinking enabled him to discover opportunities enriched both his life and his bank account.

That kind of thinking is at the heart of Dorie Clark's book *Re-inventing You: Define Your Brand, Imagine Your Future*. Dorie, who teaches at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and consults on marketing strategy, was described by the *New York Times* as "an expert at self-reinvention and helping others make changes in their lives." She's also author of *Stand Out: How to Find Your Breakthrough Idea and Build a Following Around It*.

I visited with Dorie about a number of issues faced by people considering work and career changes.

Rodger Dean Duncan: A first step in professional reinvention is getting clarity on where you currently are. What are the steps to a "personal brand inventory" to provide that clarity?

Dorie Clark: First, it's not a bad idea to Google yourself to see what comes up. Then set a Google Alert so that in the future you're notified when your name is mentioned online. That way you can be aware of what's out there, thank people if they're saying something nice, and correct the record if they're saying something incorrect. Your Google search results provide a clue to what people who don't know you well will think when they start to research you. If you've written a number of thoughtful blog posts about your profession, that sends one message, and if the results for your name are random and scattered, that sends another.



Dorie Clark

Next, I suggest something called the "3 Word Exercise." It involves asking about a half dozen friends and colleagues to describe you in only three words. This forces them to boil down their perceptions and identify what's most important—which gives you an important clue as to what is seen as most distinctive about you, and strengths you can build on.

Duncan: In evaluating personal passions and possibilities, what are some good ways to enlist others to help you focus on a promising future?

Clark: When you're in the discovery stage and are trying to figure out what you want to do (or do next) professionally, it's important to gather "data points" to determine

whether the career possibilities you imagine match the reality. It's easy to fantasize about running your own bakery and creating innovative, delicious treats. It's another thing altogether to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning to bake bread every day.

Try to gather at least five to ten data points for each job or profession you're considering. These could include informational interviews with friends or friends-of-friends, reading memoirs of people in the profession, attending conferences for that profession to see what's being talked about, etc.

Something that's uniquely valuable, if possible, is to spend time job shadowing someone—i.e., following them around for a day or so and seeing what their life is really like. Very few people do this because they worry it seems invasive or awkward—and certainly, it would be more difficult if the person is extremely high ranking, or works inside a large corporation and would need to get permission from others. But especially for entrepreneurs or those who have more autonomy, it can be a flattering request that shows real interest in their work, provided you have a close enough connection to them that it doesn't seem like a random request from a stranger.

Duncan: You recommend “test driving” a new career direction to ensure it's really a good fit. How can that be done in a way that avoids a risky detour?

“Try to gather at least five to ten data points for each job or profession you're considering.

Clark: Certainly, job shadowing (as described previously) can be very helpful here. In *Reinventing You* I describe a young woman who was certain she wanted to become a flower arranger—only to discover, once she spent a half-day actually trying it out, that she hated the cold that was necessary to keep the flowers alive and would never want that profession. It's a lot

better to “waste” a half-day of your life discovering you don't like something, rather than a half-year or a half-decade. Of course, that time isn't a waste at all, if it's providing you with useful information.

Additionally, I'm a big proponent of exploring new professional directions while you're still employed in your current job, rather than quitting and only then trying to figure it out. That risks serious financial consequences unless you already have a significant financial cushion.

For instance, I profiled a woman named Patricia Fripp who steadily built her desired career—as a professional speaker—over the course of an entire decade. She was a hairdresser and supported herself through that profession. But each year she invested more time and effort into her side business of speaking.

At first, Patricia would speak for free. Over time, she got paid small amounts of money, but not enough to live on. That was okay, however, because she had her day job to fall back on. As she advanced in both her skills and reputation as a speaker, she began earning more and more money. After a decade, she closed down her hairdressing

business and never looked back. Why? Because she had fully replaced her income (and then some) with her new career.

You don't have to take a full decade, but it's a very good idea to think about how to leverage your nights and weekends to build your new side gig, because it takes the risk out of the enterprise until you're ready.

Duncan: What are some good strategies to expand your learning opportunities in your current job to help prepare you for greater opportunities elsewhere?

Clark: The most important thing in preparing for your professional future is to understand that it's your job—not your company's—to set your learning agenda. It's nice, and an added bonus, when companies provide training programs and shepherd you along a given career track (provided it's one you like, of course). But these days, we can't count on them to do it. We have to be the captains of our careers, and set the course for ourselves.

That means identifying what you want to learn and the ways you'd like to do it. Certainly, you can go to your boss or HR director and ask them to offer (or send you to) certain training programs or executive education opportunities. Odds are, they'll be impressed with your self-directedness and ambition.

But it's also a good idea to create your own ways of gaining that knowledge, regardless of what your company agrees to pay for. For instance, there are huge numbers of free or very affordable online courses you can take to build your skills, and you can cultivate (and demonstrate) your leadership abilities on the job by doing something as simple as volunteering to head up a committee at work, or taking on additional responsibilities, such as agreeing to lead a team presentation.

Duncan: What issues should one consider in finding—and benefiting from—a professional mentor?

“It's *your* job—not your company's—to set your learning agenda.

Clark: One of the biggest challenges is actually *finding* a mentor, because the most successful people are often the busiest and they may not have time to help you (or the many others who would like their assistance). So, the question becomes: how can you get noticed and “talent spotted” by the kind of people whom you'd like to be your mentor?

The Center for Talent Innovation has an interesting perspective on this. In their research on mentorship (and sponsorship, which is a kind of “mentorship-plus” in which the senior person also expends political capital on your behalf), they discovered that one of the best ways to attract a sponsor is to have a strong personal brand.

The reason for this is two-fold: first, being known and respected in your company and in your field means they're more likely to hear about you in the first place, a precondition

to becoming your mentor or sponsor. Second, even the most altruistic leaders can't agree to mentor everyone while receiving zero benefit for themselves. It has to be a two-way exchange.

You may not be able to offer more obvious benefits: they probably have more power, or industry knowledge, or connections than you do at this stage in your career. But one thing you can give them is a reputational glow, because if they're seen as being the patron of the next generation of rising talent, that marks them as both smart and influential. In short, your brand redounds to their benefit. So, taking the time to think strategically about your brand and cultivate a reputation you can be proud of is worth the investment.

Duncan: In positioning themselves in the marketplace, professionals must be differentiated from others competing for the same jobs. What are the keys to doing this successfully?

Clark: I suggest three ways professionals can distinguish themselves from others. They are content creation, social proof, and one's network.

Here are the reasons my research indicates these are the three critical ingredients:

Content creation—sharing your ideas via articles, speeches, lunch-and-learns, or even just consistently speaking up in meetings—is essential because if you want to be recognized for your ideas, you have to share your ideas. Unless someone has directly worked with you, and that's a small fraction of the population, there's no way for them to tell if you're any good. Sharing your ideas lets others see for themselves that you have a valuable way of solving problems and looking at the world.

Social proof, a term borrowed from psychology, refers to your credibility. What makes you, as compared to all the other people with similar aspirations, worth listening to? People are busy and, sad to say, usually won't take the time to evaluate every single person on their qualifications or ideas, because that would take too long. Instead, people typically rely on a kind of shorthand. If you're affiliated with trusted brands they already know—you've worked with respected clients, you're the head of a volunteer professional association, or you've published articles in a blog or magazine they've heard of, for instance—they're far more willing to give you a chance.

A third thing that can distinguish you from others is your network. The people around you help sharpen your ideas to make them better—and also serve as ambassadors. This helps you spread your best ideas further than you could on your own.

Duncan: You suggest that in rebranding oneself, it's important to build a convincing narrative. What are the steps to doing this?

Clark: When you're changing jobs or professions, or otherwise trying to rebrand yourself, the people around you—who are often busy with their own lives and paying only half-hearted attention to yours—often won't intuitively understand what you're aiming at or why you believe it's important to make that change. They also may not

understand how your past experience is relevant to what you're trying to do now. If left to their own devices, then, they may write off your new endeavor as a passing fad, or shrug their shoulders and say, "I have no idea why he's trying to do that."

That's why it's so important for you to create your own succinct narrative that explains where you're coming from, where you're headed, and—critically—how your past experiences add value to your future plans. That enables other people to connect the dots and see, as you do, the talent and potential you bring.



Personal application:

- When you do a “personal brand inventory,” what do you discover? What can you do with that insight?
- What resources (books, courses, podcasts, webinars, etc.) are available for your use in exploring new career opportunities?
- Who in your network might be able to help you find a mentor? And do you have a plan for how you might derive the most benefit from a mentor?



Exclusive conversation with
David Covey

Outsmarting 7 Traps That Can Hamper Your Success



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Do you check your social media a dozen times each day? Do you get a surge of endorphins every time your phone dings an email alert? You've fallen into the focus trap.

Do you make adjustments in your life only when circumstances force you to? Do you delay course corrections until the last possible moment? Do you rely on sheer willpower to sustain personal improvement? You're likely caught in the change trap.

Be honest, are you uninspired and disengaged at work? Do you hang on to your job primarily because of the pay or because simple inertia keeps you stuck? You're in the career trap.

These and other self-defeating behaviors that can ensnare good people are helpfully examined in *Trap Tales: Outsmarting the 7 Hidden Obstacles to Success* by David M.R. Covey and Stephan M. Mardyks.

Just as their title implies, Covey and Mardyks examine seven common traps—

1. Relationship Trap
2. Money Trap
3. Focus Trap
4. Change Trap
5. Learning Trap
6. Career Trap
7. Purpose Trap

Anyone can fall into one or more of these traps, and the result can be anything from annoying to devastating. People who live enriched lives learn to recognize and avoid the traps—or at the very least, extricate themselves from a trap if they get entangled.

David Covey guides us through the world of what he calls *Trapology*.

Rodger Dean Duncan: You say myopia—living in the now—is a major cause of the Money Trap. What role does failure to consider future consequences of present behavior play in people's challenge with other traps?

David M.R. Covey: It plays a huge role. The best way to live trap free is to be a forward thinker. But the majority of us, myself included, often fail to plan beyond the short term. And we pay an enormous price for it. We somehow think we are exempt from worse-case scenarios playing out in our lives. That happens to other people—certainly not to us.



David Covey

Living in the now is at the core of modern culture. If we need answers to questions, we Google them. If we want to buy something, we can do so within seconds and receive it the next day. We now receive deliveries on Sunday. Who can wait until Monday? Many of our online purchases are delivered on the same day we ordered them. We don't have to wait. And if we don't have the money, we can charge it. No big deal.

Duncan: So, you see impatience as part of the problem?

Covey: Yes. I'm not against the amazing convenience, speed, and efficiency technology has created. In fact, I embrace it. However, the challenge that comes is that we now have a new set of expectations. They have been

forever altered. We think everything should happen immediately, and we get frustrated when we have to *wait*.

A wise spiritual leader once said: “Patience stoutly resists pulling up the daisies to see how the roots are doing.” Some of the best things in life don’t happen quickly. Think of a great marriage, a life-enhancing product, or an enduring company. These outcomes take time and effort and work and patience. Many of us find ourselves in short supply of these crucial characteristics. And this impatience mentality is what makes us so susceptible to the seductive traps we fall into.

Duncan: Some people seem to have a knack for falling into several (if not all) of the traps you write about. To what extent does learning to recognize and avoid one trap help a person deal effectively with other traps?

Covey: When you recognize that traps exist at work, at home, and in life, you see the world from a fundamentally altered perspective. This viewpoint is one you might adopt for the game of chess. To win at the game of chess, you need to do two things—avoid falling into the traps your opponent sets up for you, and plan several moves ahead of your opponent. It’s not sufficient to plan only one move in advance, i.e., to be concerned only about the immediate consequences of your next decision. Rather, we must plan several moves in advance. And so it is with life.

When someone is aware of a certain trap, and then takes steps to avoid it, they begin to recognize other areas in their life where traps may be present. It all begins with awareness. We encourage people to become what we like to call a “Trapologist”—a person who detects and avoids traps and helps others do the same.

A Trapologist learns from the experience of others, rather than having to experience everything firsthand by themselves. As Confucius once said: “By three methods, we may learn wisdom: first by reflection, which is the noblest; second by imitation, which is the easiest; and third, by experience, which is the bitterest.”

Duncan: You list the Relationship Trap as the first of seven. Why?

Covey: Human beings are social animals. We crave connection. We want to feel that our life matters, that there is purpose and meaning to what we do. The most

“When you recognize that traps exist ... you see the world from a fundamentally altered perspective.”

fundamental way we achieve these connections is through our relationships—with family, friends, work, community, etc.

Nothing is more important than relationships. The literature, which studies individuals on their deathbed, confirms this. When people are dying, and they are asked what is most important in their life, they

universally say “relationships,” and then they talk about the experiences they cherish as a result of those relationships. No one on their deathbed ever wishes they had spent more time at the office. Money, possessions, and professional success—these things are

important, but they are secondary to our relationships. No other success at work or in life can compensate for failed relationships.

Duncan: Personal change is often hard, and many people postpone it in- definitely. What is a good approach to change that you've seen work?

Covey: I don't think an incremental approach to change is the answer. In my mind, the solution is to realize a complete paradigm shift— what I call an “epiphany breakthrough.”

Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis model looks at the driving forces and restraining forces involved in making a change in one's life or in an organization. Driving forces are initiatives and actions that propel us forward from our current state to our desired state. Restraining forces are the obstacles (or traps) that get in the way, and that keep us anchored to the status quo.

Duncan: Give us some examples of what you see as driving forces and restraining forces.

Covey: When we attempt to make a change in our life, in our marriage, or in our organization, we usually spend 80% of our time focused on driving forces and only 20% of our time focused on restraining forces. It is my view that this ratio should be inverted to focus 80% of our time on the traps, and only 20% on new initiatives.

Once people buy-in into this new paradigm—that long-term sustainable change is more effectively achieved through removing traps rather than by adding new driving forces—they see the world in a completely new light. They start to consider the traps that have been holding them back. We aren't naturally conditioned to think this way.

For example, consider weight loss. It's more important to identify what will derail us from our goal of losing 20 pounds—like late-night binging, getting buttered popcorn at the movies, or discovering the core reasons why we consistently fail to eat right or exercise each day. It's not about adding more to-dos. Rather, it's about creating our *not-to-do* list. We need to take our foot off the brake vs. pressing harder on the accelerator to create our new reality.

Duncan: You quote physiologist Carol Dweck who says the best gift parents can give their children is to “teach [them] to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep learning.” How can leaders adopt that approach with employees in the workplace?

Covey: John Wooden, the legendary UCLA basketball coach, taught that there are four laws of learning—demonstration, imitation, correction, and repetition.

When leaders take a new approach with their employees—to try, fail, learn, and repeat—and the top leaders themselves model this, change happens. As leaders authentically acknowledge their own mistakes, share their current challenges, and demonstrate key

learnings, they create a safe company culture that encourages experimentation by both leaders and employees.

Leaders must also encourage their employees to reinvent themselves when their conscience dictates, not when circumstances press upon them to change. Reinvention is hard work. It requires introspection and discipline. It's much easier to sit back and rest on your laurels. You have to be willing to abandon old ways of doing things, and not be afraid to try new approaches, which may be awkward or uncomfortable.

Human nature encourages us to procrastinate the changes we know we should make. Yet, when we postpone changes needed in our life and in our organizations, we run the risk of becoming obsolete and outdated. Retired US Army General Eric Shinseki, summarized it perfectly when he said: "If you dislike change, you're going to dislike irrelevance even more."



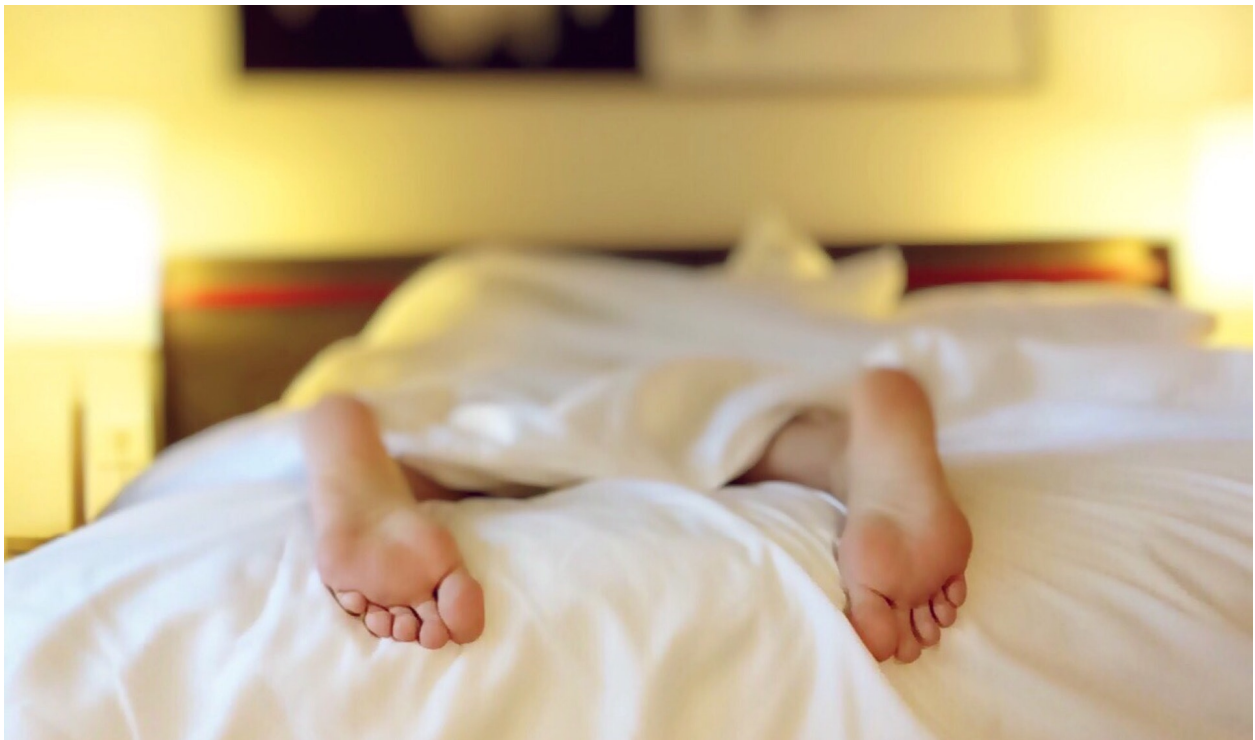
Personal application:

- To which trap(s) do you seem to be most vulnerable? What can you do to avoid the trap(s) or to recover if you've already been trapped?
- Which of your most important relationships could benefit from some extra attention? So, what's your plan?
- What restraining forces can you identify in your life? What can you do to eliminate or at least reduce the impact of those forces?



Exclusive conversation with
Laura Vanderkam

No Time for Balance? The Solution May Be Simpler Than You Think



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Most people who feel the crush of busyness have heard the clichéd advice about time management: “Either run the day or the day runs you.” And my favorite, “The bad news is that time flies. The good news is that you’re the pilot.”

The interesting thing about clichéd advice is that sometimes it’s spot-on correct.

Early in my career, my wife and I had two small children. My job and daily commute were stressful. After fighting rush hour traffic, I arrived home one evening and was briefly irritable with our children. I immediately apologized, but still felt bad about my temporary lapse. My wife later asked me “what’s going on?” I gave her my usual litany about having so much to do and so little time to do it.

Then my dear wife, a great coach, gave me a gentle lesson that’s helped me throughout the decades since.

“Honey,” she began, “I think we live in an age of miracles.” I didn’t dispute that idea, but asked her to give me an example. “Well,” she continued, “I notice that you frequently complain about not having enough time. But I also notice that in the autumn of the year, on Mondays, at precisely 9:00 PM Eastern time, a miracle happens right here in our living room. You somehow *find* three hours to watch Monday Night Football. For a guy who never has enough time, that’s truly a miracle.”

Then she tied a nice bow on it: “Time really is about making deliberate choices. Like everyone else on the planet, you have only 168 hours a week. Maybe you could re-evaluate the choices you make in how you invest those hours.”

Ouch! But don’t you love it when someone you trust calls your attention to a blinding flash of the obvious?

Laura Vanderkam expands on this theme in her bestselling book *Off the Clock: Feel Less Busy While Getting More Done*. Her TED talk, “How to Gain Control of Your Free Time” has been viewed more than six million times.

Laura destroys the myth that there’s just not enough time in the week for professionals to live happy, balanced, and productive lives. I visited with her to explore her thinking on this ever-popular topic.

Rodger Dean Duncan: Consistently effective time management is an elusive aspiration for many people. You began your journey by keeping a detailed log of your activities. What did you learn from this practice? Any surprises?

Laura Vanderkam: If you want to spend your time better, you need to figure out where the time is going now. Otherwise, how do you know if you’re changing the right thing? Most people can get a good impression of their lives by tracking a week, but about three years ago, I decided to track my time continuously, keeping a detailed log of all my activities.

This has been a good practice for many reasons. I saw that I did have time to read. I wasn’t working as much as I thought. I occasionally have bad nights, but overall I do get enough sleep.

Most importantly, tracking time has helped expand my memory. Now I have a record of exactly how I’ve spent my time, and I can call these memories back up more easily. Having more memories makes time feel more vast. I see how much choice I have, and

making choices skillfully — that is, with a good sense of the data — creates a feeling of time freedom.

Duncan: It's been claimed that nobody ever said on their deathbed that they wish they had spent more time at the office. How can chronic workaholics invest more in "off the clock" activities without going on a guilt trip?

Vanderkam: First, I doubt it's true that no one wished he or she spent more time at the office! Work can be an incredibly meaningful part of life. Also, people sometimes wind up out of the workforce for longer than they mean to due to unemployment or an unexpectedly early retirement, and it derails their financial goals for themselves and their families. That can definitely be a deathbed regret.

That said, if someone is working and would like to have more off the clock time, one great first step is to start planning more fun into life. One reason we keep working at nights or on weekends is that our personal lives aren't compelling enough to stop. I don't think working is a worse choice for time than watching TV. But being intentional about your personal time changes the equation. If you have tickets to a 7 p.m. game you really want to see, you'll probably stop working in time to get there. If you have a hike with your family planned for the weekend, you'll probably check your email less (at least while you're hiking).



Laura Vanderkam

In many cases, work expands to fill the available space. When you give it less space, you'll see that the important stuff still gets done, and that can help reduce the guilt.

Duncan: "Let it go" is one of the approaches you advocate for using time effectively. What kind of choices does "letting go" require?

Vanderkam: We all have the same amount of time, but people interact with it in different ways. I've found that mental rumination can eat up a lot of time, and keeps people from enjoying the free time they have.

Some people agonize over decisions. They are "maximizers," and want to choose the best possible option. "Satisfiers" (as Barry Schwartz, the psychology professor who studied this phenomenon calls them) set their criteria, and go with the first option that clears the bar. This saves an incredible amount of time, and tends to make people happier, because in most cases, there is no best option. The hotel you choose after three hours of researching is not going to be much better (if it's better at all) than the hotel you choose after three minutes.

I also find that perfectionism eats up a lot of time. People set huge goals for themselves, and then get discouraged and give up. Better to let go of these large expectations and instead aim to make small daily progress—so small, you feel no resistance to the idea. If you want to write a novel, don't set out to write 80,000 words. Set out to write 400

words a day, five mornings a week. Four hundred words is nothing, but this habit will give you a draft in less than a year.

Duncan: You write that “done is better than perfect because there is no perfect without done.” What mental shifts can a perfectionist take to benefit from this view?

Vanderkam: Nothing is ever truly perfect. I read a lot—as you do—and one of the upsides of this is that seeing even classic, great literature has its flaws. I find this encouraging. We’re all just trying stuff and seeing what works. Someone struggling with perfectionism can also try realizing this: Your work can’t help you until it’s out of your head. Once it exists, people can give you feedback, which can help you improve your work overtime. You’ll also see ways to improve your work. And as people interact with your work, they’ll become part of your journey, and want to stay involved in your world. I love that my books are out in the world, becoming part of people’s conversations even when I am not physically there. They couldn’t do that if I were waiting to achieve perfection.

Duncan: What are the key to making time for friends, and what role do rich personal relationships play in a person’s professional life?

Vanderkam: For *Off the Clock*, I had more than 900 people with full-time jobs track their time for a day. Then I asked them questions about their time so I could compare the schedules of people who felt time was abundant with people who felt starved for time. I found that people’s time perception scores rose in direct correlation with how much time they spent interacting with friends and family. Spending time with people we love energizes us, and that makes us feel like time is rich and full, rather than slipping through our fingers.

We see our families because we live with them, but making time for friends is more complicated. The people who do this well build regular friend get-togethers into their lives. For instance, you commit to meeting for dinner the first Thursday of every month.

“Spending time with people we love energizes us, and that makes us feel like time is rich and full.

Or you meet two friends to run at 7 a.m. every Saturday morning. That way, no one has to plan each individual gathering, and people know to plan their lives around it. While it sounds paradoxical that making a time commitment could make you feel like you have more time, I promise it is true!

As for professional relationships, people are people. Work feels more satisfying—and hence people are more engaged—when you spend

Monday with people you’d be willing to spend Sunday with too. Viewed from that perspective, chatting with colleagues isn’t wasting time. It’s actually making you more effective.

Duncan: What’s your bottom-line advice to someone who wants “more time” in their days?

Vanderkam: One of the best ways to create a sense of time abundance is to plan more adventures into your life. When people say “where did the time go?” what they tend to mean is that they don’t remember where the time went. Plan memorable things into your life and you will remember them—and that can make time feel more vast.



Personal application:

- When will you begin keeping a detailed log of your hour-by-hour activities? Today? Tomorrow? The longer you postpone it the more evidence you have that you’re not really serious about managing your time.
- How can you *plan more fun* into your life? Who would be a good partner (and reinforcement) in that?
- Which of your routine tasks (including work) could benefit from the “*done is better than perfect because there is no perfect without done*” approach?



Exclusive conversation with
Buster Benson

“Well, Excu-u-use Me!” Why Can’t We Just Get Along?



By Rodger Dean Duncan

“Well, Excu-u-use Me!”

That catchphrase, popularized in the 1970s by Steve Martin, was part of some of the funniest comedy routines of the time.

Unfortunately, that phrase now captures the touchiness of current-day culture. It seems that no comment is immune from attack, no opinion is safe from an onslaught of ridicule.

Consider the contrived outrage at the television ad for Peloton, maker of exercise equipment. The ad featured a husband who dared to give his already slim wife a Peloton stationary bike for Christmas. The commercial was immediately slammed as sexist, tone deaf, and body-shaming. The backlash against the ad was so harsh and relentless that the company reportedly lost nearly a billion dollars in market value.

In today's hysteria-prone world, there seems to be an endless search for conflict. As one sensible commentator wrote, "In this age of overwrought indignation and attention-seeking fits of rage, too many brands and businesses immediately apologize and run for cover. Ironically, this rarely earns them forgiveness for whatever alleged offenses they have committed and only invites more finger-wagging and exaggerated claims of wrongdoing."

And of course political discourse is another sad example of the growing contempt epidemic.

Are you frustrated by the state of argument in our world? Then you need to get acquainted with Buster Benson. Today he's CEO of 750Words.com which brings private journaling to a safe place on the web.

Buster is author of *Why Are We Yelling? The Art of Productive Disagreement*.

Yes, I know. "Productive disagreement" sounds like an oxymoron. But it's not.

Do yourself a favor and consider what Buster has to say about conflict management.

Rodger Dean Duncan: In recent years, public discourse—especially in politics and on social media—has devolved into new lows of incivility. What effect has this had on everyday, face-to-face relationships?

Buster Benson: My previous hypothesis was that the most practical advice I could offer would be on how to turn unproductive disagreements into productive ones. It didn't take long to realize that there's a much bigger problem we're currently facing—most of us have lost hope that disagreements are even worth pursuing, so we avoid addressing people face-to-face altogether.



Buster Benson

We've become conflict avoidant in some very obvious ways, and other more sneaky ways. When I began cataloguing disagreements people were having online, at work, and in personal lives, most of the time the person they disagreed with *wasn't even in the conversation*. I call this "sneaky conflict avoidance" because it seems like we're arguing about something, but it's more like a monologue where we rant to the choir of people who share our opinion. This form of sneaky conflict avoidance is everywhere. It's caused by the fact that so many of our public squares and venues for

conversations have become extremely polarized. Increasingly, we're talking only in places filled with people we agree with, and ranting *about* people who aren't there with us.

Duncan: Some people seem to regard disagreement as an inherently undesirable or dangerous thing. What's the problem with that viewpoint?

Benson: Margaret Heffernan, author of *Willful Blindness*, found that when people were asked "Are there issues at work that people are afraid to raise?" 85% of people will say yes. That means that 85% of us know about problems that likely affect the business and are sitting on them because it feels dangerous to do otherwise.

This makes sense in a way because oftentimes these problems aren't part of our primary job description. Not-my-problem-ism is a real disease. It can feel like we're doing the right thing by assuming that the people responsible for the problem both know about it and are incentivized to figure it out. Nobody's going to fire you for ignoring a problem that wasn't yours. And yet, the end result of this willful blindness, or collective avoidance, is unquestionably more unpleasant in the long term for the business and our own happiness. Every relationship, project, company, or other kind of group we belong to has problems, and each of these things will suffer (and grow worse!) if they are swept under the rug.

The other alternative, I believe, is to practice seeing disagreements as training opportunities rather than obstacles to avoid.

“Not-my-problem-ism
is a real disease.

Think of the expert athlete who sees discomfort in training as the only way to work through it and get to the next level of fitness. Think of a skill that you've learned to master over time, and how taking on new challenges is part of what

keeps you invested in that skill. It's even what makes the craft enjoyable! The art of productive disagreement is a skill that can be sharpened in this same way.

Duncan: What role does disagreement play in effective collaboration?

Benson: Let's say a couple disagrees about where to go for vacation. Instead of avoiding the conversation and canceling the vacation, a productive disagreement could lead to collaboration on a plan that was better than both of their ideas going in.

Take a product team at a startup where the sales team disagrees with the engineering team about what's most important to prioritize this quarter. Instead of merely escalating to the CEO or other decision-maker for a tie-breaker, or making empty promises, a productive disagreement could lead to ideas that satisfy the needs of both the sales and engineering teams. An added bonus is that this will likely also lead to both of them better understanding why the other cares about what they do.

Imagine, in an alternate universe, a political system where policy debates involved each side trying to first understand the other side's "best argument" because they knew that if

that best argument was persuasive, they'd gladly adopt that policy over the one they came in with. Instead of having policies that were packed with concessions to squeak by with enough votes, or policies that were designed to undo as much of the other side's progress, we'd have a system where the parties sharpened each other and produced policies that were better than either side could have come up with on their own.

All of these cases require that we see disagreement as a tool for benefiting from our differences, rather than as a battleground to try to wipe the other side out, or avoid altogether.

Duncan: What are the ingredients of a “productive” argument?

Benson: There is no single recipe that will work wonders for all disagreements. In fact, it's the collaborative search for the right recipe right now, and new possibilities neither had previously considered, that can turn a stuck problem into a generator of new possibilities.

The first step on this path is to make sure you see the other side as worthy of collaboration, to see them as complex, flawed, and human like ourselves. Like us, they're a blend of good and not-so-good, and still in the process of developing the character needed to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy interactions. Finding ways to unlock that in each other is what makes the disagreement productive.

Duncan: A lot of talking heads on TV seem determined to demonize people with opposing viewpoints. How can we avoid that trap in our personal relationships?

Benson: We like simple narratives, and talking heads on TV have mastered the art of simplifying narratives so that things are extremely black and white. This art of simplifying narratives is a counter-productive voice because it reduces things in order to make them easier to digest at the cost of losing touch with the complex nature of reality.

“**Make sure you see the other side as worthy of collaboration ... as complex, flawed, and human like ourselves.**

The antidote to this is to also develop an internal voice in ourselves that enriches and complicates the narrative with knowledge and wisdom that is more in touch with reality.

The good news is that we know how to do this in relationships, and family, quite well. When you've known someone a long time, you appreciate how they're a blend of

strengths and flaws. You've seen first-hand how they've changed over time to favor different strengths and struggle with certain flaws. If you had just met this person, you might be able to apply a simple narrative to them, but the act of building a relationship with them is the same act as complicating their narrative.

When you want to balance the simple narratives you hear, the antidote is to build a relationship directly with the person that is being demonized (within boundaries that consider your own safety of course). That's the only way to get first-hand knowledge of

their complexity, and learn to see them in the same way that you see yourself, as complex blend of good and evil that is nonetheless worthy of caring for.

Duncan: You suggest asking questions that invite surprising answers. Please give an example of this, and explain how that practice helps produce “productive disagreement.”

Benson: How many times do we think, or say, something to the effect of “I can’t comprehend how person X believes that Y is a good idea.”

We can use this very frustrating and futile position as an opportunity to find out how they believe that. They are in fact the best person to talk to in order to understand how those very incomprehensible beliefs and positions are viable—even if you then still disagree with them.

I see every disagreement as an opportunity to at least understand how someone with a position that’s different from mine has grown to have that position. Half the time I learn that there are certain formative experiences that I didn’t have that make their position viable. And half the time I learn that I’ve misunderstood their position and that the one they do have is a lot easier to comprehend. In both cases, that feeling of not being able to comprehend how someone like them exists is able to dissolve a bit.

Here are some questions that invite surprising answers that can help get there—

1. How did you form this belief? Do you have any formative experiences that really shaped how you see this?
2. How do you think people like me often misunderstand (purposefully or accidentally) your position? Could you help me overcome that misunderstanding?
3. What do you think I’m missing about how your position would improve the situation at hand that I’m not currently seeing? Can you help me get there?

Duncan: What are some common threads in what you learned about productive disagreements in your work at Amazon, X (formerly Twitter), and Slack?

Benson: When I talk about productive disagreement in the context of work and business, most people think I’m talking about having much longer conversations where everyone talks about their feelings, and every side is heard. What I’ve learned from my own experience at these companies is that the path toward productive disagreement can be as simple as saying, “Taking everything each of us knows and believes to be true, let’s each predict what would happen if we did proposal X? How about proposal Y?” Then, do either X or Y and see what happens, so that everyone can have a chance to learn from reality directly.

This is a humbling process, but it acknowledges the constraints we live in by keeping momentum moving forward while also training ourselves (whether we’re “right” or “wrong” initially) to be better at predicting the outcome of events. Leadership is almost

always willing to entertain this kind of productive disagreement, and will also have a chance to learn from it.



Personal application:

- Based on what you've learned here, how can you use disagreement to help you in collaborating with others?
- In what situations could you ask questions that might elicit “surprising answers” to promote mutual understanding?
- What can you do to challenge your own thinking more honestly?



Exclusive conversation with
Cheryl Bachelder

Why You Should Dare to Serve



By Rodger Dean Duncan

My friend Jim was hired by a huge agribusiness organization to take over as CEO. The business was in dire straits. It was losing market share, hemorrhaging cash, and morale was in the tank. Jim's mandate from the board was expressed in a single word: turnaround.

A few days after joining the troubled company, Jim walked into an early morning strategic planning meeting. You can imagine the attentiveness of all the eager beavers

trying to impress the new boss. When he first entered the room, Jim overheard a young man mention that his wife was in the hospital. Jim inquired about the woman's health, and the man said his wife was expecting a baby that was likely to be delivered that day.

"Let me make a deal with you," Jim told the young father-to-be. "I promise to give you a personal briefing on the outcome of this meeting if you'll rush over to the hospital where you belong. You'll get only one chance to witness the birth of your baby, and you don't want to miss it."

On the surface, that may seem like no more than a nice gesture. But it was the very kind of thoughtfulness—humble *service*—that enabled Jim to earn the trust and loyalty of his people. And, oh, by the way: after the very first year under Jim's leadership, the people in that company produced such an impressive turnaround that it became a case study at the Harvard Business School.

That kind of humble and collaborative leadership is featured in *Dare to Serve: How to Drive Superior Results By Serving Others*.

Author Cheryl Bachelder, former CEO of Popeyes, a multi-billion-dollar chain of more than 2,600 restaurants around the world, has gone far beyond researching and writing about purpose-driven leadership. Her own turnaround triumph at Popeyes gives authenticity to her message.

Cheryl's message is not just for CEOs. It applies to leaders at every level.

For example:

1. Spend time getting to know your team.
2. Set clear and inspiring expectations.
3. Cheer more than you critique.
4. Ask for feedback often and listen carefully.

Consider these insights from a woman who has tested and succeeded with the principles she professes.

Rodger Dean Duncan: Humility, it's been said, is not thinking less of yourself. It's thinking of yourself less. How does that apply to Dare-to-Serve leadership?

Cheryl Bachelder: The central idea of Dare-to-Serve Leadership is to courageously set aside self-interest and serve others. Not only does this make you a more effective leader, it accelerates the performance results of your team/organization.

I often challenge people to think of their very favorite boss—and to list the reasons why they loved to work for them. The list always includes mentions of ... she took time to get to know me, she grew my skills, she built my confidence, she took risks on me, she had

my back. This is a humble leader who took the time to serve you well. This is a leader who set you up for success. This is a leader who deeply cares about growing your capability. This is a leader not focused on his own resume, kudos, and accomplishments. This is someone you want to work hard for and give your very best.

As leaders, when we create an environment where the business plan is clear, focused and understood—and then we create a work environment that is safe for the team— they are encouraged to take risks and grow in capability. We will see incredible trust, loyalty, collaboration. And, oh yes, we will see results.

Duncan: What are other primary benefits of being a Dare-to-Serve leader?

Bachelder: There are five key benefits—

1. *Your team members will share more openly* their ideas, concerns, and observations. That openness will give you a truer picture of the business situation. This is because they trust you and they feel psychologically safe to tell you the truth.



Cheryl Bachelder

2. *Your team will be more likely to follow your vision.* Once they understand your vision, they will also see that your vision includes a valuable place for them—a place where they can contribute their best work. As a result, they will follow you, even if they are not 100% sure that you are right or that the plan will work.

3. *You won't need to micro-manage your team.* You will have empowered your team to act and make decisions. They will know you have their back if they make a mistake, so they'll be quicker and bolder in their actions.

4. *Your team will perform better.* A self-centered leader creates an anxious, unsafe workplace where people conclude it's just too risky to try things or to grow in capability. Alternatively, if you create a psychologically safe, trusting environment for your team they will stretch, stay later, try harder, and aim to please you with their very best contribution.

5. *Your team will have your back.* The team will watch for things going off course and quickly correct them. They will raise red flags when they see cross-functional break- downs. They will call the honor line when they see an ethical breach. They'll even tell you, the leader, when you've strayed from the right course.

Duncan: Being a Dare-to-Serve leader can require a considerable mind shift. What are some traps that must be avoided to make the shift?

Bachelder: At Popeyes, we bumped into mindset traps periodically that interfered with our desire to be Dare-to-Serve leaders. The first one was the need to be “right.” Any time

we faced disagreement with our franchise owners, this raised up like the hairs on the back of your neck. Leaders typically work hard to build a business plan, and they propose it to the organization because they truly believe it's the right thing to do. They have conviction about it. But if your team or customer or guests immediately challenge the plan, there's probably some feedback you need to hear. The only antidote to this mindset trap is to *pause*—then listen carefully and intently to the issues being raised.

The second mindset trap is frustration with your followers. The leader's role is often to persuade the people to follow. Sometimes they don't. It's that same feeling you have when your dog sits down on the sidewalk and refuses to complete his walk. Exasperation sets in pretty quickly. And similar to the dog situation, when this happens at work we tend to just talk louder or exert our authority. Then the people dig their heels in deeper. The antidote to this mindset trap is the even longer pause. Take a break. Delay the decision. Come back to it fresh later. Let all the emotion settle down before revisiting the matter.

A third mindset trap is when you find yourself *wishing* that the people trusted your leadership, but all the evidence indicates they don't. If we're honest with ourselves, lack of trust is insulting, or even hurtful. We feel like we've given people our best work, our time, our commitment, and now this lack of trust is a slap in the face. The antidote is to replace our childish thoughts and "*be the adult*." Allow the other party to express their concerns, even when you don't agree. Stay in a "high ground" conversation, restraining your emotions. And perhaps most difficult of all, express your trust in them. Extending trust is the first step to building trust.

Duncan: Peter Drucker said, "So much of what we call management consists in making it difficult for people to work." How can a Dare-to- Serve leader create a user-friendly work environment that makes excellent performance more likely?

Bachelder: In my experience, leaders are often too quick to conclude that their people are not up to the task. But leaders are far less likely to look in the mirror and ask themselves, *what am I doing* that's making it difficult for people to perform well? If the person or team is falling short of the desired results, here are just a few of the questions that you should ask yourself:

- Have I set crystal clear expectations on what needs to happen?
- Have I reduced the workload to the vital few initiatives that I believe will change the performance?
- Is there anything making the environment unsafe to take risks?
- Have I put the right people with the right skills in every position? Have I communicated and trained the principles of how you expect the team to work together?
- Have I invested my time in coaching and growing the capability of the team?

- Have I had the tough conversations to challenge the people to stretch and perform?
- Have I ensured that the resources, dollars and support are in place to accomplish the goal?

As the leader, you have a huge responsibility to set up the people for success. You create the environment for performance to occur. If the people are wandering around directionless, confused, unproductive, or stuck—that's on you. Do your job.

Duncan: Author and historian Studs Terkel said, “Work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread.” How can leaders be most effective in helping people discover (and treasure) meaning and purpose in their work?

Bachelder: Terkel also said, “Most of us ... have jobs that are too small for our spirits.” The Dilbert cartoons capture this well—the dreadful, boring, miserable workplaces that too many people find themselves in. And we laugh, as if it's hopeless. I believe differently. I believe work is actually the way many discover their unique design, their life's purpose, and the very meaning of life. I know that sounds theological and huge. But we spend a huge amount of our lifetime in a job of some kind, contributing in some fashion. Could we experience meaning at work?

Both the leader and the follower have a responsibility here. The leader can help the people discover that the work has a greater purpose. Some legacy companies have done this well. Zappos sells happiness, not shoes. Southwest Airlines was launched on the idea of democratizing the skies, allowing people of all incomes to travel. These higher order purposes are aspirational, motivational, and meaningful.

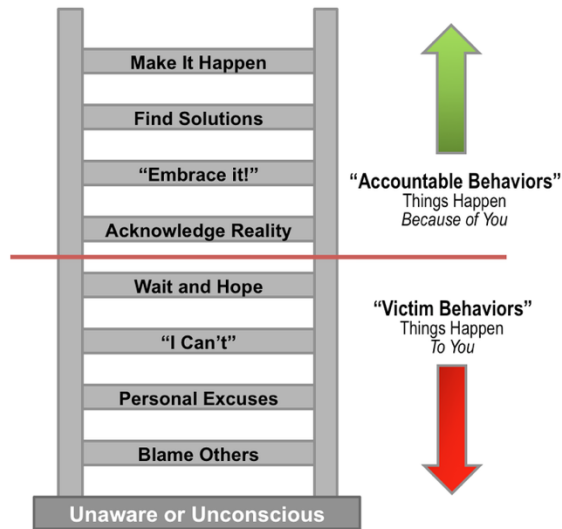
“Work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread.

At Popeyes, we led our people to understand that we served our franchise owners, a group of deeply invested entrepreneurs—more than 40% of them immigrants to America. The franchisees were pursuing the American dream, and we were here to help.

The follower's responsibility is to answer the question “Why do I work?” At Popeyes, we guided team members through a class called Journey to Purpose. We asked them to look at their strengths, their values, and their life experiences, then determine how they wanted to serve the team. We asked them to write down a statement of personal purpose and share it with their team. I can tell you that not everyone did this deeply and sincerely, but those who did contributed exemplary results. They were the high performers.

Duncan: Which principles and practices are most useful in holding a team accountable for high performance? And how can a team hold the leader accountable?

Bachelder: The most helpful tool I've found for teaching accountability is The Accountability Ladder, developed by Senn Delaney. The enemy of accountability is thinking powerless, victim thoughts. We all fall into this trap of thinking "the problem is that other department" or "that other person isn't carrying his weight." When we are challenged on our performance, we start making excuses, blaming things and others



that we think are outside of our control. But accountable people catch themselves in the victim mentality and consciously work their way up the ladder. They acknowledge their part of the reality. They own it. They start brainstorming new solutions And they pro-actively get going. I keep the accountability ladder nearby at all times.

Duncan: In his landmark book *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl famously said "When we are no longer able to change a situation ... we are challenged to change ourselves." How can that insight help inform a person's transition from self to serve in leadership orientation?

Bachelder: Looking squarely in the mirror is the best way to challenge your own leadership mindset. Say to yourself: "I claim to be concerned about the development of my team, but what exactly did I do today to put that into action? I say I'm a candid, direct communicator for my team, but today I avoided an important issue and let it fester for the team. I say I value respect toward my team, but I lost my temper today in a meeting and said some things I shouldn't have said."

In The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, Step 4 is *"Take a searching and fearless moral inventory of yourself."* If leaders do that daily, their actions will become more consistent and more congruent with their words. And that makes you a better leader for your team.



Personal application:

- What mindset traps might be holding you back from practicing Dare-to-Serve leadership?
- How can the Studs Terkel quotes influence your thinking about your own work?
- How can the Viktor Frankl quote influence your thinking about how you approach your work and manage your career?



Exclusive conversation with
Chip Conley

Is There Wisdom @ Work? in Your World?



By Rodger Dean Duncan

“Brain drain” sounds like a terrible medical condition. But it’s actually a term used by economists referring to a country’s loss of its most educated and talented workers to other countries.

The term also applies to individual companies and even whole industries that struggle with managing their talent resources.

A related—and common—challenge is managing the balance between fresh recruits and more seasoned workers. We live in a world that venerates smart young entrepreneurial go-getters while savvy veterans often feel invisible and undervalued.

Chip Conley has a solution: help people in midlife repurpose their knowledge and embrace their mastery and value, then show them how to reboot their careers and inject fresh vitality into their lives.

Conley is living the very doctrine he preaches.

At age 26, he founded Joie de Vivre Hospitality and turned it into the second largest boutique hotel brand in the U.S. He sold his company in 2010 when he was 50. He felt a bit adrift, unsure what to do with his energy and ambition. Then he got a call from a young entrepreneur named Brian Chesky who had founded a home-sharing start-up called Airbnb. Today, at age 58, Conley is Strategic Advisor for Hospitality and Strategy at Airbnb and has helped turn that online marketplace into the world's largest hospitality brand.

Conley says you don't have to be on the other side of 50 to be concerned about your value in the marketplace. "The age at which we're feeling self-consciously 'old' is creeping into some people's 30s," he says. "Power is cascading to the young in so many companies."

To help others navigate their careers, Conley has written *Wisdom @ Work: The Making of a Modern Elder*.

"This is the perfect time for elders to make a comeback," he says, "thanks to their ability to synthesize wise, empathetic solutions that no robot could ever imagine. In an era of machine intelligence, emotional intelligence and empathy—something older people have in spades—are more valuable than ever. The more high tech we become, the more high touch we desire."

Conley says it's time to liberate the term "elder" from the word "elderly." That paradigm shift, he believes, can help transform the workplace. And he offers tips on how to avoid getting lost in a career cul-de-sac.

Rodger Dean Duncan: For today's 30-something workers, life in their 60s and 70s may seem light years away. How can young professionals adopt a mindset that will serve them well several decades down the road?

Chip Conley: For the first time, we have five generations in the workplace so there's a lot we can learn from each other. It's almost like we have the ability to create an intergenerational potluck with everyone bringing to the feast what they do best. We're seeing the end of the traditional "three-stage life" in which people learn till they're 20-25, earn till they're 65 and retire till they die. Instead, today we'll see more and more people adopt a growth mindset in which they're committed to life-long learning.

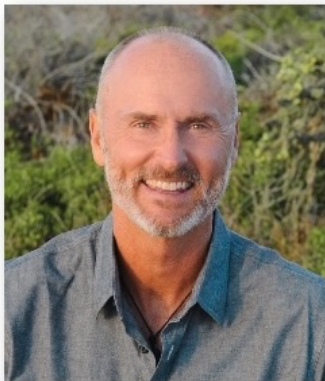
Duncan: Becoming an intern, you suggest, is a good way for people who feel “too old to evolve” to stay relevant. Can you give us an example?

Conley: As a way of staying relevant in an increasingly young and digital savvy industry, 71-year-old Doug McKinlay, an advertising professor at Brigham Young University, approached a friend at a Dallas-based ad agency, the Richards Group, about becoming a summer intern. The company paired Doug with a 25-year-old creative exec, with whom he quickly formed a symbiotic relationship. This benefited both men, as well as the agency. Doug now suggests that all advertising professors work inside an agency every five to seven years to ensure they’re up-to-speed on what’s new in the industry.

Duncan: You suggest that workers undergo a periodic “identity cleanse.” What exactly is that and what’s its purpose?

Conley: Development psychologist Erik Erikson suggested that each of us has an “invariable core” or an “existential identity” that is an integration of the past, present and future.

An “identity cleanse” allows you to purge some of the baggage of your LinkedIn profile and become more conscious of what’s essential in your experience and history. Reserve at least a couple of hours for this exercise as well as find a place to do this where you won’t be disturbed or distracted.



Chip Conley

I recommend doing this by yourself, but there’s some preparatory homework you could ask a minimum of a half-dozen co-workers, friends or family to complete. Ask them to answer the following, “When you think of me in good times and bad, what are the core qualities that I exhibit? What are the positive ones? And what are the more challenging ones?”

Before you read people’s answers, answer these questions yourself, being as candid as you can, knowing you don’t need to share this with anyone else. When in doubt, consider feedback you’ve gotten from past employee reviews. Make your list and then compare it with the answers you received from others. Can you identify your identity? What are the durable traits or qualities you want your reputation built upon? If you’re having a hard time determining them, think about when you feel most “in the flow” at work or what you’re doing when you easily lose track of time?

You’re probably experiencing some natural talent or aptitude. What habits or customs can you incorporate into your daily life that back up this trait or quality? For example, if you like that your invariable core is recognizing and appreciating people, does it make sense to create a habit that you will privately recognize two people with specific feedback in person at least, on average, twice per day?

Duncan: Adopting a beginner's mind is crucial to staying (or becoming more) relevant in the workplace. What are some helpful approaches to doing that?

Conley: A Modern Elder is as much an intern as they are a mentor which means that we need to be open to trying things that are new and unfamiliar. If you have a fixed mindset, this will be difficult as you're constantly trying to "prove" yourself and win. But, if you have a growth mindset, you're more focused on "improving" yourself and winning means learning. I found that asking a lot of "why" and "what if" questions—the kind you might hear from a five-year-old was more valuable than "what" and "how" questions which are more appropriate for a senior leader as these naïve questions often exposed blind spots in our thinking.

Duncan: William Yeats said "Education is not filling a pail. It's lighting a fire." How can that mindset help someone navigate the various stages of a career? How can it help organizations in their treatment of the all-important human resource?

Conley: You can fill a pail with knowledge, but what's particularly valuable in an organization is catalytic curiosity: a willingness to use appreciative inquiry to help a company imagining something bigger. I highly recommend that people do an online search for "Appreciative Inquiry" and learn some of the techniques for that kind of thinking.

Duncan: The root of the word "question" is "quest." What's your counsel to Modern Elders on how to hone the skill of asking questions that spur creativity and insight?

Conley: A question, thoughtfully conceived, can illuminate a room, a company, a life. Yet conceiving the proper question and then crafting the way of expressing it is an art.

Here are some helpful guidelines:

(a) Empower: Ask questions that give the receivers the feeling of being valued and that their opinions are worthwhile and respected. You can empower others by asking such questions as, "How do you feel about...?" or "Help me understand why you proposed that option?" or "Could you explain a little further?" Or you can use a

“ I highly recommend that people do an online search for ‘Appreciative Inquiry’

beginner's mind and start your inquiry with, "Pardon me for bringing up some- thing that might be obvious for everyone here..." or "Help me under- stand..." Subordinates can tell when the leader is asking questions to genuinely learn. The kind of inquiry I'm talking about derives from an attitude of interest and curiosity. It implies a desire to build a relation-

ship that will lead to more open communication. It also implies that one makes oneself vulnerable and, thereby, arouses positive helping behavior in the other person.

(b) Listen: Author Edgar Schein writes, "Try to minimize your own preconceptions, clear your mind at the beginning of the conversation, and maximize your listening as the conversation proceeds. In fact, the most important diagnostic that the other person will

use to decide whether or not you are interested is not only what you ask but also how well you hear the response. Humble inquiry can reduce the status or deference gap and lead to a more informal open exchange.”

(c) Put Your Heads Together: “Question-storming” exercises can be used as a substitute for conventional brainstorming sessions. The idea is to put a problem or challenge in front of a group of people and instead of asking for ideas, instruct participants to generate as many relevant questions as they can. One helpful rule is to ask that each inquirer start their brainstorming inquiry with a “What if” or “How might we” question. “What if” questions tend to have an expansive effect allowing us to think without limits.

(d) Be Goal-Oriented: Is there any collateral benefit you want to result from your inquiry? Ask yourself, “What do I want my question to accomplish?” Find an answer, reveal a blind spot, help someone establish their authority or regain their confidence, test underlying assumptions that haven’t been voiced, dive deeper into a subject that has previously only been superficially explored?

Duncan: What are some good ways to establish—and use—a peer-to- peer learning environment?

Conley: The future of business is all about “mutual mentorship.” At Airbnb, we encouraged people to learn from each other by expressing an interest in having coffee/tea to discuss intergenerational collaboration. For me, it was often learning DQ (digital intelligence) from Millennials while for my younger cohorts, it was learning EQ (emotional intelligence in the form of leadership and the like) from Boomers like me.

Duncan: Although they may see value in establishing a questioning culture, some people find it difficult to do. What are some traps to avoid?

Conley: Here’s how to avoid the traps that inhibit a questioning culture in many organizations:

(a) Avoid using questions like a hammer. In companies that swing the questioning pendulum too far in the direction of intense inquiry, you often find know-it-alls using questions as a way to stroke their ego and show off. When questions are used

““The future of business is all about ‘mutual mentorship.’”

as a hammer to drive an existing viewpoint rather than as a flashlight to shine light on new ones, you don’t elicit productive reflection. To remedy this, focus on empowering rather than disempowering questions. When in doubt, offer a healthy mix of authentic empathy and sharp curiosity in your questions.

(b) Know when it’s time for questioning and when it’s time for efficiency in decision-making and execution. A questioning culture can slow things down and, if it’s a hierarchical organization like the military, it can lead to confusion in strategy or

lack of leadership direction. So, it's important to recognize if your organization isn't built for questioning at times when the pressure is on, deadlines are looming, and stakes are high.

(c) Foster candor and psychological safety. Part of the reason many employees don't feel comfortable asking tough questions is a fear of reprisal for being a "troublemaker" - or even losing their job. Google found the #1 commonality of effective teams was creating a safe space for people to express themselves.

(d) Be clear that alignment is the ultimate goal of questioning. A questioning culture is not synonymous with democratic decision-making, although they're often confused to be the same. Companies that do this well make very clear when it's the right time for questions and potential disagreements and when it's time to align.

(e) Make sure senior leaders are actively engaged in the questioning process. If senior leaders don't actively take part in the questions and debate, whether it's because they're not in the room or because they are preoccupied on their phones or laptops, it sends a deadening signal to everyone else. Additionally, when a truth has been uncovered through the questioning process, but senior leadership doesn't see it or take action, this can dissuade energy expended by the group in a future debate.



Personal application:

- What can you be doing—now—to help prepare yourself for a productive and joyful life in your 60s or 70s?
- In what ways could you provide—or benefit from—a mentoring relationship with someone of a different generation?
- What questions could you put in your conversation toolkit that could help you connect with and learn from others?



Exclusive conversation with
Beverly Kaye

Career Mobility? Up is Not the Only Way



By Rodger Dean Duncan

For many organizations, the second most expensive thing that can happen is for their best and most capable people to quit and leave. Studies show that replacing a good employee can cost up to 150% of a person's annual salary and benefits package.

Losing good people is costly. But I believe the number one most expensive thing that can happen to an organization is for its best and most capable people to quit and *stay*. Disengagement is deadly. No organization can afford to subsidize people who are R.O.A.D warriors (Retired On Active Duty).

The smart approach—one that works to the benefit of all parties—is to foster a culture that makes career management *everyone's* responsibility. A culture that emphasizes collaboration and accountability by everyone in the workplace. A culture that replaces old career paradigms with new ones better suited to the 21st century.

That's the focus of *Up is not the only way: Rethinking Career Mobility* by Beverly Kaye, Lindy Williams, and Lynn Cowart.

I visited with Beverly Kaye about her decades-long work with career issues. Dr. Kaye is recognized internationally as one of the most knowledgeable and practical experts on career development and employee engagement.

Rodger Dean Duncan: In discussing issues related to career mobility, you use the term “ownershift.” What does that word denote for individuals, managers, coaches, mentors, and organizations?

Beverly Kaye: In the organizational career development field, many talk about “ownership” in terms of the responsibilities of the key players in creating a sustainable system in an organization.



Beverly Kaye

If a career initiative is to be effective there are usually three stakeholders—the manager, the employee and the organization (senior management and HR leaders). Managers need to support the development of their employees. Employees need to take charge of their own career paths.

Individuals must shift their reliance on their managers to support their careers and instead reach out to others in the organization and in their extended networks for the help they need to realize their full potential. This mindset shift is not just “I own my career” (again, nice words), but to the commitment that I’ll hold myself accountable to actively pursue the people, information, and opportunities that are necessary to meet my goals.

Duncan: What role do managers play in this?

Kaye: The ownershift that managers need moves them from a vague notion of “support” as in “I’ll schedule a meeting” to “I will actively recommend other opportunities on the job or elsewhere in our organization in order to further the growth of those who report to me.” These managers subscribe to the notion of letting people go to grow.

Organizations also need to shift from merely stating admirable intentions on their websites and in their recruiting efforts to putting their promises into practice. A key is to hold managers accountable for the development of their teams in terms of rewards and consequences.

I rarely see organizations taking concrete action vis à vis this responsibility. They say “we expect,” but they don’t *inspect*. Career information is more available on the Internet than ever before, and many of the more successful companies have strengthened the internal resources they offer. One related “mind-shift” is to actively market the fact that they have this information and make its access clear and easy to find.

Ownershift happens when all three stakeholders make the necessary shifts in their actions to support career growth.

Duncan: As they manage their careers, you urge people to turn in their telescopes and pick up their kaleidoscopes. What behaviors and practices do you mean to highlight with that metaphor?

Kaye: This metaphor paints the most immediate visual. We want to move people away from putting all their energy and efforts into achieving a singular goal. Instead, we encourage them to look at the bigger (more colorful) picture and its different configurations. We want them to know that one small twist of the kaleidoscope has a tremendous effect on what one sees—it always presents a new and different picture/scenario. When people become more aware of what is in their own periphery, their range of possibilities expands.

Growth in today’s business environment means bidding adieu to the old thinking about career ladders and restrictive career paths. The new way of thinking about career mobility means a continuing series of moves—up, down, laterally, around, and over. I think today’s organization chart should look more like an “orbit-ization” chart (although lacking sufficient graphic design skills, I wouldn’t know how to draw one) where individuals move frequently and for different periods of time, from assignment to assignment, from team to team. They orbit around a problem or a key person, knowing that orbits often change depending on the evolving needs of the organization.

Agility has become a hip, cool word, drawn originally from the technical world. Being an agile “careerist” (my word) means seeing multiple patterns instead of the more structured career path with stop signs along the way.

“Growth in today’s business environment means bidding adieu to the old thinking about career ladders.

Duncan: For a growing number of people, lateral career moves make more sense than they once did. What are some of the questions a person should ask when exploring a lateral move?

Kaye: Today, moving *sideways* doesn’t mean you are *sidelined*. The lateral move is beginning to be viewed more positively. In fact, some organizations are already calling this kind of mobility a “lateral promotion,” and are even touting the new catchphrase that “over is the new up.”

In truth, serving in a variety of lateral positions enables one to have broader knowledge of the organization and this is now an invaluable asset. Taking a role at a similar level

broadens perspective and provides a more holistic view of the business. It activates a new and expanded network, and it builds agility which is crucial.

A career-focused individual would do a deeper exploration of a lateral opportunity if it's a move they are considering. More than even asking others these questions, savvy careerists will ask these of themselves:

- What specific new competencies will I learn?
- How might this open new routes to other positions?
- How will this build my marketability in the broader organization?
- What are some specific learning opportunities that could be cultivated?
- How will this round out my resumé? What technical and management competencies are essential for me to have?
- What are some competencies that this opportunity will provide?
- How will this opportunity expand my network?
- Who would I most like to learn from?
- What part of this opportunity would be the most challenging for me?
- Who will be my manager, and what do I know about that person?
- What parts of this new experience am I least looking forward to?
- How will my own world expand?

If it's carefully thought through and if one takes advantage of the expanded learning and visibility that comes with a lateral move, new opportunities will undoubtedly present themselves. Bottom line, a lateral step offers another perspective—a new lens and an opportunity to add to one's skill reservoir or fine tune a particular capability that needs polishing. The person who gets hands-on experience in multiple areas learns functional interdependencies and gains a deeper understanding of just how the organization works. What could be better?

Duncan: What can, or should, organizations do to encourage employees to take a more creative (or at least a less traditional) view toward managing their own careers?

Kaye: The benefit in terms of engagement and retention should be enough to motivate any organization and its leaders to make some small but significant changes in the way career information is disseminated and supported.

Some basic ideas for organizations that want to support their employees in thinking more creatively about their own development include:

- Prepare employees on the “how to’s” of building their individual development plans. It’s one thing to suggest that employees “own” their own careers and another to actually teach them the essential elements to consider.
- Educate managers on the art and science of holding career conversations. These conversations can actually be taught. Managers often have the will but not the skill. Organizations can deliver the specifics.
- Collect stories of individuals who have followed alternative career paths. Some organizations video these stories or capture them in print and make them available. The best way to show that there are a variety of career paths is to highlight stories of individuals who have lived/are living them.
- Make career coaching available. Some bring in professional coaches who are available to employees. Others have actual career centers that provide information and coaching. The most exciting that I’ve seen are organizations that tap into their own talent to voluntarily coach fellow employees, talk about their own experiences, and share their lessons learned.
- Capture, curate, and disseminate career information to all employees and managers. Such information is meant to inform everyone about opportunities throughout the organization, show career path alternatives, provide future skill requirements. All this will open channels wider and deeper.

Duncan: What are some of the telltale signs that a person should consider an employment change—either a different kind of job, or a new employer, or both?

Kaye: The signs are plentiful. The challenge is to recognize them in yourself as well as in those that report to you, and to engage in the conversation that is begging to be held. Telltale signs include—

- Indifference about going to work, wanting to pull the proverbial blanket over your head in the morning
- Being bored with work that once was exciting and interesting
- Loss of creativity for approaching problems that inevitably arise, and having no patience for dealing with those problems
- Feeling like a dinosaur, seeing younger people leap-frogging ahead
- Change in organizational hierarchy so there’s no longer a connect and a belief in leadership

- Scope changes in expectations so the new demands are not attractive or motivating
- Volunteering for special committees or projects is no longer attractive
- Loss of passion for what you do
- Disruptive technology makes it difficult to keep up
- Reporting to a manager who doesn't value your work



Personal application:

- Based on what you've learned here, what can you do to become more agile in managing your own career?
- Which of the questions posed by Bev be most helpful to you?
- Do you detect signs that you should consider a career change? If so, what's your plan?



Exclusive conversation with
Dan Cable

How to Breathe Excitement into Mind-Numbing Work



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Many organizations have it all wrong. They don't just need to motivate their people. They need to stop demotivating them.

If you've seen the results of recent research, you know the typical workplace needs a major overhaul. In fact, multiple studies show that the modern workplace is plagued with chronically low levels of employee engagement. The Gallup organization estimates

that disengagement is costing American companies \$450 billion to \$550 billion per year.

You might think such findings—which have remained painfully steady for many years—would result in changes. Yet many work environments still leave employees feeling stifled, unappreciated, and eager to update their LinkedIn profiles to search for the next job.

Social psychologist Dan Cable has some compelling ideas for making all this better. He's author of *Alive at Work: The Neuroscience of Helping Your People Love What They Do*.

In this conversation, Cable—a professor of organizational behavior at London Business School—offers suggestions on how to encourage self-expression and experimentation to help employees see how their work impacts and benefits others. In other words, how to replace discouragement with engagement.

Rodger Dean Duncan: What are the most common demotivators in the workplace?

Dan Cable: There are so many opportunities to demotivate someone, such as a colleague who is a “taker-jerk” and gets all the credit, or a power-hungry boss who's more focused on his/her next career move than helping the team get better. I focus on the demotivation we experience when we shut off our seeking systems—the part of our brains that craves exploration and learning and that gives us hits of dopamine when we follow its urges.

The seeking system gets activated by three things: encouraging people to (a) play to their strengths, (b) experiment and learn, and (c) feel a sense of purpose.



Dan Cable

These three ingredients are often missing in the recipe of large organizations. I don't think most leaders are evil and I don't think most leaders try to squash people's souls. But I do think most leaders have been trained for—and are rewarded for—efficiency and predictability. So, organizations have metrics and controls and policies to standardize employee behaviors, and to punish employees when they haven't done what was expected.

In general, this makes us feel standardized and processed as we spend most of our awake hours pursuing repetitive tasks that feel a bit disconnected from the bigger picture. We find ourselves disengaging from these sorts of environments. The worldwide polls

show that about 70% of employees are not engaged with their work, and 17% are “actively” disengaged. These are people who are not only unmotivated—they are repelled by what they do all day.

But get this: we're talking about an evolutionary tendency to disengage from tedious activities here. That doesn't sound so bad, does it? Taken out of the modern workplace, it kind of makes sense, right? Low motivation and disengagement from tedious, meaningless tasks isn't some kind of "bug" in our mental makeup. It's a feature. It's our body's way of telling us that we were designed do better things—to keep exploring and learning. This is our biology. It's part of our adaptive unconscious to know that our human potential is being wasted.

Duncan: Your research shows that many people suffer from “learned helplessness.” Exactly what is that, and how is it manifested in the workplace?

Cable: Many employees find themselves caught in a crossfire between their biological seeking systems and their organizational realities. Their built-in biology urges them to explore their environments, experiment and learn, and assign meaning. But most people work in organizations where they don't feel that it is possible to do any of these things. After being shut down and punished a few times for using creativity instead of following the rules, employees begin to ignore the urges of their seeking systems. This means they

“Low motivation and disengagement from tedious, meaningless tasks ... is our body's way of telling us we were designed to do better things.

shut off the dopamine and learn to shut down and just “take it.” They end up making a living but not a life.

Learned helplessness manifests itself in negative emotional states. We grow resigned and it lowers our motivation. When we learn helplessness, we no longer even try.

Duncan: What kind of environment is most likely to motivate people to share ideas, work smarter, and embrace change?

Cable: The positive emotions that emerge from an activated seeking system (curiosity, excitement, zest) are functional in triggering exploration, innovation and positive relationships with others. These emotions have downstream organizational implications such as releasing employee energy, enthusiasm, and creativity. For example, as curiosity and excitement increase, so does creative problem solving, because people are better able to marshal their cognitive resources to cope with the task at hand instead of being encumbered by fear and threat.

Duncan: What role does a leader's personal humility (or lack of it) play in helping people become and stay engaged in their work?

Cable: To prompt employees' curiosity, self-expression, and learning through experimentation, a leader can start with the humble purpose of serving others and being open to learning from employees. Research shows that when leaders express humility and share their own developmental journeys, they end up encouraging a learning mindset in others. Ironically, humble leadership works not by demanding perfection, but its opposite—by showing that humans are never perfect and must explore, fail, and practice in order to learn and improve.

For example, some medical teams did not adopt a new method of open-heart surgery, even though it was safer, less invasive and painful, and improved recovery time. The new procedure, which involved special equipment to access the heart through an incision between the ribs, was a source of anxiety. For “God-Complex” know-it-all doctors, the new procedure presented the chance of failure. They did not want to give up power to serve their full team, including nurses. Even though the new approach was better for patients, many doctors continued with the old approach, and lost relevance.



Personal application:

- Be honest. Do you ever suffer from “learned helplessness” at work? If so, what can you do to offset that condition with a more can-do approach to your job?
- What can you do to help create a work environment that’s encouraging and uplifting to people?
- How can you do a better job of serving others, regardless of where they are on the organization chart?



Exclusive conversation with
Gail Golden

You Can't Do It All, and That's Perfectly Okay



By Rodger Dean Duncan

“Put first things first” is one of those self-improvement prescriptions with a very high “Oh, duh!” factor. As in “Oh, duh! Everybody knows that.”

Trouble is, almost everybody ignores the prescription.

Sure, most people know that family is (or at least should be) more important than work. Sure, most people know that physical exercise, good sleep and a sensible diet are crucial for good health. Sure, most people know that the best relationships are built on real conversation and interaction, not screen time with Facebook and Instagram.

But most people still seem to struggle with a perennial question: “How can I deploy my attention and energy to the greatest benefit of what I value most?”

Does this sound like you? Then you should get acquainted with Dr. Gail Golden. Founder and president of an international management consulting firm, she’s a practicing psychologist who coaches senior leaders of Fortune 1000 and non-profit organizations.

Gail is author of *Curating Your Life: Ending the Struggle for Work-Life Balance*.

“Cooking with 17 pots on a four-burner stove is what so many of us try to do,” she says. “We somehow believe we can stretch our energy capacity more and more to accommodate a ridiculous number of activities. We must select and organize to get ahead, to be more productive, and to have an impact.”

Her approach? She says that much the same as a museum curator creates a pleasing and meaningful exhibit by sorting, selecting, and arranging artifacts for a collection, we can be more productive and fulfilled when we learn to “curate”—sort, select, and arrange—our commitments.

Gail offers some smart and workable ideas on how to do it.

Rodger Dean Duncan: On the subject of evaluating how to manage our lives, you say most of us make the cardinal mistake of comparing our own insides to other people’s outsides. What does that mean?

Gail Golden: One of the ways we measure how well we’re doing is to compare ourselves to others, especially to people we admire. They look so well put-together. They’re getting so much done and they never seem frazzled and overwhelmed.

Meanwhile we’re very aware of how inadequate and frayed we feel. It’s really important to recognize that those people who look so cool and calm are often just as stressed out as we are—they’re just hiding it very well. And often, others are looking at us and thinking we’re the ones who have it all together!

Duncan: The word “curate” means to select and organize something— such as a collection of books or music albums. How does that idea apply to the way we can manage our lives?

Golden: If you create a collection by putting *everything* into it, you won’t have a very satisfying or interesting collection. You have to make choices, which means eliminating some items, even if they’re beautiful or valuable, because they just don’t fit.



Gail Golden

Curation is also about distinguishing between the really important items that are the main focus of your collection, and the secondary items that don't deserve as much prominence.

In your life, that means figuring out where it's okay to be just "good enough" so you have the energy to be great in the areas that really matter to you.

Duncan: Most people who struggle with life management have a few "limiting beliefs." What's a good way to identify those beliefs?

Golden: One way is to notice where you're making choices that don't work well for you, especially if you make the same mistake over and over again. Another is to listen for that voice inside your head that relentlessly tells you what a loser you are.

Sometimes you can do this work on your own, but often it's helpful to have a coach who can help you do the detective work to identify and challenge those "limiting beliefs."

Duncan: Once a limiting belief is identified, what steps can be taken to replace it with a belief that's more useful?

Golden: Sometimes there's a powerful moment when you recognize that limiting belief and realize that it doesn't have to control you anymore. Then you can begin to challenge it and liberate yourself from the harm it's doing to you. With that negative, critical voice in your head, one of my favorite tactics is to ask myself, "Would I talk to anyone else the way I'm talking to myself?" If the answer is no, then it's time to craft a kinder, more rational internal dialogue.

Duncan: How can people get better at saying no to activities imposed on them by work colleagues or even friends and family?

Golden: Saying no to people you respect or care about is hard. Often, we need to practice those conversations in advance, to be sure that we're being clear and respectful to the other person. It can help to think about what the other person's agenda is and keep that in mind, even as you are being firm about your "no."

Duncan: It's clearly important for people to focus their energy on things that are really important to them. What self-reflection process do you recommend for identifying those things honestly?

“Saying no to people you respect or care about is hard.

Golden: There are assessment tools and surveys that can help you to identify your values and priorities. It's also helpful to be aware of when you are feeling excited, engaged, and productive. For example, I gave a keynote address on the topic of curating your life that

was a huge success. As I stepped down from the podium, I felt like a million bucks. And that's what inspired me to write my book.

Duncan: You suggest that people should give themselves permission to embrace mediocrity. Please elaborate.

Golden: I think this is probably the most controversial part of my curation model, because our culture teaches is that mediocrity is never acceptable. But the truth is, if you try to be great at everything, you'll probably be great at nothing, and you'll wear yourself out in the process. As I said before, by accepting those places in your life where "good enough" is good enough, you'll have the energy to focus on the things that really matter.

Duncan: How can the "curating your life" approach be helpful to people who want to reinvent themselves in the middle of or late in their careers?

Golden: One of the key concepts in life curation is that you have to re-curate at different phases of your life. Just as museum exhibits have to change over the years to stay relevant and interesting, so does our life "exhibit." The priorities that matter to you when you're 25 are very unlikely to be the same when you're 65. Staying engaged and productive requires that we re-evaluate our choices every few years to be sure we're being true to who we are now.

“If you try to be great at everything, you'll probably be great at nothing, and you'll wear yourself out in the process.”

Duncan: "Relationship curation" is another part of your approach to life management. What exactly is that?

Golden: An important part of relationship curation is balancing your needs with your partner's needs. Life curation is not about being self-absorbed and ignoring the people around you, nor is it about pleasing others at the expense of yourself. It's about making choices that serve what is really important to you, and for most of us, that includes bringing joy to the people we love.

Duncan: How can business leaders increase the productivity in their organizations by encouraging team members to be life curators?

Golden: They can be good role models in their own work styles, setting reasonable expectations for when their people have to be "on," and sometimes protecting their team members from their unreasonable expectations of themselves.

Curation is a key element in getting the best performance from your people, both because they are using their energy in a focused and efficient manner and because they are finding meaning and joy in what they are doing.



Personal application:

- Okay, be honest. What are some things you can let go of to make room for things that really matter?
- What are some of your “limiting” beliefs? What impact are they having on your life? What beliefs could be more useful to you? Next steps?
- In what circumstances can you give yourself permission to embrace mediocrity without jeopardizing your overall effectiveness?



Exclusive conversation with
Shawn Askinosie

How to Find Meaning in Work, Chocolate, and Monks



By Rodger Dean Duncan

It's a sobering thought, but many people spend at least half of their waking hours—for their entire adult lives—at work. Not with their families and other loved ones. Not with their hobbies or community service. But on the job.

So, doesn't it make sense to do work that nourishes the soul as well as the bank account? Doesn't it make sense to do whatever is necessary to find fulfillment in activity that consumes so much of the time we have on earth?

Shawn Askinosie thinks so. He left a successful career as a criminal defense lawyer to establish a bean-to-bar chocolate factory. He never looked back.

Askinosie Chocolate, based in Springfield, Missouri, is a triumphant success by any standard. The company sources 100% of its cocoa beans in direct trade with farmers on three continents. Its products have won multiple awards. Askinosie Chocolate—with a workforce of only 15 people—was named one of Forbes’ 25 Best Small Companies in America.

Aside from the sweet success on the balance sheet, the company is hyper-focused on what Askinosie calls “reverse scale”—constantly asking not how big can a product or project scale but how it will transform people.

Some of that is distilled in Askinosie’s book, *Meaningful Work: A Quest to Do Great Business, Find Your Calling, and Feed Your Soul*.

I visited with Shawn to get a flavor of his recipe for making the most of work.

Rodger Dean Duncan: Even in this age of more employment options than ever, many people feel trapped in their jobs. What advice do you offer people who want more satisfaction from their current work?

Shawn Askinosie: All of the principles I outline in my book apply to both storylines: leave your job for something else or stay and find meaningful work right where you are.

Many people tell me they are miserable and unfulfilled in their work, but they have no concept of what to do differently. I believe in the power of a vocation and in the ability to discover your own personal vocation. Once the picture of personal vocation is sharpened, you’ll have clarity to make decisions in your business and work life.

You could stay right where you are and transform the job you’re doing right now into one of meaning. The key is understanding the virtue of stability. Without a personal vocation, you can sell your business and buy another business or quit your job and find a new one many times over and still find yourself in the same place.

Duncan: How can people find purpose in work that seems humdrum, repetitive, or “just a job”?



Shawn Askinosie

Askinosie: Walking along, a person encountered a stonemason and inquired as to what he was doing. The mason replied, “I am working on these heavy rocks, carrying and chiseling them all day long so I can get paid.” Walking further he asked another mason what he was doing and that mason replied, “I’m a stone mason, building a great cathedral to the Glory of God in which people will come to worship for centuries in the future.” The difference between the cathedral builder and a

stonemason? Attitude, even though they have the same “job.” The title of the job is not what gives us dignity. It’s the attitude we bring to the task at hand.

To create an environment in which people have the best chance of believing their work is significant, we must believe it to be true. Every person has the basic human right to believe and know the work that they do matters. No work is insignificant. Martin Luther King said, “All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.”

It would be easy for our company’s four-person packaging team to regard their tasks as menial. But our packaging is recognized and awarded because each of them cares deeply about executing every small piece with excellence. They know their work contributes to the growth of our company, and money in the hands of farmers.

Our job as business leaders is to set the stage for success every day. Every businessperson might ask: “What are the things we can do in our organization to make it more likely that our team members see themselves as building a great cathedral?”

Duncan: Gallup surveys show workplace morale at an all-time low. What can business leaders do to help their people enjoy genuine engagement in their work?

Askinosie: Whether you call it culture, environment, foundation, servant leadership or more formally “core values”—it begins with how you make your employees feel.

We must get a handle on the space where people spend eight hours a day. They will breathe, work, talk, think, create, interact, laugh, hope, dream, eat, and drink in this space. Our hearts are present, so let’s stop pretending we need to leave them out of business. Of course, our employees possess dignity outside of or apart from their work. But why wouldn’t we aim to cultivate an environment where they feel those same values about their job? In all humility, we must do everything we can to prepare and take care of our workplace culture as if it is a treasure.

One of the precepts of our vocation is service to each other within the company. There’s something we do at the chocolate factory to show our appreciation for our employees. It’s simple, no cost, and one of the most impactful things I’ve seen. In addition to birthdays, we celebrate what we call “work-iversaries.” When it’s someone’s work-iversary, we take time at the conclusion of our Tuesday huddle and recognize that

“Our hearts are present, so let’s stop pretending we need to leave them out of business.

person with a favorite food or drink. Most importantly though, everyone forms a semicircle around the celebrated person and one-by-one we tell them what we love, admire, respect, or appreciate about them. The person says nothing, they just take it all in. Sometimes there are tears—the good kind.

Duncan: Many people listen to an internal radio station WIIFM (What’s In It For Me?). But when you coach people in how to discover satisfying vocations, you advise

that they should expect nothing in return. Why? And how do you help people adopt the more selfless orientation?

Askinosie: The “expect nothing in return” advice is part of the paradox of service: find yourself by losing yourself in the service of others.

The idea is that once we are living our vocation, we need to realize that it’s not a destination at which we “arrive.” Therefore, we take this notion of service day by day in order to remain tethered to our life of meaningful work. I’m not saying that business folks should never expect profit or a healthy company, not at all. This principle is specifically related to the part of the process of maintaining our connections to the people and ideas that brought us this work in the first place.

Duncan: What are the three or four most important questions you ask when coaching a would-be entrepreneur?

Askinosie: 1. Where does it hurt? (If it doesn’t hurt, then we have more work cut out for us than I thought.) 2. Why are you waiting to take the first step with your great ideas of service? 3. Have you experienced joy at work? Tell me about it. 4. Have you pressure tested your idea financially?

Duncan: In addition to your activity as a business entrepreneur, you’re a “Family Brother” at a Trappist monastery. What do you do in that role, and how does it relate to the principles you practice as a businessperson?

Askinosie: My time at Assumption Abbey offers me a personal respite regardless of what’s going on in my business or life. I use my time upon return to the world to practice bringing the Abbey with me so it can be with me wherever I go and in whatever I do.

The Abbey enables me to unplug from technology, rest in God’s presence and re-center to my true self. The lack of Wi-Fi and cell service somewhat forces that reality, but I often need that push to truly disconnect and decompress. I live behind the cloister and follow the monks’ regular schedule of prayer, which begins every day at 3:30 AM.

Duncan: What effect does that have on you?

Askinosie: The practice of solitude trains me to listen to my own voice, my true self. The solitude I find at the Abbey benefits my business. I’m a collaborative entrepreneur. I seek input from all sides and enjoy discussing and vetting decisions with others.

As a Family Brother, I share in all aspects of the Trappist tradition as lived in Assumption Abbey, including residing in private rooms, sharing a simple and frugal lifestyle, working, participating in the Divine Office and Eucharist, community gatherings and discussions. I connect to this community as one expression of my faith. This life practice allows nearly everything else I do—business or otherwise—to flow from it. It’s my center point.



Personal application:

- How could the idea of “work-iversaries” be used in your work- place to build a sense of purpose and increase unity and mutual appreciation?
- What outside-the-job activities can you find in your life that will help bring meaning and purpose to your work?
- What “cathedrals” can you and your workmates build?