Volume 5

LeaderSHOP

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

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

LeaderSHOP

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Exclusive conversation with
Jon Clifton

What 'Happiness' Really Means to Your Life, Work, and Wellbeing

By Rodger Dean Duncan

More than three decades ago, folk and jazz artist Bobby McFerrin soared to number one on the charts with his pop hit "Don't Worry, Be Happy."

Happiness, of course, is in the eye and heart of the beholder. But however you may define or measure happiness for yourself, it's likely something to which you aspire.

There's no shortage of opinions on happiness:

- “I have chosen to be happy because it’s good for my health.” – Voltaire

- “Happiness is a journey, not a destination.” – Buddha

- “A person needs just three things to be truly happy: Someone to love, something to do, and something to hope for.” – Tom Bodett

- “If you want to be happy, do not dwell in the past, do not worry about the future, focus on living fully in the present.” – Roy T. Bennett

- “It isn’t what you have or who you are or where you are or what you are doing that makes you happy or unhappy. It’s what you think about it.” – Dale Carnegie

And then there was young Anne Frank, one of the most-discussed Jewish victims of the Holocaust: “Think of all the beauty still left around you and be happy.”

All the philosophizing aside, a lot of people haven’t taken Bobby McFerrin’s advice to heart. Unhappiness is not only increasing around the world, it’s rising at unprecedented rates. It’s a phenomenon, in some ways like the supply chain crisis, that affects all of us—often in ways we never imagined.

Jon Clifton, CEO of the Gallup organization, sheds light on this crucial issue in his book *BLIND SPOT: The Global Rise of Unhappiness and How Leaders Missed It.*

In helping leaders and organizations sole their most pressing problems, Gallup is the gold standard in survey research and analytics. By combining more than eight decades of experience with its global reach, Gallup likely knows more about the attitudes and behaviors of employees, customers, students, and citizens than any other organization in the world.

Whether you lead an organization, a team, or focus only on your own health and wellbeing, Clifton offers enlightening, research-based insights.

Rodger Dean Duncan: Why does happiness not seem to be on the radar of most leaders—whether political, business, or otherwise?


Jon Clifton

Jon Clifton: If you gave world leaders a pop quiz on the state of their economies, stock markets, inflation, or even gas prices, all of them would ace it. But if you asked them about the global state of stress, sadness, or anger, most would fail. Why? Because almost none are systematically tracking how people feel in their countries.

The same goes with private sector leaders. Some measure employee satisfaction, but they measure it poorly—or treat it as a box to check. If you don’t believe me, ask an executive this: “How many of your employees are thriving?”

Duncan: Tell us a bit about Gallup's global research on happiness. What are the objective and subjective indicators, and how is the research conducted?

Clifton: There are two ways to understand how people's lives are going. The first is to describe their life objectively—do they have a job? How much money do they make? Are they overweight? All these things are "objective" measures because how much someone weighs or how much someone makes isn't really a matter of opinion.

The second way to understand a person's life is from *their* point of view—how do they feel every day? Do they experience a lot of anger? Do they laugh and smile a lot? Do they experience a lot of sadness?

If you want to know how someone is feeling, all you have to do is ask them. Every year, we conduct interviews in more than140 countries and ask people about how their life is going. In roughly 40 countries, we conduct interviews over the phone and in another 100, we conduct the interviews in person.

It's remarkable how open and honest people are about how they are feeling. For example, in 2021, 28% of people openly told a stranger (a Gallup interviewer) they experience a lot of sadness.

Duncan: Why is it important to measure both positive and negative emotions?

Clifton: You might think that if a person experiences a lot of positive emotions, they therefore feel very few negative emotions; and if someone feels a lot of negative emotions, they therefore experience very few positive emotions. Turns out, that's not always true. Humans can experience a lot of emotions or very few emotions at all, which is why you need to measure both.

> "If you want to know how someone is feeling, all you have to do is ask them.

For example, if you go to the funeral of a beloved grandparent, you may experience pain and sadness. But you also might laugh and smile with family members remembering the good times with the loved one you lost. You may have cried and smiled a lot the same day.

Duncan: In addressing the issue of what constitutes a great life, Gallup focuses on five elements or dimensions: Work, Social, Financial, Physical, Community. Why those five? And where's the spiritual component?

Clifton: The happiest people in the world almost always have five things in common—they are engaged in their work, their finances are in good shape, they have friends that look out for them, they are physically healthy, and they live in communities where people help each other. It's really hard not to be happy if all of those are happening in your life.

In my opinion, spirituality influences all of them, depending on each person's beliefs and culture.

Duncan: You quote Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman as saying that "increasing happiness and reducing misery are very different things" and that rather than focusing on boosting happiness "it is a responsibility of society to try to reduce misery." How can Gallup's research help people think differently about addressing the issue of happiness?

Clifton: Dr. Kahneman's point is that while improving global happiness is an important mission, a higher mission may be improving the life experiences of those who are suffering. They are two very different activities.

Most global research focuses on how people see their life and it is measured by asking people to rate their life on a scale of zero to ten. This probably best measures "contentment" instead of happiness, and it highly correlates with money. There is a lot more to life—and understanding how much anger, stress, and sadness a person experiences is fundamental to knowing if they have an overall great life. Those negative indicators are what we find are increasing dramatically, which is where leaders need to focus.

A Great Job, a Miserable Job, and Unemployment – the Emotional Difference

	Great Job (Engaged)	**Indifferent at work** (Not engaged)	**Miserable Job** (Actively disengaged)	**Unemployed**
Negative experiences				
Sadness	24%	27%	42%	43%
Anger	16%	19%	29%	26%
Physical pain	31%	32%	42%	36%
Stress	28%	36%	50%	44%
Worry	37%	44%	59%	57%
Positive experiences				
Respect	95%	92%	81%	88%
Smile and laugh	87%	80%	64%	71%
Enjoyment	83%	75%	54%	62%
Well-rested	78%	71%	57%	70%
Learn	72%	61%	43%	50%

Duncan: We have plenty of data on employee engagement. To what extent—and how—is engagement related to happiness?

Clifton: Most people spend 85,000 to 110,000 hours of their life working. The only thing they do more is sleep. So, what happens at work hugely impacts how your overall life is going.

In fact, work is so impactful, that if you are actively disengaged at work, you are more likely to experience stress, worry, and physical pain than someone who is unemployed. You are also less likely to feel well-rested, experience enjoyment, and smile and laugh.

If you can get a job where someone cares about your development, you have the ability to do what you do best, and you have a great relationship with your colleagues—it dramatically decreases the possibility of sadness, anger, or any negative emotions in your life. The same is true with positive emotions—all of them increase when you are engaged at work.

The solution to the world's rising unhappiness is right in front of everyone's face—it's creating better jobs.

Duncan: In the face of a challenge as profound as a global pandemic, many people report increasingly negative outlooks while others are more positive and hopeful. What factors cause (or enable) people to respond to the same adversity so differently?

Clifton: Covid impacted all of us very differently. For instance, you and I could keep doing our work when the world was shutting down—many physical laborers were out of work. Families with children were vastly more disrupted than those without. People with a compromised family member were under very different self-imposed guidelines.

Duncan: What's the difference between the way people *see* their lives (life evaluation) and the way they *live* their lives (life experiences)?

Clifton: The way people *see* their life overall compared to how they *experience* life day to day are very different, so you have to measure both. For example, we find that people with children compared to those without children do not rate their lives differently (on a global scale), but they *experience* life very differently. The people with children experience more negative and positive emotions than people without children.

Duncan: Loneliness is linked to all sorts of negative issues. What best practices seem to foster friendships and satisfying interactions in the workplace, and what's the impact on happiness?

Clifton: The best run organizations foster workplace friendships by building the right systems, never forcing relationships, and talking more and emailing less.

Earlier this year, we conducted a survey of the CHRO's [Chief Human Resource Officers] of the largest companies in the world and asked them what aspects of wellbeing they focus on the most. Dead last? Social wellbeing.

"The way people *see* their life overall compared to how they *experience* life day to day are very different, so you have to measure both.

Often, executives are friends with each other, and they don't think the importance of workplace friendships applies to the rest of the company. But workplace friendships may be even more important on the front lines.

But how can organizations foster those friendships?

First, create formal systems that are based on getting work done. One company found that "buddy systems" for new employees works. If you create eight touch points for new employees with a buddy, employees develop significantly faster. The objective was development, but it produced friendships. In

Gallup's book *12: The Elements of Great Managing*, we found that department rotations also create friendships. Different work experiences expose you to new people, which create opportunities to meet new friends.

Also, make subtle changes to the way work gets done. Some organizations that successfully increased friendships just moved people's offices closer to each other. This will get more difficult as work becomes more remote or hybrid.

Second, don't force it. Axe-throwing activities or scavenger hunts can feel contrived. In one study, only a quarter of British employees said they looked forward to their Christmas party—the rest wanted a cash bonus instead. People come together with likeminded people at work because of a shared goal of an organization. The shared problems, late nights, or long travel often produce friendships that last a lifetime.

Third, talk more and email less. Building friendships means talking, seeing, and being with people. Leaders need to set an example by communicating more live and less on e-mail. And, as many are moving to a more virtual world, it means doing less asynchronous work. Emails cause people to misinterpret each other. The solution is to call each other more—especially on Zoom or FaceTime. But the best is to meet up somewhere in person. Email will never live up to face-to-face dialogue.

Duncan: As Simon Sinek has said, "100% of customers are people. 100% of employees are people. If you don't understand people, you don't understand business." What can private sector leaders do to significantly boost their understanding of (and positive impact on) the "people issues" that are so critical?

Clifton: Private sectors leaders need to place more seriousness on the role human nature plays in their business outcomes. What they don't know is that when dealing with customers, feelings are facts.

Executives often assume that customers are automatons – satisfy them rationally and they will pay for your product or services. Make sure the coffee is hot and that it tastes good; and serve it quickly and at a low price. Yet, those factors aren't everything.

One high-end bakery lost one of their highest paying customers because they disrespected her. If humans were only rational actors, disrespect wouldn't matter in the buying process because the products never changed. A customer's rational thought explains about 30% of their decision-making whereas their emotions explain roughly 70% of their decision-making.

Personal application:

- In what ways are you monitoring your own happiness and wellbeing?
- How can you more proactively place yourself in relationships and situations that help you thrive?
- What can you do to enhance the wellbeing of others in your circle of influence?

Exclusive conversation with
Brian Tracy

Beat the Time Crunch: Get Better Results at Work, at Home, at Play

By Rodger Dean Duncan

Let's face it. No matter who we are or what our station in life may be, none of us has more than 24 hours a day, 168 hours per week. For most of us, it doesn't seem to be enough.

So, the challenge is this: How can we make the best use of that precious and finite resource called time?

It’s a question faced by every generation. And in today’s world— with its plethora of media and other time-sucking distractions—finding solutions to the time crunch seems more urgent than ever.

It’s possible, if not probable, that the simplest solutions make the most sense. That’s why I like Brian Tracy’s book *Master Your Time, Master Your Life*. (Brian has written more than 80 books!)

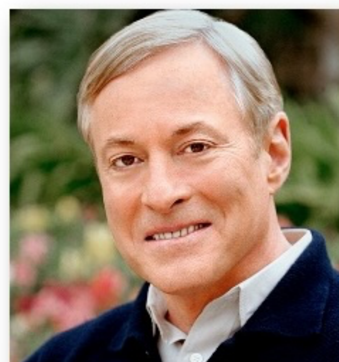
”How did it get so late so soon?” Dr. Seuss asked. It’s a question most of us pose every day.

It doesn’t have to be that way. Brian offers workable approaches to investing in simple time management behaviors that pay rich dividends.

Rodger Dean Duncan: You suggest that most people live in a reactive-responsive mode. How does effective time management help produce better choices and decisions?

Brian Tracy: Most people live in a “reactive-responsive” mode in that they are thrown off by almost every stimulus in their environment, plus whatever pops into their mind at the moment, whether they are working, checking their email or conversing with someone. This is inevitable, unavoidable, and getting continuously worse in our fast-moving world.

Effective time management enables you to impose a sense of control over yourself and your work. By writing down, planning and setting priorities for your day, you can discipline yourself to put a moment of thought between the distraction and the natural impulse to react. You enable yourself to call a brief moment, a “time out,” during which you can think with greater clarity about what is more important and what is less important.



Brian Tracy

Duncan: What role do clear, written goals play in effective life management?

Tracy: Clear written goals and plans are more responsible for long- term success than perhaps any other factor. When you’re clear about what you really want to achieve in the long term, it’s much easier for you to decide what you should do in the short term. Dr. Edward Banfield of Harvard called this “long-term thinking.” He said it was more responsible for upward socio-economic mobility than any other factor.

Here’s a simple way to change your life: Make a list of ten goals you would like to achieve in the next 12 months, exactly as if you had no limitations. Then ask yourself, “Which one goal on this list, if I achieved it, would have the greatest positive impact on my life?”

Whatever your answer, let this goal become the driving force of your life. Make a list of everything you could do to achieve this goal. Then, resolve to do something that moves you toward this goal every day, seven days a week. This simple exercise has probably been more responsible for great success than any other factor.

Duncan: You write that today there's a pandemic of poor performance sweeping across the Western world. What do you see as the signs and implications of such a phenomenon?

Tracy: The pandemic of poor performance that is leading to under-achievement, frustrated expectations for upper mobility, and lower pay is what I call the "attraction of distraction." It's the almost irresistible tendency to react to "shiny objects," especially the ring, bing, or musical sound of email, text messages and phone calls. Each stimulus triggers a shot of dopamine in the brain's pleasure center, almost like the ringing bells and crashing coins of a slot machine paying off, triggering the response, "I wonder what I just won?"

> "Most people live in a 'reactive-responsive' mode in that they are thrown off by almost every stimulus in their environment.

Soon, the impulse to react-respond to stimuli becomes stronger and stronger, and the willpower to resist becomes weaker and weaker. Then the person becomes addicted to the dopamine rush of momentary distractions, all day long, getting less and less done in more and more time.

Duncan: Many people understand the value of "to do" lists. But you add a fresh wrinkle with what you call the Law of Three. What is that and how does it enhance a person's productivity?

Tracy: The "Law of Three" is a principle I discovered in working with thousands of businesspeople, entrepreneurs and sales professionals over the years. The way it works is this: If you make a list of everything you do in a week or a month, it will usually contain 20-30 tasks or activities, sometimes more.

But when you analyze your list, you will find that only three of those tasks are responsible for 90% of the value of your contribution to your company, your work, and your personal income.

How do you determine what those three tasks are? Simple. You ask the three "magic questions: Question #1 is: "If I could do only one thing, all day long, which one task would make the greatest contribution to my company?"

Circle that task on your list. It's usually quite clear. (By the way, if you don't know the answer to this question, you had better find out, and fast. You are in great danger of wasting your time, all day long).

Then ask the question two more times: "If you could do only two things, or three things, all day long, which would make the most valuable contribution?"

From this day forward, focus on those three tasks all day long, and dedicate yourself to continuous improvement in each one. This can change your life and make you one of the most valuable people in your organization.

Duncan: Gary Becker, the Nobel Prize-winning economist, says we don't have an "income gap in our society. We have a "skills gap." What role should continuous learning play in an individual's personal time management?

Tracy: Warren Buffet, Charlie Munger, and Bill Gates are all lifelong learners. They attribute much of their success to "CANEI," which stands for "continuous and never ending improvement." The reason is simple. In the final analysis, you get paid only for results. If you want to earn more, you must learn more. You must achieve more, better, faster results. You must become more competent at getting the results that people want, need and will pay you for.

The wonderful discovery is that each person has extraordinary abilities, great powers for success and accomplishment that, if they were to tap into and unleash them, would enable them to create the life of their dreams.

Personal application:

- Under what circumstances might you be susceptible to the "attraction of distraction" syndrome? What habits could you adjust (for example, use of social media) to make better use of your time?
- How can you use "the Law of Three" in developing your weekly and daily to-do lists?
- What can you do to ensure that you are engaged in the kind of continuous learning that will pay dividends in your future?

Exclusive conversation with
Jackie Stavros and Cheri Torres

Polarized? Consider Conversations Worth Having

By Rodger Dean Duncan

Regardless of where we may stand on someone's spectrum of identity politics, many of us are both disturbed and sickened by today's public discourse.

Social media, TV talking heads, and once-respected media outlets have devolved into steaming caldrons of vitriol. The incivility is on display even (especially?) in the once-hallowed halls of Congress.

Whatever happened to respect in our private and public interactions? Where and when did we lose the willingness to exercise compassion toward someone with a different viewpoint? Where and when did we forget how (or why) to recognize each other's humanity?

Okay. We could wax philosophical all day. For now, let's consider some ever-so-timely suggestions for talking together. Not *at* each other. *With* each other.

A good starting place is *Conversations Worth Having: Using Appreciative Inquiry to Fuel Productive and Meaningful Engagement*.

Jackie Stavros and Cheri Torres offer proven principles and practices for navigating conversations in ways that produce good results and strengthen relationships. Stavros is a professor at Lawrence Technological University, an expert in Appreciative Inquiry, and an associate at the Taos Institute. She's presented her research in more than 25 countries. Torres is a senior catalyst and consultant at Collaborative by Design, NextMove, and Innovation Partners. She works with leaders and teams to change culture from the inside out.

Rodger Dean Duncan: For those who are unfamiliar with Appreciative Inquiry, can you explain what it is?

Jackie Stavros: Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an approach for dis- covering the best in people and teams to fuel productivity and meaningful engagement in organizations and local, national, and global communities.

AI is one of the most widely used approaches for fostering positive change and creating innovation. It's used in organizations ranging from Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Google, the U.S. Navy, and Cleveland Clinic to cities like Denver and Chicago and in countries around the world. The Appreciative Inquiry Commons is a worldwide portal providing practical tools on AI and the growing discipline of positive change.

Duncan: What are the hallmarks of a conversation worth having?


Jackie Stavros

Stavros: Conversations are how we interact with others and with ourselves. The hallmarks of a conversation worth having are an appreciative tone, a positive direction, and generative questions. These conversations are—

- Meaningful
- Inquisitive
- Solution-focused
- Productive
- Engaging

Conversations worth having generate shared understanding, new information, and possibilities for action to move forward. In our work- places, these great conversations fuel productivity, performance, engagement, and satisfaction, all supporting excellence.

Duncan: What role do questions play in advancing a conversation to a productive conclusion?

Stavros: The type of questions you ask can open up or shut down another person. Appreciative inquiry-based questions are generative in that they demonstrate a genuine curiosity in a person, team, or situation. Generative questions create new images and change the way people think and act. These questions generate information, reveal hidden assumptions and diverse perspectives, and make room for the emergence of new ideas, possibilities, or opportunities. Questions that arise out of curiosity and genuine interest can deepen understanding and play a role in building relationships, strengths, connections, and productive solutions.

Recall a conversation in which someone's questions resulted in your feeling more connected to them or inspired to take action. For example, you can ask questions that focus on what you want more of: *What are your wishes?* instead of what you don't want. Our questions create our moments.

Duncan: Rather than focus on what's going wrong in an organization, you counsel leaders to invite workers to share best practices. What effect does this shift in conversations have on personal accountability for results?

Cheri Torres: If there is something going wrong in an organization, you must address it. We counsel leaders to shift the way they address the problem. An appreciative approach engages relevant stakeholders in conversations about desired outcomes. We suggest the *Flipping* technique to help people do this—

Cheri Torres

- **Name it.** Name the problem
- **Flip it.** Name the positive opposite
- **Frame it**. Clarify what you want

We know of a hospital administrator who tried to "fix" low patient satisfaction metrics by continually asking her nurse managers to identify what was going wrong and do something about it. Frustration, blame, and shame created conversations that sounded like *attack and defend*. For months, nothing changed. The administrator attended an AI training where she learned to reframe the problem into the desired outcome and to ask generative questions:

- **Name It.** Low patient satisfaction metrics
- **Flip It.** High patient satisfaction metrics
- **Frame It.** Patients are delighted with their care and service

When she asked nurse managers about patients who were delighted with their care and service, the energy in their meetings was palpably different. People were engaged and energetic. By paying attention to satisfied patients, they discovered behaviors and actions they could replicate; and in that open mindset, they were more creative with solutions. Patient satisfaction scores improved significantly within the first quarter.

Duncan: You say “positive framing” draws people into a conversation and inspires engagement. Give us an example of how this works.

Torres: The previous story is helpful in understanding the science be- hind why this approach is so effective at engaging people. When we focus on what’s wrong, it often triggers our self-protection instincts. Our biochemistry changes to help us fight or flee. Research in neuroscience and positive psychology underscores that focusing on what’s possible and inviting people to collaborate literally gives us greater access to critical thinking and creativity. The biochemistry in our brains shifts from “me” to “we.”

Stavros: Here’s another example. A program manager had to integrate U.S.-based and German-based teams in three different divisions. These teams did not play well together and the challenge was to join them as one cohesive and productive center. The manager facilitated a series of conversations among all team members to create a unified vision, mission, and value set. Everyone was highly engaged because the conversations focused on strengths and opportunities, and they were invited to co-create the center’s strategic plan. Their engagement and commitment to the plan produced increased sales to existing customers, new customized product solutions, and a culture that worked collaboratively and innovatively.

Duncan: What’s a good way to deal with someone who’s obviously not interested in engagement and wants only to promote a single viewpoint?

Torres: Establish group norms at the outset of any team conversation. Be sure to include staying open, listening, and making room for possibilities.

If someone is continuously advocating for a single viewpoint, get curious. Ask generative questions that clarify their view and open the door for others.

For example:

- How would your idea help us achieve the goal?
- What are the benefits of moving forward with your idea without exploring other options?
- What might be the benefits of exploring other possibilities before we make a decision? (This question could be asked of the whole group.)

Be sure to reinforce the benefits of having taken time to explore a variety of options. Point out how the final decision had elements of a number of people’s ideas or how staying open benefited the team.

Duncan: Many people reflect on previous conversations that went awry and wish they could replay them at a different speed or tone or volume. What advice can you offer for initiating “do-overs” for conversations that didn’t go well?

Torres: It takes courage to ask for a do-over, and it's worthwhile.

Here are suggestions:

- Reflect on the conversation and why it went awry. It's likely people were in a self-protective mindset. What triggered that reaction for you and others?
- How might the conversation have been different with a more open mindset?
- Think through how you would have liked the conversation to go. Create a positive frame for your do-over— what would you like to have talked about? What outcome would you prefer?
- Given the outcome you'd like, what are you curious about? What does the other person know that you don't? What questions can you ask that will invite the other person in?

Then make an appointment with the person. Begin with transparency and vulnerability: "I really didn't like the way our conversation went. ... I apologize for my role in it. I would like to start over. My intention is ..." (insert your positive frame, the outcome you are hoping for).

Stavros: When reflecting on your previous conversations, think about the nature of the interaction. Was it appreciative or depreciative? Was it inquiry or statement-based?

Your conversations can make all the difference in your life or someone else's life.

Personal application:

- Which of your conversations worth having could benefit from what you've learned here? How? When will you initiate them?

- What specific questions should you be asking yourself as you pre- pare for those conversations?

- What unsatisfactory conversations have you had in the past that merit a do-over? How will you prepare for the do-overs? Specifically what do you hope to accomplish?

Exclusive conversation with
G. Riley Mills

Hit the Bullseye with Your Communication

By Rodger Dean Duncan

Most people can talk. But then they risk assuming that uttering words is the same as communication. It’s not.

Genuine communication is much more than merely expressing an opinion or dumping information. It’s all about connecting: connecting with people’s hopes, dreams, values, concerns.

Multiple studies show that effective communication skills are at the heart of personal and professional success. Technical skills are fine, but if you can't "connect" with other people you're at a distinct disadvantage. The good news is that you can get better.

That's the essence of *The Bullseye Principle*, a definitive guide for anyone wanting to excel with high-stakes conversations, presentations, and collaborations.

Author G. Riley Mills, a seasoned communication coach, shares some ideas that can help boost your ability to influence.

Rodger Dean Duncan: There's no doubt that the ability to communicate with purpose and clarity is a critical key to personal and professional success. You take that truism a step further by emphasizing what you call "intention-based communication." What exactly is that?

G. Riley Mills: Intention-based communication applies to business communication the same techniques actors and world leaders have used for centuries to appear confident, credible, and compelling.

The goal of intention-based communication is to ensure your audience understands why your message is important to them through your delivery—*how* you say it.


G. Riley Mills

To use an analogy, we view communication like an arrow whizzing through the air to its target. The target's bullseye is your objective—what you want your audience to think/feel/do after hearing your message. The arrow is your message. Your intention is how you launch the arrow.

Intention is a strong one-word descriptor. In practical terms, if you want to excite, motivate, or inspire your audience, your intention must be congruent with your message and your audience should clearly see excite, motivate, or inspire in all areas of your communication—body language, word choices, facial expressions, and vocal dynamics.

Without a strong, clear intention, your message will be ambiguous at best.

Duncan: You cite a study showing that 62% of young workers believed their oral communication skills are good enough for them to succeed at work, while only 28% of their employers agree. Why the difference in perception? Why are young people so over-confident in this regard?

Mills: Young workers aren't the only group assuming their communication skills are up to par. Business professionals of all ages and job responsibilities can benefit from improving their communication skills.

The perception gap between employers and younger worker's communication skills is complex. Boomers typically communicate in-person while younger workers prefer instant messaging, text and email. Young workers assume multiple internships have adequately prepared them for the workforce. But they haven't. Young workers assume companies are more interested in hard skills than soft skills. But they aren't. And schools at all levels aren't adequately preparing young workers with the communication skills needed to succeed in the workplace.

> **"Without a strong, clear intention, your message will be ambiguous at best.**

The biggest communication skills gap though, across all ages, is we assume because we talk every day, we must be good communicators. Effective communication, though, like any skill, takes time and focused practice.

Duncan: In the business world there's a lot of handwringing about low levels of employee engagement. What role can or should communication play in boosting engagement?

Mills: To increase employee engagement, improve your manager's communication skills. We know people leave companies because of their managers, and the data show how managers affect the bottom line:

- A manager's leadership style is responsible for 30% of a company's bottom-line profitability.
- One study showed that 70% of the variance in the employee engagement of teams could be traced back to the influence of the manager.
- Employees were three times more likely to be engaged if managers held regular meetings with their direct reports.

Duncan: In this modern age of 140-character tweets, what helpful lessons can people learn from Aristotle's writings from more than 2,000 years ago?

Mills: The biggest lesson is, regardless of platform—in person, conference call, email, twitter, etc.—communication can be distilled to the same three elements: Speaker. Subject. Audience.

As Aristotle pointed out, we are all just speakers communicating a message to an audience. That means, regardless of medium, you must constantly go back to the first step in our 3-step process for influential communication: *analyzing your audience*. If communication is meant to influence another person's behavior, it must be grounded in the receiver's desires and interests.

Aristotle's three means of persuasion—ethos, logos, pathos—are still a good guide for anyone communicating information today. To best in- fluence an audience, no matter the industry or subject, you benefit from being seen as sincere, credible and passionate as a leader or executive.

Duncan: Before any communication—whether offering a comment in a meeting or launching a major promotion campaign—what are three questions that should be addressed?

Mills: We all want something as a result of our communication. And the clearer the message, the easier it is to hit the bullseye and get what we want. You must know whom you are talking to. How can you satisfy the needs of your audience and customize your message for them if you don't know who they are?

The first step is to analyze your audience. Consider demographic, psychographic, and situational factors:

- *Demographic*—age, marital status, gender, education level, occupation, religion as well as cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds.

- *Psychographic*—attitudes, beliefs, values, loyalties, pre-conceived notions, feelings, and level of knowledge of your topic.

- *Situational*—size of group, time of meeting, occasion, event's length, room size and, seating arrangement.

The second step is understanding the reaction your message should elicit—how you want them to feel and, subsequently, what you want them to do as a result of hearing your message (your objective).

The third step is to modify your delivery to achieve that result—modifying how you say what you say to accomplish your objective.

Duncan: It's been said that marketing is less about what you make than about the stories you tell. What's the best formula for an effective organizational narrative?

Mills: We recommend applying the dramatic structure developed by Gustav Freytag, a 19^{th} century German novelist, to business storytelling. It's the same framework for effective storytelling that novelists, playwrights, and screenwriters use.

- *Establish background information (exposition).* Who is the story about, when and where does it take place? The more descriptive, the better the picture you will paint for your audience.

- *Identify the problem (inciting incident).* Develop conflict. Introduce the pain point or problem. What incident or event gets the ball rolling? Who what is the villain?

- *Detail the solution (rising action).* Build and reveal pertinent information to drive the story forward. Show steps taken to address the problem and clearly identify a solution.

- *Spotlight the result (climax).* Describe specifically how you did it and how you achieved a positive outcome. Focus on the benefit your solution provided and ensure the story's climax aligns directly with your objective for telling the story.

- *State the takeaway (falling action and resolution).* Wrap up your story with a one or two line closing that clearly defines what the listener should have learned from your story.

We all have stories we can share to inspire or enlighten others. Your job as a storyteller is to kick off the story and get to the ending in the fastest, most interesting way possible. And remember, in most cases, a story is always about the ending—the lesson or moral you want to drive home.

Personal application:

- How can you use the principles of intention-based communication in your next meeting? In your next presentation?

- Select a typical workday during the next week or so. During that day, keep track of how much time you invest in interacting with others (beyond routine chit chat.) Now, ask yourself what you can do to be more effective in your communication by applying the storytelling framework discussed here.

Exclusive conversation with
Maura Thomas

For Best Productivity:
Manage Your Attention, Not Your Time

By Rodger Dean Duncan

Do your goals feel like scenes from *Groundhog Day*?

You're not alone. And psychologists tell us that failure with personal goals has a ripple effect: when we fail with one goal our self-confidence erodes and we may be even more prone to giving up on a subsequent goal.

So, we need some coaching on how to manage this conundrum.

Maura Thomas can help. She's an award-winning speak- er, trainer, and author on productivity, attention management, and work-life balance. She's a favorite go-to source on these topics for the *Wall Street Journal, Fast Company* and *Inc*., and is a regular contributor to the Harvard Business Review. Her latest books are *Work Without Walls* and *Personal Productivity Secrets*.

I talked with Maura about productivity issues that challenge all of us.

Rodger Dean Duncan: Many people make—and then abandon—resolutions around managing their time. You say a goal involving personal productivity should focus on managing attention, not managing time. Why?

Maura Thomas: We have framed our efforts around productivity and efficiency as "time management" for way too long, all the while knowing that no one can actually "manage time." It passes, no matter what we do. We can't slow it down or create more of it, and we all have the same amount. Therefore, "time" is not our problem. It's distraction and misplaced attention that are interfering with our ability to achieve the results that are most significant to us. And the solution to distraction is not time management, but *attention management*.


Maura Thomas

In theory at least, it is possible to manage our attention. And I believe that in an increasingly distracting world filled with technology *designed* to persuade us to engage with it, the ability to manage our attention is the antidote, and a critical skill to learn. Attention management is our most important defense against a world that is constantly conspiring to steal it.

Duncan: Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) affects millions of people who struggle to focus and follow through on important activities. You suggest that ADD can sometimes be self-induced. What are the early warning signs of situational ADD?

Thomas: This is such a useful concept, coined by psychiatrist and ADD expert Dr. Edward Hallowell. The pace of business is so fast today. Communication is often instant, pushing expectations higher and higher—if "faster is better," then "instant" must be best. Information is instantly available at our fingertips, we can receive delivery of just about anything in the same day, and we're accustomed to lightning-fast Internet speeds and computer processing power. But humans are not computers and expecting our learning and processing, our accessibility, and our communication to be instant, synchronous, and always-on is a recipe for the impatience, exhaustion, burnout, and health issues that have been on the rise for at least two decades now.

The real reason this pace pushes our expectations higher is because it pushes our attention span and our patience lower and lower. I ask my audiences if they feel that their attention span is shorter than it used to be, and if they feel more impatient than they used to. And virtually everyone, everywhere responds "yes" to both questions.

Those are two signs of *"situational ADD,"* but the unfortunate problem is that most people don't recognize them "early." That's why I've been using my work to sound the alarm about attention management and help people recognize how destructive this path can be if it's not reversed. My book *Attention Management: Breaking the Time Management Myth for Unrivaled Productivity* is written with this specific purpose—to help people recognize how their everyday habits and environments are sabotaging their ability to achieve their significant results and to live a life of choice, rather than a life of reaction and distraction.

Attention management is the ability to control distractions, be present in your moments, maximize your focus, engage your flow, and ultimately, unleash your genius.

Duncan: In a world that seems to bombard us with endless demands on our time and attention, how can we become more proactive (less reactive) in managing our lives?

Thomas: The important difference between being proactive and reactive is the ability to make choices about what to do next instead of just constantly "reacting." But we have so much to track and manage that it takes time and effort to stay on top of everything. Our busy lives feel like they require us to constantly "play defense," just "blocking and tackling" the influx of information constantly bombarding us.

We need the ability to "play offense:" to plan, organize, and make thoughtful choices about what gets our attention. But because of our impatience and our tendency to always be "doing," many people behave as if "stopping to think" and taking time to organize and manage are luxuries we can't afford. (How many times a week do you think I hear, "I don't have time to get organized!"?) As a result, we end up spending too much time doing "what happens to us:" answering the latest email, dealing with the constant "drop-ins," and getting sidetracked by every new incoming communication or piece of information.

That's why I teach a workflow management process that enables people to store, organize, and act on commitments, communication, and information according to their priorities, and prevent things from falling through the cracks. I call my methodology the Empowered Productivity™ System because it helps them regain control over their ability to achieve their significant results.

I had a follow-up call with a client who attended a training I delivered the previous week. He said it allowed him to eliminate all of his various lists, notebooks, and sticky notes, manage distractions, get his inbox to zero. He said it gave him the peace of mind that while he knew there was a lot to do, he had a handle on all of it—personal and professional—and he felt good about the choices he was making.

Duncan: You point out that our best thinking doesn't come from a stressed-out brain. What are some good ways to lower our stress by controlling the mental chatter?

Thomas: Much of our "mental chatter" is items from our scattered to-do lists popping into our head at random all day long. Most people write things down to help them remember. That's the reason most people have lists, or reminders, scattered around their offices and homes.

And it's true that writing things down does help you to remember. But there's just too much, and relying on your brain supplemented by notebooks, sticky notes, and the occasional cocktail napkin to manage it all creates the mental burden that is really stressful. It's important to get all of these things in one place and organize them in a way that allows you to stop "keeping track" and enables you to make progress. That's why an important part of any workflow management system, including Empowered Productivity, is the right set of tools.

I believe all busy professionals need at least five (electronic) tools for managing the details of their lives. And most people do a good job with 3 out of the 5: a calendar, a contact manager, and a place to keep notes.

> "The important difference between being proactive and reactive is the ability to make choices about what to do next.

But the other 2 are where people struggle. Number 4 is a good task manager, and the reason people struggle is not because they don't have the tool (there are hundreds of apps, and task management is a part of most business software). It's because they don't have the methodology for using the tool. Believing that a new tool alone will make you more productive is like thinking that a new set of clubs will magically make you a PGA-level golfer.

Number 5 is email and here again everyone has software and apps to send and receive mail. But they are missing the workflow methodology to really *manage* it. The biggest reason many people are drowning in email is that they use their inbox as a task list. They look to their email to figure out what they need to do next. Without a good way to manage tasks and email, not only do we have the mental burden I mentioned earlier but we also have the physical burden of overflowing inboxes.

Duncan: Daydreaming in the grocery line, you say, can actually be more productive than checking email, and that such seemingly "idle" times are often "the very moments when we have mental breakthroughs." How can individuals create opportunities for such moments? And what can leaders do to make such moments an acceptable—even expected and celebrated—part of an organization's culture?

Thomas: I teach about four quadrants of attention management: reactive and distracted, engaged in flow, focused and mindful, and daydreaming.

When we are daydreaming, we're not actively controlling our thoughts, we aren't focused on anything in particular, and we don't have a lot of external stimulus. This is when our minds can wander and "stumble" into connections and insights that are otherwise crowded out. (For example, do you ever feel like you have your best ideas in the shower?)

In order to encourage more of these, we must recreate what I call the "in-between" moments we used to have before the existence of smartphones: such as walking, waiting in line, or riding an elevator. Our challenge is that now in any pause of activity, we immediately pull out our phone, and engaging with email, social media, or other communication tools destroys the opportunity to daydream.

"Open office" floor plans have been gaining in popularity for at least the last five years or more, in an effort to encourage innovation, collaboration, and creativity. We now know, however, that any gains in offered by these impromptu associations are canceled out by the loss of privacy, focus, and thinking time. The good news is that it's not really the floor plan that's the problem, it's the implementation. Leaders must craft the office environment with intention, and put as much emphasis on the importance of undistracted time as the open-floor plan puts on collaboration. Some ideas I wrote about in *Work Without Walls* include soft furnishings and plants that absorb sound, some private areas in the open space and a remote work policy, so people have somewhere quiet to go when they need to get important work done.

Duncan: You define productivity as "the ability to achieve your significant results." With so many competing priorities in the average person's life, what's your counsel on deciding what should really take precedence?

Thomas: The professionals I work with are busy people with busy lives, but this is by choice—they are motivated and driven and have unique gifts to bring to the world. "Time management" teaches us to "say no more often" and "do less." But saying "no" deprives the world of those unique gifts. And because many people "have to" work, the things they say "no" to tend to also be the things that nurture and sustain them: things like hobbies, recreation, family time, and volunteer activities.

I'm passionate about my work because I believe that exhaustion is optional. I believe we can be driven and motivated and have busy and full lives, and that these things can motivate, energize, and inspire us instead of exhaust, overwhelm and stress us.

Ultimately, I believe that the pursuit of productivity answers two questions: "What kind of person do you want to be?" and "What kind of life do you want to lead?" Living those ideals—not only at work but in all parts of our lives—is what should take precedence, and the way I define peak productivity. Attention management is the path to get us there.

Personal application:

- Do you exhibit any signs of situational ADD? If so, what can you do about it? What *will* you do about it?
- Based on what you've learned in this interview, what steps will you take to get yourself better organized?
- Given Maura's counsel, what adjustments might you consider in how you define productivity?

Exclusive conversation with
Joseph Michelli

Airbnb Can Teach Your Business a Thing or Two

By Rodger Dean Duncan

We live in the age of disruptors. We have them in politics, in science, in education, in medicine, in sports, and even in entertainment. And we have multiple examples throughout the business world.

Illustrations of the latter were scrawled on a whiteboard a while back by Alberto Brea, chief growth strategist at a New York marketing firm.

Here's what Brea wrote—

- Amazon did not kill the retail industry. They did it to themselves with bad customer service.

- Netflix did not kill Blockbuster. They did it to themselves with ridiculous late fees.

- Uber did not kill the taxi business. They did it to themselves by limiting the number of taxis and fare control.

- Apple did not kill the music industry. They did it to themselves by forcing people to buy full-length albums.

- Airbnb did not kill the hotel industry. They did it to themselves with limited availability and pricing options.

- Technology by itself is not the real disruptor. Being non-customer centric is the biggest threat to any business.

Those six bullet points provide lessons for anyone who's planning—or already running—most any kind of enterprise. Including yours. Focus on the customer is not a new concept. Yet it somehow escapes a lot of people.

But not the people at Airbnb.

Customer experience consultant Joseph Michelli explores Airbnb's journey from startup to juggernaut in *The Airbnb Way: 5 Leadership Lessons for Igniting Growth Through Loyalty, Community, and Belonging*. How can Airbnb's experience apply to *your* business?

Rodger Dean Duncan: Philosopher Paul Tillich once said, "The first duty of love is to listen." How does Airbnb incorporate that into its leadership and business practices?

Joseph Michelli

Joseph Michelli: Airbnb founders (Brian Chesky, Joe Gebbia, and Nathan Blecharczyk) all have strong backgrounds as experience designers. Brian and Joe graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design, and Nathan graduated with a computer science degree from Harvard.

Given their educational experiences, all three founders are grounded in design principles that focus on listening to the stated and unstated needs of the customers or web users they serve. Based on their penchant for listening, leaders throughout Airbnb challenge themselves and team members to think about possible solutions that might address customer/user needs. They then test those solutions by listening for feedback from customers. Subsequently, Airbnb team members deploy the best solutions across their platform.

Duncan: Give us an example.

Michelli: Airbnb serves two types of customers on its platform—hosts and guests. Since hosts report that they don't know which elements of an accommodation to detail in their listings and since guests often aren't aware of their own subtle preferences, Airbnb has explored and deployed artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to enhance the experience of both stakeholder groups. Specifically, picture recognition technology uses machine learning to scan, tag, categorize, and filter images on the Airbnb site.

To understand the benefits of this technology, assume an image of a listing has a picture of a bunk bed, but the bunk bed information failed to be included in the text description of the property. Also, assume that you have a history of choosing homes with bunk beds. Picture recognition technology could select that specific property as an option for your consideration because of the context of your past behavior on the platform. Leaders at Airbnb remind us that sustained business success involves understanding customer needs through listening and observation and then testing solutions to address those needs.

Duncan: Airbnb leaders say they are not only in the people business, they're also in the "belonging" business. What does that mean in their context, and what can it mean for other kinds of businesses?

Michelli: Let's assume I am a member of the LBGTQ community wanting to stay in a rural conservative town. When I make my booking on Airbnb, I want to know that I will be respected and treated like a welcomed guest. Similarly, assume I am traveling to a remote part of the world where I can't speak the language. I would want to know that my Airbnb booking will do more than provide a place to sleep. I would want a host who will care for me and about me during my stay.

Airbnb leaders seek to communicate the importance of assuring this type of psychological well-being to everyone who engages on the platform. As such, Airbnb's founders have embraced hierarchy models of needs like those proposed by Abraham Maslow. As you'll recall, Maslow suggested humans have basic needs for safety, food, and shelter as well as higher-level needs for love, belonging, community, and personal fulfillment.

Duncan: How do you see that model's application at Airbnb?

Michelli: In the broad context of business, each of us should consider how we can help customers achieve not only their basic needs but also facilitate fulfillment of their higher-level needs. Airbnb has formalized the importance of helping guests experience belonging into their formal mission statement—"to create a world where anyone can belong anywhere." The shortened version of that mission simply reads "belong anywhere." Additionally, Airbnb leaders continually communicate (formally and through social channels) with hosts about the importance of creating belonging.

Duncan: There's no doubt that trust is the "operating system" of every good relationship—professional as well as personal. What can entrepreneurs and other businesspeople learn from the way Airbnb approaches trust issues?

Michelli: Few human interactions require more trust than opening up a room in your home to a stranger or conversely staying in a stranger's home. Early on, in fact, Airbnb struggled to secure funding from investors who resoundingly said, "A business requiring this much trust between strangers will never work." Eleven years into Airbnb's juggernaut (and an estimate $38 billion valuation) while going into a public offering, Airbnb continues to challenge conventional wisdom.

> "Sustained business success involves understanding customer needs through listening and observation and then testing solutions to address those needs.

Duncan: So how is trust baked into the Airbnb model?

Michelli: No business (online/offline, sharing economy/traditional enterprise) can guarantee the safety and trust of those they serve, given that there are occasional bad actors. That said, business leaders can learn many lessons from Airbnb on how to design for trust, including the importance of developing a reciprocal reputation system. In the case of Airbnb, guests and hosts rate one another and the results of those ratings on dimensions like cleanliness, communication, etc. are simultaneously published on the site. These ratings not only drive accountability and positive behavior from the hosts and guests involved, but they also influence the decisions of prospective guests. Moreover, these ratings are factored heavily into search algorithms, such that poor host ratings make it difficult for those hosts to have their listings appear when a prospective guest searches for a property like theirs.

Another quick trust factor to mention is host and guest guarantees. Airbnb provides up to one million dollars in insurance protections to hosts against damage to their properties caused by guests. Similarly, Airbnb continues to enhance guest guarantees to include support booking a property of equal or greater value in the event a listing is not as promised. In these instances, guests should incur no cost for their stay.

Duncan: How can hospitality (some call it "service with heart") be practiced by a business that never actually interacts in person with its customers or clients?

Michelli: We are all hosting. In the digital world, many brands only host customers on their website or app, but it is still hosting and requires an understanding of the deliverable customers expect from basic and (as I like to call it) "enlightened" service. Hospitality is Airbnb's take on enlightened service and it means that you care for internal and external stakeholders with an emphasis on the following basics—

- **Responsiveness -** Helping customers with prompt service
- **Reliability -** Efficiently delivering on promises

- **Tangibles -** Appearance of virtual and physical property, equipment, people, products, and communication

It also means developing skills to offer service with heart, by delivering:

- **Assurance -** Courtesy, knowledge, thoughtfulness, and anticipation of emotional needs

- **Empathy -** Personalized care

Duncan: "Empowerment" is a popular word with multiple shades of meaning in the world of commerce. What does it mean at Airbnb, and what can other businesses learn from Airbnb's example?

Michelli: Airbnb leaders approach empowerment in keeping with a definition provided by experts Nanette Paige and Cheryl Czuba, who note "it is a process that fosters power ... in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important."

Airbnb leaders have crafted a formal economic empowerment agenda, which includes aggressive goals to help predominantly minority communities leverage homes to generate income. That agenda also makes strong commitments to living wages for not only Airbnb team members but vendors as well. Moreover, that economic empowerment agenda encourages hosts in the Airbnb community to pay a living wage to those that support their respective businesses (e.g., cleaners or other hosts who cover for them when they're on vacation).

Airbnb also encourages and supports hosts to engage with local officials in order to protect their right to responsibly share their homes. Many of these individuals report that they have saved their homes from foreclosure by home-sharing. Similarly, many seniors (the fastest-growing host group) told me home-sharing has protected them from housing insecurity. For broader application, Airbnb teaches us how to take an "ecosystem" approach to business. When we help others succeed (economically and personally), those individuals have more power to help us sustain our business success.

Duncan: What role can (or should) the notion of "community" play in a company's efforts to establish an organizational culture?

Michelli: Linking back to the notion that humans have a higher order need to belong (in the context of community) companies can help their team members, business partners, and customers connect with one another. For example, Airbnb team members routinely participate in volunteer activities with Airbnb hosts. By activating employees and business partners to do good, Airbnb builds bonds between Airbnb team members, hosts, and in the communities in which Airbnb does business. By supporting online and offline host groups, Airbnb also becomes a valued partner for individuals seeking to make a living from home-sharing.

I was recently in Portland, Oregon, where a home-sharing group named Host2Host put on an Airbnb sponsored event called HostFest. The community event raised funds for a non-profit organization in Portland, which helps people experiencing homelessness.

In my humble opinion, we should be in business to serve others. It's through that service that our businesses thrive. Service requires us to build communities within our organization where our team members are treated well and where they also engage customers and other stake- holders in broader community building.

Personal application:

- What clues does this conversation provide about the "customer experience" components of your own leadership activities?
- What could be done in your organization's culture to give people a greater sense of "empowerment" in their work?
- How could a greater focus on the "belonging" and "community" issues discussed here help people in your workplace have higher levels of engagement?

Exclusive conversation with
Rachael O'Meara

Stressed? Tired? Burned Out? Take a Pause

By Rodger Dean Duncan

Not long ago I shifted gears on my very busy life. I shut down my consulting practice and put a hold on my writing projects. My wife and I closed up the family home, said goodbye to our children and grandchildren, and headed off to another part of the country.

This was not to be a kick-back-and-relax vacation. It was an uninterrupted twelve months of volunteer missionary service for our church. We sorely missed our family and friends. But it was the best year of our lives. Hard work, yes. But it was *different* work.

In addition to the satisfaction of laboring for a cause that's important to us, it was a *change.*

It was a *pause.*

In a world where busyness is often valued more than results, many people are reluctant to take a break, even a short one. After all, who wants to come across as a slacker?

But mastering the art of knowing when to stop, even if only briefly, is a critical ingredient of a life well-lived.

That's the premise of Rachael O'Meara's fine book *Pause: Harnessing the Life-Changing Power of Giving Yourself a Break.*

Are you too busy driving to stop and get gas? This woman's advice is for you.

Rodger Dean Duncan: In today's fast-paced, competition-driven world, why do so many people seem to have an aversion to taking a time out?

Rachael O'Meara: Welcome to the Pause Paradox: we value productivity and profits as people and companies, yet we need to ensure we're hitting pause to create sustainable, long-term success at home and at work.

Pausing, or intentionally shifting your behavior, appears counter intuitive. We often resist pausing to avoid falling behind or looking like a slacker. Instead, consider pausing to enhance creativity or needed downtime, even if it's for a few minutes.

Pro-pause research shows that a wandering mind may facilitate creative problem-solving. Harvard researcher and psychologist Shelley Carson warns us, "A distraction may provide the break you need to disengage from a fixation on the ineffective solution."

Duncan: Some people are beginning to realize how their lives are consumed by technology. You recommend taking an occasional "digital vacation." What's the science behind that recommendation?


Rachael O'Meara

O'Meara: Taking a digital device pause (DDPs) is one way to detach from technology. As anyone who has vowed to put his or her phone away yet refuses to do so, there is an addictive quality about it all. The reason? When we check our devices, the neuro-transmitter dopamine gets released which helps control the brain's reward and pleasure centers, according to *Psychology Today.*

Naturally, as we receive pleasure-inducing digital chimes and comments, we feel good as the physiological response to dopamine in our brain's pleasure center "lights up." This is why it's so difficult to unglue your eyeballs without intentional effort.

Shift your habits by creating rules and boundaries around your screens via daily digital vacations, or pauses. Some ways to try this: limit social media exposure to a set block of time, have a device-free day or time, or put your device away at meals or an hour or two before bedtime. Experiment a bit and decide what works for you.

Duncan: What are the early warning signs that it's time for a pause?

O'Meara: There are five key signs you may need a pause. How many of these have you experienced recently?

- **You used to love your job and now you loathe it.** Perhaps you used to thrive on the pressure of your role, but it no longer seems worth it. Or maybe you're in a slump. Burnout is a signal to take note of what isn't working and shift.

- **Someone informs you things aren't working out.** It may be a hint or a direct hit.

- **You need a technology intervention**. It's easy to get hooked, and as you know, it's a physiological response to dopamine. When it starts to impact your well-being and relationships, it's time to pause and shift your behavior.

- **A major life event or challenge occurs.** Change is inevitable and can be a natural inflection point to assess and align with what matters to you.

- **A new opportunity arises.** An irresistible job offer or an invitation for a passion project or trip comes along. What is your emotional intelligence telling you? Taking a pause may be exactly what's needed to consider or set course on a new path.

Duncan: Good decision-making is a crucial part of personal performance. How can a pause help a person resist the temptation to overthink things?

> “Pro-pause research shows that a wandering mind may facilitate creative problem-solving.

O'Meara: It's tempting to create a detailed to-do list for some much-needed downtime, taking a pause is an ideal time to stop thinking, and allow some wisdom and answers to emerge. Over-thinking can kill just about anything. Pausing is the perfect opportunity to step away from your everyday life and your preoccupied self. Before you face your next time crunch or critical decision, give yourself permission to sit with the idea and step away. One study illustrates that by distancing yourself from a challenge and taking on an observer perspective may enhance your reasoning and lead to insights and new solutions.

Duncan: How can a person cultivate the skills of “pausing” and thereby derive increasingly more benefit from it?

O'Meara: Pausing is a state of mind. It can prevent continuing going down a path of burnout, reduce stress, and lead to new insights. Pausing doesn't require financial resources, time, or money. Instead, experiment with different types of pauses. One of the easiest ways to do this is through daily pauses. Here are a few ideas to try. Pick one and practice it within the next thirty minutes.

- **Belly breath pause:** Sit or stand with both feet firmly on the ground and close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so. Place one hand on your diaphragm or heart and slowly inhale, hold your breath, and slowly exhale. Count each inhalation until you get to ten breaths.

- **Digital device pause:** Create a rule to limit or not engage with your devices for a limited time, or not using devices to distract from time with family or friends.

- **The outdoor pause:** Go outside for a walk around the block. Invite a friend for this "nature" pause and explain its purpose and discuss what you experienced.

- **Create a daily one-minute "mindful" awareness pause** while you do something else like brushing your teeth, eating, or walking.

If you already have a daily pause practice, journal about your experience. One study shows that writing about an emotional experience for two minutes a day for two consecutive days improves mood and well-being.

Personal application:

- What rules and boundaries can you set (and follow) to help you manage distractions like digital devices? How can you enlist the help and reinforcement of others?

- Which of the early warning signs of needing a pause have you observed in your life? What's your plan for heeding those signs?

- Do you have a tendency to overthink things? Be honest. Overthinking can be a major deterrent to productivity (and good health).

Exclusive conversation with
Nate Regier

Conflict Without Casualties: Finding Value in Disagreement

By Rodger Dean Duncan

Pulling rank is a common trust-buster. Some people try to exert influence by using the power of their position or authority. Maybe their egos get in the way. Maybe they delight in the role of bully. Maybe they're impatient and just want others to do things their way. Maybe they simply lack confidence and are reluctant to entertain the views of others.

Whatever the reasons, pulling rank is never effective in engaging peoples' heads, hearts, and hopes. In fact, it does just the opposite. And it perpetuates the myth that disagreement is always a bad thing. It isn't.

During my years at Campbell Soup Company, I worked with two CEOs. They were worlds apart in virtually every aspect of leadership. The first one was an old school executive whose closest colleagues—even those who had worked with him for more than 35 years—still called him "Mr." He clearly preferred surrounding himself with "yes men," people who blindly followed his orders with no alternatives offered and no questions asked. He seemed to relish the perks of his office and was none-too-subtle about reminding people that he was the boss.

When this man retired, he was replaced in the corner office by Gordon McGovern. Gordon was nearly a polar opposite. He preferred the employee cafeteria over the executive dining room with its silver and china and deferential butlers. Though well-bred and Ivy League-educated, Gordon was informal and approachable. He thrived on lively conversation, *especially with people who offered opposing views*. He was as comfortable chatting with a worker on the plant production line as he was in talking with a member of the board of directors.

In fact, because Gordon was so approachable, he got some of his best ideas from people who operated at several rungs lower on the organization chart. He seemed totally blind to the issues of rank. Though this seemed to annoy some of the holdovers from the previous CEO's senior staff, it endeared Gordon to nearly everyone else in the company. He was, by far, more effective than his predecessor in bringing out the best in others.

I recall observing a conversation Gordon had with a young intern. They were talking about product packaging. Gordon offered a view and the intern expressed an opposing opinion. Rather than resist this "conflict," Gordon said with delight, "Great, you're suggesting a different approach. I'd love to hear more about it." Then the two launched into a lively discussion that led to an important innovation.

Despite its negative reputation, conflict can be a good thing. When handled properly, it can help produce insights not otherwise possible. That's the thesis of *Conflict without Casualties: A Field Guide for Leading With Compassionate Accountability*. Author Nate Regier, a clinical psychologist and CEO and co-founder of a global training firm called Next Element, shows how to replace workplace drama with accountability.

Rodger Dean Duncan: Why do so many people seem predisposed to regard conflict as an inherently negative thing?

Nate Regier: Most people have negative associations due to previous conflicts gone bad. They've seen destructive conflict from caregivers, coaches, teachers, the media, even their role models. They've experienced the casualties like broken relationships, emotional pain, or even physical illness. All they know is negative conflict, also known as drama.

Duncan: Drama, you say, is misusing the energy of conflict. How and why do people adopt this habit, and what's the best way to cultivate a more productive use of conflict?

Regier: Conflict is nothing more than a gap between what we want and what we are experiencing at any point in time. These gaps generate energy which can show itself in lots of ways; physically, emotionally, psychologically. Drama is what happens when people spend that energy struggling against themselves or each other, with or without awareness, to feel justified about their negative behavior.

There are three main influences that lead to these bad habits:

First is human nature. Humans are predisposed to seek justification. When in doubt, try to prove you are right. You know you are doing it if you gain satisfaction in saying, “See, I knew this would happen,” or “See, I always mess things up.”


Nate Regier

Second is personality. Personality strongly influences how people play the game of drama, e.g. which roles they play and how they recruit others to join them. Sometimes it’s subtle, sometimes in-your-face.

Finally, we learn how to play the drama game by watching others. Anyone who is around drama long enough will eventually learn these three unspoken rules—1) Don’t talk about what’s really going on, 2) Don’t share how you are really feeling, and 3) Don’t hold anyone ac- countable for their behavior.

The alternative to struggling against people is to struggle with them. That’s called compassion. Compassion has three ingredients—openness, resourcefulness, and persistence.

Openness is about courageous transparency, sharing real feelings and motives, and supporting an environment of safety.

Resourcefulness is about creative problem-solving, encouraging ownership over solutions. Teach people how to fish instead of giving them fish.

Persistence is about accountability and consistency between word and deed, upholding the most important principles and values in relationships.

Compassion is about using all three of these ingredients to walk into conflict without casualties.

Duncan: According to the so-called Drama Triangle (a model describing how people interact in distress), there are typically three roles played out in a conflict—Persecutor, Victim, and Rescuer. In the workplace, what do these three roles look like in observable behavior?

Regier: The Drama Triangle was postulated by Dr. Stephen Karpman in the 1970s.

The Persecutor adopts the attitude, “I’m OK, You are not OK,” and feels justified to attack, blame or manipulate others to close the gap between what they want and what they are experiencing.

Persecutors at work blame others for problems, attack people for being stupid, lazy or uncommitted, and manipulate people and relationships for personal gain. Typical tactics include: threats, intimidation, withholding information, belittling, criticizing, pitting people against each other, pushing beliefs, micromanaging.

Victims adopt the opposite attitude, “I’m not OK, you are OK.” By putting themselves down and putting others’ needs before their own in self-destructive ways, they can justify their self-defeating belief. Typical behaviors from Victims include holding back, making silly mistakes, self-criticism, isolating, withdrawing, compromising boundaries to keep the peace, and personalizing even constructive criticism.

“Openness is about courageous transparency, sharing real feelings and motives, and supporting an environment of safety.

Rescuers get their kicks by fixing others. They are a solution in search of a problem, believing that “I’m OK, you are only OK if you accept my help and are grateful.” They swoop in with unsolicited advice, seeking to create dependence and feel like the hero. They are convinced that their job is to make others better, and feel justified when they can save someone else from imperfection or weakness.

Rescuers use these kinds of tactics: pointing out what’s wrong instead of what’s right, offering solutions without asking permission, gloating when people refuse their help and then stumble, inserting themselves in others’ business, leaving people to fend for themselves so that they will toughen up.

Duncan: You say one of the key qualities of a good leader is the ability to solve problems without creating new ones. How can a leader address workplace conflict in a way that avoids merely rescuing the victims but instead teaches people to deal productively with conflict themselves?

Regier: In drama, leaders can easily find themselves putting out fires instead of building safe, curious, and accountable work environments. The key to productive conflict is compassion, the art of struggling with people instead of against them.

Here’s how leaders can leverage the three ingredients of compassion. I start with Openness, then Resourcefulness, then Persistence. Our research at Next Element has showed that conflict is best addressed in that order.

Openness fosters a safe place to talk about the real issues, including feelings. Emotional motives are one of the biggest drivers of behavior even though most people don’t talk about it. Vulnerability is respected instead of feared. Resourcefulness fosters creative problem-solving and ownership. Resourceful leaders don’t do it for their people, they encourage and allow their people to learn and grow together. Persistence fosters an environment of consistency where boundaries are enforced and promises kept in a spirit of dignity. Compassionate leaders set the tone for a culture where people are worthwhile, capable, and accountable.

Duncan: You suggest that leaders who try to institute a "zero-tolerance policy" for drama are likely part of the problem. Please elaborate.

Regier: Zero tolerance for drama represents a naive and short-sight- ed understanding of conflict. Nature hates a vacuum. Discouraging drama without a replacement only causes it to go underground. Attacking someone who is in drama is also drama. Conflict is inevitable and holds tremendous creative potential. Drama-free workplaces can only happen if leaders recognize they are part of the equation and give people alternative ways to address the conflict.

Duncan: How does compassion for people engaged in workplace drama help them accept accountability for the outcome?

Regier: Compassion isn't just "for others." It's for me, too. Compassion means "to struggle with," so it completely changes the rules of the game. Compassion says, "We are in this together. We are worthwhile, capable and accountable, so the struggle belongs to both of us. I won't hurt you, I won't do it for you, and I won't let you off the hook."

I once presented a compassionate culture training program for department directors of a national company. After learning about the three ingredients of compassion, one leader said, "It doesn't have to be adversarial. We can both be confident that we are in this together for the common good. I can see my employees really stepping up under these conditions."

Duncan: How does compassion help people avoid being pulled into Persecutor, Victim, or Rescuer roles?

Regier: The core belief of compassion is "I'm OK, you're OK," even when we are dealing with unhealthy behavior or unmet goals. The three skills of compassion are antidotes to drama because they replace justification with effectiveness and they invite people to use their natural character strengths instead of the negative behaviors of drama. Compassion helps us see past the role or mask people are wearing, and invite out their best selves instead.

Duncan: What's been your experience with organizations that have successfully adopted "compassionate accountability" as a key ingredient of their cultures?

Regier: It starts with leadership being willing to see their own drama, make different choices, learn the compassion skills, and implement change.

Compassionate organizations evaluate everything they do—policies, procedures, protocols—through the lens of whether it supports safety, curiosity, and consistency. This is what some of our clients have experienced:

- Greater satisfaction in relationships at work and at home.
- More ownership for innovation and change.
- Improved customer satisfaction.
- Reduced turnover.
- Happier, more productive employees.
- Leaders who are less frustrated because they are working smarter, not harder.

Personal application:

- How can you use your new understanding of the Drama Triangle to help you avoid unproductive behaviors when dealing with conflict?
- What can you do to show compassion for people during conflict without getting sucked into the drama vortex?
- What can you do the next time you see drama in your own behavior?

Exclusive conversation with
Michelle Reina

Boost Your Trust Quotient: Strengthen Your Relationships

By Rodger Dean Duncan

On the political campaign trail, "trust" is a common theme in assessing both the attractiveness and electability of candidates. While most of us will never have our own trustworthiness measured by the pollsters, it's nevertheless a key ingredient of the personal "brand" we project in the marketplace of relationships.

Dr. Dennis Reina and Dr. Michelle Reina are experts on the subject. Their book *Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace* is excellent reading for anyone who's really serious about building effective relationships.

To sample their approach, I visited with Michelle Reina.

Rodger Dean Duncan: It's been said that a thousand tiny paper cuts can do as much damage as one deep stab wound. In the workplace, what are some of the seemingly harmless "trust paper cuts" that add up to produce feelings of betrayal?

Michelle Reina: Business is conducted via relationships. Relationships that produce results are based on a foundation of trust. Every day, "trust paper cuts" are inflicted when people:

- Gossip, and backbite: Talk *about* each other rather than *with* each other when issues arise.
- Exclude others from decisions that impact their work.
- Withhold information or fail to act on requests for information promptly.
- Take more credit than is truly deserved.
- Change plans without consulting stakeholders.
- Fail to keep agreements, meet deadlines, or accept responsibility.
- Micromanage others' skills and abilities.
- Spin the truth rather than tell it like it is.
- Are late for work repeatedly.
- Blame others.
- Criticize to intimidate rather than improve other's behavior.

The most challenging aspect of "trust paper cuts"? About 90% of the time, people aren't even aware these behaviors are eroding trust. While the behaviors don't get addressed, they do *not* go unnoticed.

Duncan: When people already trust us, what are some of the routine behaviors that reinforce and even strengthen that trust?

Reina: Even in the most trusting relationships, people still let each other down. Disappointments, misunderstandings, and broken trust are natural outcomes of human relationships. The difference in high-trust relationships is that when trust is compromised, people work through the situation together. Instead of blaming or avoiding, they ask questions to understand the circumstances and check out assumptions. They revisit expectations, making the implicit explicit. They talk to each other with positive intent to learn, grow, and deepen their connection. Through this process, broken trust becomes a stepping-stone to stronger trust.

Duncan: In some organizations, trust is embraced at the slogan level while inter-department competition is the norm. What's your advice in that kind of situation?

Reina: We recommend leaders conduct an assessment to pinpoint systemic behaviors driving counterproductive competition. They will discover self-serving behavior: people jockeying for position, hoarding information, not being responsive to others' needs or requests, and working at cross-purposes. Behind these behaviors, they will likely uncover internal competition for resources that is institutionally structured and rewarded. Or, a cultural ingrained attachment to *"This is the way it is and always has been."* Or, disincentives that impede inter-departmental collaboration.

Michelle Reina

Systemic competition breaks down collaboration, prevents people from doing their best work, and compromises trust. Only when identified and understood can behaviors driving unhealthy competition be redirected and positioned for trustworthy behavior to be the new collective goal.

Duncan: The old proverb says the road to hell is paved with good intentions. What's the key to translating good trust intentions into observable, authentic behavior?

Reina: First, do an internal check. Ask yourself what your intentions are. For instance, do you intend to listen openly to others' points of view? Do you intend to express interest in their work and discover what you can do to support their efforts? Do you intend to ask for feedback so that you can learn and grow? Getting clear on intentions is the first step to acting on them authentically.

Next, commit to behaviors that reflect those intentions. Often, behaving authentically requires humility, vulnerability, and compassion. Telling the truth about your thoughts and feelings can be uncomfortable. Being honest about what you can actually deliver and the skills you *don't have* takes courage. Yet, your transparency opens the door to deeper, more trustworthy relationships.

Duncan: What's a workable formula for dealing with a betrayal of trust?

Reina: There are seven steps.

- *Step One:* Observe and acknowledge what has happened. Recognize the impact of broken trust on your work and life.

- *Step Two:* Allow feelings to surface. Own the feelings associated with the breach of your trust. Are you confused, angry, hurt, shocked, or stunned?

- *Step Three:* Get support. Seek *objective* counsel to gain greater perspective.

- *Step Four:* Reframe the experience. Get curious. Consider the bigger picture, opportunities that may now be open to you, options you can consider. Reflect upon what the experience may teach you—about you, relationships and life.

- *Step Five:* Take responsibility. Take responsibility for restoring trust, even if you're not "at fault." Dig deep and learn the behaviors to practice that can keep the situation from happening again.

- *Step Six:* Forgive yourself and others. Release yourself from the weight of bitterness and resentment and empower yourself to approach others with compassion and understanding.

- *Step Seven:* Let go and move on. Disengage yourself from the grip of broken trust and move forward.

Duncan: Most people know that behaviors either build or erode trust. What role does explicit conversation about behavior play in creating and maintaining trust?

Reina: When people are honest and explicit they can raise each other's awareness of how their behavior is building or breaking trust. This raised awareness provides a reference point for feedback and open dialogue. A safe container is created to surface and work through breach- es of trust and related issues and concerns.

Duncan: Many people make commitments with good intentions, but then allow "new" issues to compete for their time and other resources. What are some tips for dealing with this "crescendo effect" so commitments and trust are not violated?

Reina: Be honest—both with yourself and with others. Genuinely assess what you can and cannot do. Give yourself permission to say "no" or "not right now." Keep people informed of your current and intervening variables. If you do find your back up against a well, come clean immediately. Name the situation for what it is and renegotiate. Every-one knows what it feels like to drop the ball. If you own your overextension right away, you'll often experience more compassion than you anticipated. You'll preserve and strengthen trust in your relationships.

" When people are honest and explicit they can raise each other's awareness of how their behavior is building or breaking trust.

Duncan: During his long odyssey of perfecting the light bulb, Thomas Edison famously said "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." To inspire innovation, how important is it to foster an environment where "mistakes" are not punished?

Reina: For innovation to flourish, mistakes need to be treated as opportunities to learn and grow, not faults to be punished. Courage and compassion are partners to innovation. When people make mistakes, what they need at their core is reassurance, and then insight to learn and grow from those mistakes. When judged and criticized, people contract, withdraw, and play it safe. The status quo becomes the new norm. Innovation ceases. We worked with a company that experienced a $2 million product recall because people didn't feel safe to admit mistakes. Creating an environment where mistakes are not punished is *that* important.

Duncan: Some people who have been betrayed in the past find it difficult to extend trust to people who had nothing to do with the previous violation. What advice can you offer them?

Reina: Notice your reluctance to trust. Pay attention to your tendency to generalize, judge, criticize, blame, or overlay something on another person that doesn't belong to them. Be willing to give this person a fresh opportunity and the benefit of the doubt. Remind yourself that they are *not* the ones who broke your trust in the past. Consider what it is you need to know, evidence you need to see, and perspective you need to gain and understand in order to feel safe to extend trust. Do you need specific information? Are there expectations you need clarified? Are there agreements that need to be met?

Rather than setting up the other person to have to wait for you to extend trust, ask for what you need. Give yourself permission to recover from the impact of previous betrayals so they do not impede your present relationships. Do your inner work so you can foster the healthy, trustworthy, productive relationships you want and need.

Personal application:

- What are some honest questions you could ask yourself to assess your behaviors that may build or erode trust?
- When someone else makes a mistake that affects you, what can they do or say to earn back or maintain your trust? How do you handle your own mistakes?
- How do you feel when someone is explicit about extending trust to you? Do you work doubly hard to prove that their trust is warranted? What does that tell you about how you could/should extend trust to others?

Exclusive conversation with
Edgar H. Schein

Culture, Leadership, and Performance

By Rodger Dean Duncan

If there were an aristocracy among experts in the field of organizational development, Dr. Edgar Schein would likely be king.

For many years, he was a professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management. But he is known primarily for his prolific writing. He's author of more than a dozen books dealing with organizational performance issues. He holds degrees from the University of Chicago, Stanford, and Harvard. He's actually credited with "inventing" the term organizational culture.

I had the pleasure of serving with Ed on an industry advisory board. In addition to enjoying his magnificent intellect and wide-ranging interests, I find him to be wonderfully comfortable in conversation.

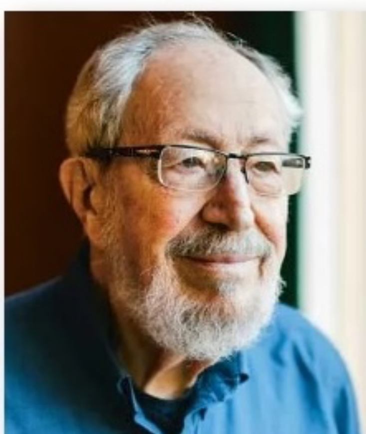
Rodger Dean Duncan: Many years ago, you were credited with coining the term "organizational culture." How do you find that term used and abused in the workplace today?

Edgar Schein: Managers today understand the importance of culture as a factor in whether a company performs well or not. But many of them mistakenly believe they can arbitrarily decide whether or not you will have a good culture. They still don't understand that culture is a product of years of learning and experience, not something you "implement."

You can find companies whose culture helps them perform, but they acquired that culture over a period of years through leadership that worked. You can find in those same companies a drop in performance as the very culture that made the company successful became a liability when changes occurred in technology and in the market. This is the story of Digital Equipment Corporation. The same culture explained both its success and its failure.

Duncan: In what important ways are culture and leadership fundamentally intertwined?

Schein: In a mature company run by promoted general managers, as opposed to entrepreneurs or founders, the culture will reflect the past history of founders and leaders and will limit what kind of leadership is possible. If a new leader such as Carly Fiorina comes into a company (like she did at Hewlett-Packard with its long history and strong culture), there will be conflict between what the new leader tries to impose and what the culture will allow. The leader will win in such conflict only by firing large numbers of the carriers of the old culture, as turnaround managers usually do. The new leader can then start fresh by imposing new values and behavior patterns. But this is not a new culture until it succeeds for a number of years and becomes internalized by the employees.



Edgar Schein

So, you can talk about *destroying* an old culture, but you cannot *create* or *impose* a new culture, only new values and behavior patterns.

When Lou Gerstner went into IBM, his success was based on figuring out what the culture was that had led to IBM's success. He noticed that the company had drifted away from some of the elements of that culture and he found a way to revive it. He worked on the culture by reviving and reinvigorating the best elements of what was there, not by "changing" the culture.

Duncan: How does culture influence the leadership styles that "work" or fail to "work" in an organization?

Schein: In general, the culture is stronger than the new leader and either limits or ignores new leaders who do not fit into the culture. The HP culture emphasized good relations between people, teamwork and humility. Carly Fiorina was able to impose some new goals and values, but her flamboyant style did not fit the culture at all and caused her ultimately to lose credibility and effectiveness. When John Sculley became

CEO of Apple, he got the board to fire Steve Jobs. Then Sculley then was himself succeeded by several outsiders. The Apple culture never adapted to these new CEOs and limited their effectiveness because Apple was a technically based culture in which marketing-oriented CEOs never gained respect. When Steve Jobs came back, there was once again mutual congruence between the culture and the CEO's style and values.

Duncan: We know that culture influences leadership. In what ways can leadership influence culture? For example, how can a leader reinforce the "helpful" aspects of a culture and dilute the culture's "harmful" attributes?

Schein: In both cases, what the leader can do is to impose new behaviors and hope that performance improves. But the new behavior has to solve a problem. In a company whose culture leads salesmen from different units to visit the same customers and cause confusion and subsequent loss of those customers, the new leader might announce "from now on we will have a culture of teamwork in our sales force and we will work together."

But this will be meaningless until it is analyzed in *behavioral* terms. In this future "culture," what exactly are salesmen supposed to do differently? When the leader announces that from now on customers will be serviced by account teams of salesmen from different units and that individual salesmen will be rewarded by how the *account* does, and changes the structure and reward system to make that happen, then the new teamwork values will mean nothing. If that is implemented and succeeds over a period of time, then we can talk about a new "team culture."

> " You can talk about *destroying* an old culture, but you cannot *create* or *impose* a new culture, only new values and behavior patterns.

Most culture change programs fail because they are just announcements of new values without a change in what new behavior will be required and how the structure and reward system will make that happen.

Duncan: What are some of the early warning signs that an organization's culture needs to change?

Schein: The warning signs are never "cultural." They are always performance issues that lead to specifying new behaviors needed to fix the problem. The culture gets involved if the new behavior won't work because of the culture. At Digital, they needed engineers to build simpler turnkey products to survive. But the engineering culture had been built on creating sophisticated, fun products, so the engineers did not respond to the new requirements.

To fix such a problem, you have to destroy elements of the old culture. But the focus has to remain on fixing the business problem and only then seeing how culture will aid or hinder the fix.

Duncan: Various forms of resistance often thwart attempts at culture change. Why do people resist change, and what are the keys to turning resistance into support?

Schein: Resistance to change is a normal response because what we are doing is based on past success, so why should we change what has worked in the past? The only way you can convince me to change is to show me that the old behavior no longer produces results and show me what new behavior would work better. You have to convince me that there is a business problem and show me how the new behavior that you are demanding will fix the problem and then provide me with the resources, and training in the new behavior and give me new incentives to learn it.

Personal application:

- In terms of observable behaviors, how would you describe the culture in your workplace?
- If you could wave a magic wand and change your workplace culture, what would that "new" culture look like?
- Since you *can't* wave a magic wand, what specific behaviors can you personally model (and encourage in others) that could produce a better culture?

Exclusive conversation with
Molly Beck

Expand Your Network Without Getting Hives

By Rodger Dean Duncan

Building a network has been cited as the number one unwritten rule of success in business. “Whom” you know clearly impacts “what” you know.

Doors of opportunity open most often for those who know where and how and when to knock.

But the process requires much more than merely racking up followers, friends, and connections on social media. It requires strategy and reciprocity.

Nobody understands this better than Molly Beck, author of the bestselling *Reach Out: The Simple Strategy You Need to Expand Your Network and Increase Your Influence*.

Molly, founder of the podcast creation site Messy.fm, offers excellent advice on building your brand, your network, and your career. And if "meet and greet events" turn you off, she shows you how to expand your network in ways that don't give you the hives.

Rodger Dean Duncan: Early in your book you say "network" is a noun, not a verb. Why do you emphasize that?

Molly Beck: Yes! Remembering back to second grade: a noun is a person, place, or thing—something tangible. Your network is tangible and you're building your network by meeting other people, not meeting other people by networking. The former is friendly and attainable. The latter conjures up images of a stressful cocktail party. A stressful cocktail party is the opposite of what Reach Out strategy is: it's digital connecting with people you want to meet by being a joy in their inbox.

Duncan: What kind of digital presence does a person need in starting a serious Reach Out effort?


Molly Beck

Beck: You need only three things to have a digital presence before starting to Reach Out online—a professional email address, not tied to work or school a LinkedIn profile a second social media profile where you share professional-ish content (a Facebook profile where you share only family pictures doesn't count; a Twitter feed where you share articles related to the industry you are in does).

Duncan: Many people apparently think LinkedIn is just for job seekers. How do you disabuse them of that notion?

Beck: One of the biggest benefits of LinkedIn beyond job hunting is its value in search results. Everyone googles everyone these days. Depending on how common your name is, LinkedIn profiles usually appear near the top of online search results when someone searches for various combinations of your name, city, and/or current company. (If you just created a LinkedIn page, your new profile should start appearing in search results a few weeks later.) The easy-to-find nature of your LinkedIn profile provides credibility that you are who you say you are, on the Internet and in real life.

Duncan: You say the real power of Reaching Out is at the edge of a person's existing network. What does that mean?

Beck: The people in the immediate circle around you (your family, friends, and close co-workers) are valuable because they know you well and can give you advice on what works well for you knowing your personality. They are at the center of the circle of your network. Yet because they are so close to you, they know many of the same people and see many of the same opportunities you do.

But if you go one level out—to acquaintances or friends of friends—these people have different vantage points and are seeing other opportunities you don't see that may help you get to the next place. The edge of your network is where the winds of change and new projects come from.

Duncan: When Reaching Out to a stranger, what should a person share in terms of "gifts" and content?

Beck: Follow this email template when writing a Reach Out email—

- Step One: Decide whether to send from your personal or work email.
- Step Two: Make your subject line awesome.
- Step Three: Use a simple greeting and the person's name.
- Step Four: Introduce yourself, give the world's shortest bio.
- Step Five: Offer your Gift. This would be:
    - Gift #1: A compliment (this a must), *plus*—
    - Gift #2: An article or book recommendation your Target might like
    - Gift #3: Knowledge you have access to that they don't or something special only you can create
    - Gift #4: A press opportunity
    - Gift #5: Free advice on a skill you have that would benefit them
- Step Six: If applicable, add your favor.
- Step Seven: Write your closing and add your email signature.
- Step Eight: Double-check everything, add their email address, and press send!

Duncan: Like many things, expanding one's network requires a well-conceived strategy. What strategy or "action plan" do you recommend?

Beck: One Reach Out to someone every weekday is the only action plan you need. One Reach Out each weekday is enough to make significant progress over a year. One Reach Out a day means you are sending about 260 Reach Outs in a calendar year. If 40% reply, that's 104 new or strengthened connections you don't have in your network right now.

Duncan: Earlier you mentioned “favor.” What steps should one take be- fore requesting a favor from a stranger in a Reach Out interaction?

Beck: Not every Reach Out email needs to include a favor. Sometimes you’re just opening a line of communication with the other person, perhaps because you anticipate needing a favor down the road. If you do want a favor, ask a non-Googleable question that can be answered easily via email.

Bad questions to waste a favor on include “Can I pick your brain?” (too vague, and insulting to ask someone for their expertise for free); “What open jobs does your company have?” (go to the careers page and look for yourself); and “Can you mentor me?” (mentoring is a relationship that develops over time. You can ask for specific advice to start, but asking someone to be your mentor when you don’t know the person well is too much to start with).

> “One Reach Out to someone every weekday is the only action plan you need.

Good questions to spend a favor on include: “What industry conferences or events do you think are worth the time and money to attend?” or “What trends in our field do you think I should be paying attention to?” or “Are there any books that you wish you’d read earlier in your career that I should read now?”

Duncan: With so many people on high alert for privacy invasions these days, what’s your advice for building confidence that it’s safe to respond to your Reach Out?

Beck: Never attach anything, including a resumé, unless asked for, in a first email. That’s overly forward and can often get your email sent to their spam folder.

Duncan: A key to Reaching Out success, you suggest, is making it a daily practice. What can people do to make that discipline part of their regular routine?

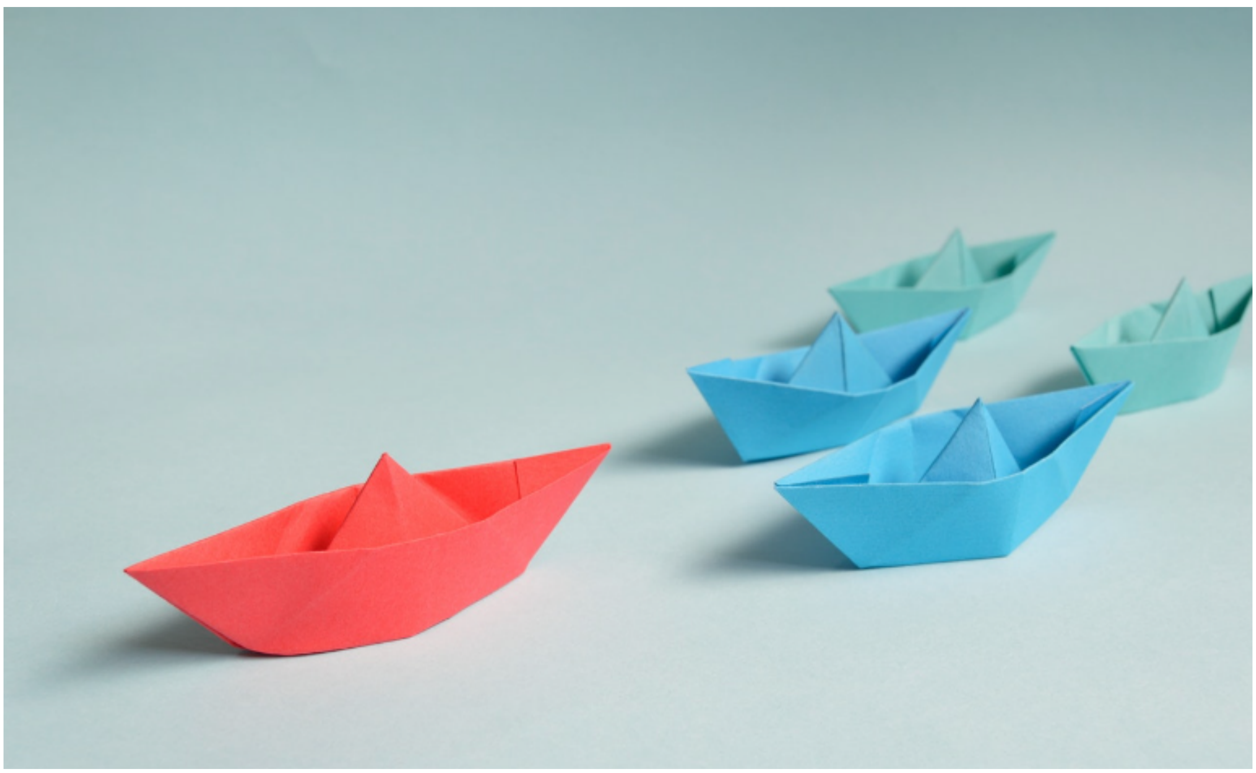
Beck: Right now, put “RO,” short for “Reach Out,” every weekday at the same time for fifteen minutes on your calendar. When that calendar invite comes up, write your Reach Out email to the person you want to connect with today. Then you’re done. It’s really that easy!

Personal application:

- What is your current digital presence? Based on Molly's advice, what do you need to do to make that digital presence ready for prime time?
- Even if you're not looking for a job and don't expect to in the near future, how can you use LinkedIn to build your network?
- What are some interesting questions you could pose to people that might motivate them to respond to your outreach?

Exclusive conversation with
Jack Zenger

What's Your Path to Extraordinary Leadership?



By Rodger Dean Duncan

Mother Teresa, it should be remembered, didn't walk around complaining about her thighs. She had work to do.

The emphasis on developing strengths—as opposed to handwringing over weaknesses—has gained a lot of popularity in recent years. Half a century ago Peter Drucker wrote that "to make strength productive is the unique purpose of the organization" and, by extension, of the individual.

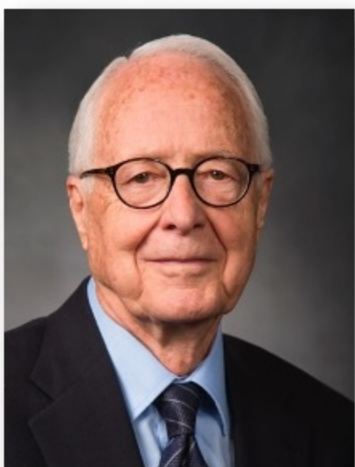
Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton later concluded from Gallup research that far too much emphasis had been placed on people's weaknesses. Their book *Now Develop Your Strengths* helped launch the "strengths movement."

Now there's Jack Zenger. He's devoted an entire career to studying the factors that enable leaders to perform at significantly higher levels than the norm. His latest book is *How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths*.

Rodger Dean Duncan: In the personal development world, focusing on strengths has become almost an industry in and of itself. What's the status of that focus now?

Jack Zenger: The practice of having leaders place greater emphasis on their strengths versus trying to fix their weaknesses has become widely accepted. A good deal has been written and published about it. I fully support that message because our research strongly confirms the validity of that practice.

The first edition of *The Extraordinary Leader* was published in 2001. Our research was done concurrently with research by Buckingham and Clifton. Our book focused on leaders and leadership strengths rather than on those of the frontline workforce. We presented evidence that the most effective leaders are those who often possess as few as four or five strengths.



Jack Zenger

Duncan: What's the basis of your conclusion?

Zenger: Our initial research was based on 360-degree feedback data collected from 200,000 respondents pertaining to 20,000 leaders. This research defined a strength as a competency exhibited at an extremely high level. We used the 90th percentile as the arbitrary cutoff point. Fortunately, we had data on business results produced by the leaders being measured, so that 360-degree feedback that described leadership strengths could be compared with various business outcomes.

Our research identified behaviors that are significantly correlated with key leadership competencies that hold out promise as methods for helping leaders further develop their strengths.

Duncan: What else did you learn?

Zenger: In addition, our research emphasized the importance of selecting strengths that not only represent competencies that are moderate strengths, but that ideally leaders will identify those competencies about which they had some passion.

Even more noteworthy, however, is the additional requirement that this be something important to the organization in which they work. This combination of competence, passion and organization need determines those strengths to be developed.

Duncan: You write that exceptional people, like everyone else, have weaknesses. So, what makes them exceptional? What do they do that raises them above the pack?

Zenger: No one is universally good at everything. It's not at all unusual for extraordinary leaders to have some weaknesses. Having said that, it's not common for them to have serious deficiencies that fall in the area of what we call "fatal flaws." Extraordinary leaders are seldom really horrible at an important leadership competency.

Duncan: Why is elevating your strengths more likely to improve performance than eliminating (or at least decreasing the impact of) your weaknesses? What kind of strengths are most likely—when leveraged—to enable a person to become exceptional?

> **"** The practice of having leaders place greater emphasis on their strengths versus trying to fix their weaknesses has become widely accepted.

Zenger: Correcting a weakness is usually a fairly straightforward process. For example, let's take someone who's determined not to be strategic in their thinking. Taking courses, reading books, and being coached by a highly strategic colleague are all activities that would probably begin to help. Moving from an extremely low spot on the curve to being average is a relatively well-defined path.

However, someone who is at the 80th percentile, who wants to become truly extraordinary, is faced with a different question. That person is apt to think or say, "I've read that book," or "I've taken that course." If you are reasonably good at something, the path seems to be a different one.

Here we apply a concept that's quite familiar to those in the world of athletics. The idea is cross-training. Aspiring athletes often engage in activities that have been shown to help in the development of a specific skill. So, a tennis player may lift weights, run long distances, bicycle, jump rope and engage in a variety of other activities.

We've found that for every differentiating competency there are a number of other behaviors that are statistically correlated to it. We believe that deliberately engaging in these behaviors that are statistically correlated will help in someone's development of the target competency.

Duncan: So, what's the bottom line?

Zenger: Elevating strengths is far more likely to elevate someone into the realms of being an extraordinary leader than focusing on their lower scores or weaknesses.

Erasing weaknesses tends to bring people from the bottom quartile or decile up to the mean average, but it does not take them beyond that. Fixing weaknesses clearly has benefit and people can make dramatic improvement because they start from a low base.

But simply removing weaknesses does not elevate people to being extraordinary leaders. That is reserved for people who develop several strengths.

Duncan: In the absence of 360-degree feedback or any other formalized data-gathering system, how can a person collect information that can be helpful in self-development? In other words, what's a good way to select competencies to develop?

Zenger: Without 360-degree feedback, it's more difficult to get an accurate assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses. However, thoughtful interviews with colleagues who know you well and who are "truth tellers" can give you good information. Interviewing a boss who is both perceptive and who cares about your development can also provide good information.

Duncan: Some organizations focus their leadership development resources on senior level personnel, depriving lower-level people of such opportunities until they "graduate" to higher titles on the organization chart (sometimes by attrition rather than by actual merit). What's the danger of such an approach?

Zenger: Organizations that provide leadership development only for senior people are making a huge mistake. We believe that the most successful organizations in the long run will be those that recognized the need for leadership at all levels. Therefore, development for first level supervisors, middle managers and upper middle managers is vital. They are the leaders of the future.

In fact, we are strong believers that individual contributors deserve leadership development as preparation for their ultimate movement into positions of management and leadership.

We conducted a study with several client organizations and discovered that there were more people participating in leadership development who were over the age of 60 than there were below the age of 30. When that was called to their attention, they saw the opportunity they were missing.

“Organizations that provide leadership development only for senior people are making a huge mistake.

Duncan: What advice can you offer someone who genuinely wants to become an exceptional performer but is in an organization that provides no formal learning and development opportunities?

Zenger: Create your own plan and diligently work to execute it.

We believe that virtually every job can be a valuable laboratory or classroom for leadership development. Many of the important skills required of an effective leader can be practiced regardless of what one's current job is.

You can practice taking initiative. You can practice being a good problem-solver. You can practice collaboration and teamwork. All of the differentiating competencies that our research identified are involved in most positions. Reading good books on management and leadership can provide the theory.

Then it's a matter of deliberately practicing some of those ideas and seeking feedback from your colleagues and boss regarding your effectiveness in implementing them.

Personal application:

- What do you feel are your three or four significant strengths? Other than your own perception (which may not be particularly objective), what external data do you have (for example, 360-degree performance feedback) to confirm that perception?
- How does your current job make good use of those strengths? What could you do to make even better use of those strengths?
- What opportunities can you discover or create to leverage your strengths further?