

Volume

6

# 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

- Volume 6 -

## Table of Contents

The 'Why' of Work: Purpose and Meaning on the Job David Ulrich and Wendy Ulrich .....	1
An Attitude of Gratitude Can Make You a Better Leader Star Dargin .....	7
What If What You Think You Know Just Ain't So? Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall .....	12
Stressed? Maybe Rest Can Be Your New Hustle Paula Rizzo .....	21
Bridging the Gap to Reach the 'Why' Generation Mark Perna .....	26
Why 'Etiquette' is So Much More Than Just Saying Please Rosanne Thomas .....	31

What ‘Engagement’ (Or Lack of It) Means for Your Organization Kevin Sheridan.....	37
How Effective Feedback Can Build Trust and Confidence Tamra Chandler .....	41
Why ‘Love’ and ‘Discipline’ Are Keys to Effective Leadership John Eades.....	47
What Great Leaders See, Say, and Do Kathryn D. Cramer .....	52
Lackluster Teamwork? Tips for Boosting Performance Adrian Gostick .....	57
Stories: The Effective Leader’s Must-Have Tool Kevin Cashman .....	63





Exclusive conversation with  
**David Ulrich and Wendy Ulrich**

# The ‘Why’ of Work: Purpose and Meaning on the Job



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Why?

It's a question all of us should ask ourselves. Why do we do what we do? In particular, why do we do the work that, for many of us, occupies most of our waking hours for our entire adult lives?

Ralph Waldo Emerson left us a quote worthy of one of those inspirational wall posters: “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”



That thought may feel warm and fuzzy, but the question remains: Why do we do the work we do?

Dave and Wendy Ulrich address that and many related issues in *The Why of Work: How Great Leaders Build Abundant Organizations That Win*.

Dave Ulrich, professor of business at the University of Michigan, has authored or coauthored more than 30 books that have shaped the human resources profession and the field of leadership development. Wendy Ulrich is a psychologist, educator and writer with a passion for helping people create healthy relationships and meaning-rich lives.

I visited with this dynamic duo to explore their thinking on issues affecting engagement, productivity, and—yes—purpose and meaning in the workplace.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** In the context of meaning in the workplace, how do you define abundance?

**David Ulrich:** Abundance is to have a fullness (e.g., an abundant harvest) or to live life to its fullest (e.g., an abundant life).

An abundant organization enables its employees to be completely fulfilled by finding meaning and purpose from their work experience. This meaning enables employees to



David and Wendy Ulrich

have personal hope for the future and create value for customers and investors. When we ask people how they feel about their work, we can quickly get a sense of how work helps them fulfill the things that matter most in their lives.

**Duncan:** You point out that meaning and abundance are more about what we do with what we have than about what we have to begin with or what we accumulate. How can a leader persuade people to adopt that viewpoint and to “operationalize” it in the workplace?

**Wendy Ulrich:** Clearly this won’t fly if a leader is trying to talk people into ignoring bad working conditions when something could be done to change them. But I learned long ago with therapy clients that

their misery often had less to do with their circumstances and more to do with what they told themselves those circumstances meant about them. (“This means I’ll never be happy .... my future is hopeless ... people don’t like me ... I’ll never succeed.”) Fortunately, even when we cannot change our circumstances, we do control what we tell ourselves those circumstances mean about us. Checking out what is real, changing the story, seeing a different perspective, or getting creative can turn a problem into an opportunity.

**Duncan:** How can an organization institutionalize, not merely individualize, abundance and meaning in the workplace?

**David Ulrich:** The concept of abundant organizations draws on many diverse literatures related to the employee experience at work: positive psychology, high performing teams, culture, commitment, learning, civility, growth mindset. By distilling these literatures, we identified seven principles of the abundant organization (identity, purpose, relationships/teamwork, positive work environment, personalizing work, resilience/growth, and delight/civility). These principles are institutionalized into organizations by designing and delivering HR practices around people, performance, information, and work that enable organizations to create a personality that outlasts any single individual.

**Duncan:** You say leaders are meaning makers. In terms of observable behaviors, what does that look like?

**Wendy Ulrich:** People find meaning when they see a clear connection between what they highly value and what they spend time doing. That connection is not always obvious, however. Leaders are in a great position to articulate the values a company is trying to enact and to shape the story of how today's work connects with those values. This means sharing stories of how the company is making a difference for good in the lives of real people, including customers, employees, and communities.

Leaders operationalize that by formally and informally sharing those stories, speaking passionately about what the company stands for and sharing personal lessons learned in that process. Leaders can involve employees in both articulating those values and creating plans to act on them. One way to make those stories come alive is to bring in people who have been helped by the company's products or services and letting them share their stories. We are usually pretty good at sharing financial data. Often more motivating to employees are stories about human impact.

**Duncan:** As the story goes, people feel differently about the meaning of their work if they see themselves as bricklayers rather than as building a cathedral to God. What can leaders (and individuals) do to make work more about cathedral-building?

“People find meaning when they see a clear connection between what they highly value and what they spend time doing.”

**David Ulrich:** There is an old fable of the three bricklayers all working on the same wall. Someone asked the bricklayers, “What you are doing?” The first said “I am laying bricks”; the second bricklayer replied, “I am building a wall”; and the third answered, “I am building a great cathedral for God.” The third had a vision of how the daily tasks of laying bricks fit into a broader, more

meaningful purpose. Like- wise, employees who envision the outcomes of their daily routines find more meaning from doing them. I am not just presenting a lecture as I teach, but preparing the next generation of business leaders.

**Duncan:** What advice do you give workers who don't have a charismatic leader who pushes an abundance agenda? What can they do to flourish?

**David Ulrich:** Martin Seligman's exceptional book *Flourish* suggests that employees can acquire a more positive outlook on their work by having Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments (what he calls PERMA). When employees take personal accountability for creating these attributes (which relate to our seven dimensions of abundance) they do not depend on the leader, but themselves for their work experience. Leaders matter to employee experience, but employee responsibility for the experience matters more. Children mature when they no longer depend on parents to provide all their needs. Likewise, mature employees become agents for their own development.

**Duncan:** In the spirit of the Olympic athlete in *Chariots of Fire*, how can a person find abundant forms of accomplishment?

**David Ulrich:** Defining what matters most or what success looks like is an easy question that is not simple to answer. Success varies by person and over time for any individual person. Olympic athlete Eric Liddell of *Chariots of Fire* fame started with success in his achievements (I can run fast enough to win the medal), but then morphed to insight (I run to find the pleasure God granted me), and ultimately to empower others (I can help others run to find their purpose). Likewise, an employee can continually ask "what do I want?" and "how do I define success?" These reflection questions help take personal accountability for their work and personal lives.

**Duncan:** Gallup research shows that employees who have a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be highly engaged at work than those who don't. What can be done to create a workplace that fosters those kinds of relationships?

**Wendy Ulrich:** Plenty!

Leaders can model healthy relationships at work.

They can encourage people to get to know each other by making time, space, and resources available for them to do so.

They can try to catch people in the act of being nice, thanking and encouraging them.

They can set up ways to teach and coach people in the skills of good relating, such as good listening, being curious about others, apologizing effectively, controlling anger, and letting go of slights—some of the specific skills people can learn and practice that will help them enjoy others and be easier to like.

People with the skills to create and maintain friendship will likely experience less stress at home, increased effectiveness with customers, and improved communications throughout the organization.

**Duncan:** What role does personal humility play in a leader's ability to inspire others and create meaning in the workplace?

**Wendy Ulrich:** Recent work by Dacher Keltner at UC Berkeley on the dynamics of power is fascinating in this regard. He found that people are most likely to rise to power when they have qualities like kindness, good listening, concern for the greater good, enthusiasm, focus, high empathy, and humility. He also found that once people are in power positions, those qualities too often take a back seat to self-entitlement, indifference to the plight of others, negative interruptions in conversation, and ignoring even basic politeness.

When a leader manages to hold on to his or her humanity and humility even when in the power seat, modeling the highest ideals we have for ourselves as human beings, others want to join that team. Humility is at the heart of a growth mindset that encourages and models learning instead of defensiveness in the face of setbacks, paving the way for creativity and resilience.

**Duncan:** Conflict, even if rare, is inevitable in most any work setting. What have you seen as best practices in addressing conflict so the “why” of work is appropriately reinforced?

**Wendy Ulrich:** Conflict is not only inevitable, but also valuable, bringing problems to light and different viewpoints to bear on problems. But conflict can also be destructive if not handled with fairness, respect, and good will.

When there's a problem it's almost always best to bring it up in a straightforward way directly with the person involved. If we are contemptuous, critical, or cruel we can expect to get defensiveness and anger in return. If we are calm, curious, and compassionate as we try to both explain our point of view and listen to others, conflict can help us get to better outcomes for all. It's amazing how healing it can be to simply feel genuinely heard and cared about and to receive a respectful apology. Most people will listen if they don't feel threatened or attacked.

**Duncan:** How can people find intrinsic value in their work if it's not readily apparent to them?

👉 **Conflict is not only inevitable, but also valuable, bringing problems to light and different viewpoints to bear on problems.**

**Wendy Ulrich:** Take a careful look at your deepest values for how to treat other people (especially in the face of disagreement), what matters most in life, what problems you like to solve or want to solve, or what personal strengths are most meaningful to you to contribute to others. Then actively look for ways to live those values, even in small ways, in the everyday work you do.

Living with meaning and purpose is not easy. It may not make us happy in the moment. It requires self-reflection, effort, getting our hands dirty, and struggling with problems that can make us feel frustrated and

inadequate. But when we connect with people, remember humor and playfulness, practice creativity and resilience, and go into work situations with a plan, we'll find ample opportunities to practice the values and skills that get us closer to what we want our lives to stand for. That's the intrinsic value of our work.

**Duncan:** How should leaders serve as models for meaning in the workplace?

**David Ulrich:** When we ask workshop participants to identify leaders who shaped their lives, everyone can quickly name someone. These leaders generally model the principles of abundance in their personal lives and work to instill them in others. Leaders who are meaning-makers are acutely aware of how their good intentions need to show up in good behaviors; how their daily interactions need to reflect their personal values; and how their job as a leader is not just to be personally authentic, but to help others develop their authenticity.



### **Personal application:**

- What can you do to demonstrate kindness and empathy in your workplace?
- With regard to your own work, how do you define purpose and meaning?
- How can you help your co-workers feel a greater sense of meaning in their work (service to customers and end-users, etc.)?





Exclusive conversation with  
**Star Dargin**

## An Attitude of Gratitude Can Make You a Better Leader



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Enjoy the little things, because one day you'll look back and realize they were the big things.

That may sound like a line from a syrupy greeting card. But it turns out to be an important ingredient in workplace issues like engagement, wellbeing, productivity, and even profit.

Star Dargin knows a bit about the rough-and-tumble of competitive business. Earlier in her career, she led hundreds of professionals in producing a bestselling software product that generated more than \$500 million in annual revenue.

Then she left engineering to become a leadership coach.

Dramatic career shift? She doesn't think so. In fact, she points out, both engineering and leadership coaching focus on making intangibles tangible.

Over the past two decades, Star has worked with hundreds of clients including high-tech firms and NASA. Her emphasis today is on gratitude.

Yes, gratitude.

As a conscious practitioner of gratitude, Star has done extensive research showing gratitude's considerable benefits beyond the obvious "feel good" factor. She shares many of her discoveries in *Leading With Gratitude: 21st Century Solutions to Boost Engagement and Innovation*. Her suggestions for personal and workplace behavior make good sense.

And, yes, they can brighten your day.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** Many people intuitively understand that gratitude is a key to happiness and good relationships. What's the science supporting gratitude's role in effective leadership?

**Star Dargin:** The study of leadership is as old as humans, but only recently is the business world recognizing the value of gratitude within it. It's difficult to quantify the relationship between leadership and gratitude because there are hundreds of definitions of leadership—and because effective leadership changes over time and cultures. It's always evolving.



Star Dargin

There *are* many leadership studies that recognize gratitude as a trait of successful leaders, albeit sometimes disguised as appreciation. Brené Brown is my favorite scientist who has done research on effective leadership.

In earlier works, Brown says, the definition of leadership intersects with the definition of vulnerability because leadership is the ability to flourish in a state of flux, to manage people through uncertainty. Brown adds that, through her studies, she has found that the quickest way to become more vulnerable is to have a strong gratitude muscle, making this trait foundational for effective leadership.

Gratitude is a positive in the workforce in many different ways. Current science shows that gratitude improves our personal and social lives, health, and wellbeing. People who are grateful live longer, heal faster, have less depression and fewer suicidal thoughts. For instance, research has found that waitresses who are authentically appreciative get larger tips and board game players who are shown gratitude win more often because they take more risks. You can start to connect these types of gratitude studies to the development of more effective leadership skills.

**Duncan:** The notion of gratitude seems to be ingrained in many of the words found in leadership literature—words like engagement, celebration, recognition, and appreciation. What are the advantages of using the word gratitude explicitly in discussing leadership practices?

**Dargin:** It's very true that gratitude is ingrained in many leadership practices today, often by using different terms. In fact, I've pulled over 50 books on leadership off my

“ People who are grateful live longer, heal faster, have less depression and fewer suicidal thoughts.

shelves and, in all of them, words such as *appreciation, recognition, positivity, and thankfulness* appear. Yet, these are all flavors of gratitude without being gratitude themselves. What do I mean?

*Engagement* has become the gold standard because, when an engaged employee feels appreciated, it can be measured and tied to return on investment, or ROI. While that makes

it an important and complicated word related to gratitude, it is still not gratitude since an employee can be engaged without having gratitude.

*Celebration* and *recognition* are similar in that they are ways a leader can express gratitude but are not gratitude itself. Plus, not every individual gives or wants to receive gratitude the same way. For example, calling out an individual accomplishment publicly can be highly motivating for some and painful for others. This makes learning the various ways of giving and receiving gratitude important in the workplace.

**Duncan:** What about a simple thank you?

**Dargin:** Saying thank you is certainly another option, but not all thank yous express gratitude.

For example, I've identified three types of thank yous. The first is cultural, learned, and ingrained in many of us since birth. In the U.S., for instance, this type occurs when we thank someone who gives us a gift, even if we dislike it. My German friend even complains that when she goes back home, she has to remember to stop saying thank you so much.

The second type of thank you expects reciprocity. In other words, you give it to get something in return. An example is bringing food to an optional meeting in exchange for attendance.

The last type of thank you is the only one that actually expresses gratitude. You are truly grateful and say thank you consciously and authentically, with nothing expected in return.

In essence, explicitly using the word *gratitude* in an authentic way cuts through the heaviness of other gratitude-encompassing words like *engagement*. It is simple and comes from the heart, so why not say, “I’m grateful” instead of using these other words?

**Duncan:** How does gratitude manifest itself in the observable behavior of an effective leader?

**Dargin:** Leaders operating from gratitude are more engaged and innovative. Rather than blaming or becoming defensive, fearful, or avoiding, they listen better and are more open and accepting. Their behavior also becomes one of natural curiosity, making them generally more creative in their collaborative problem-solving efforts. The bottom line is improved when leaders are most productive. This happens when leaders are creative and engaged. Of course, productivity leads to more gratitude, which creates a reinforcing cycle of positivity.

“ Leaders operating from gratitude are more engaged and innovative.

As an example, one of my coaching clients was a brilliant and talented technical director at a large international company. However, one of the biggest challenges he faced was working with a CIO who had a different personality type than his. He believed the CIO was belittling and undermining him. This difference meant that he didn’t feel gratitude, so he avoided the CIO and even considered leaving the company.

Through some tough coaching sessions, we were able to shift my client to a place of gratitude, a place where he could see a few things to be grateful for about the CIO and the situation. As a result, he has become more innovative and started finding ways to interact with the CIO. It didn’t happen overnight, but my client is fully engaged at the company and is no longer thinking about leaving.

Additionally, after teaching communication classes for decades, I noticed that no matter what technique was applied, unless you came at it with a positive mindset, it didn’t work as well. Starting from a place of gratitude always seems to improve communication, regardless of which technique is used.

**Duncan:** In the absence of a personality bypass operation (a surgery that’s gratefully not available), how can an ungrateful leader become grateful?

**Dargin:** Here’s the good news—you don’t have to be a naturally grateful person. Gratitude is a muscle that can be strengthened with practice.

However, this works only if you’re motivated and create an effective and consistent practice that’s customized for you. For instance, writing in a gratitude journal in the morning and evening works for some people. Others need visual cues, physical

movement, or physical reminders to practice gratitude. One woman I know keeps three small stones in her pockets and touches them to remember to be grateful.

Based on science, I've identified five attributes used to measure (and increase) gratitude. For example, one attribute is environment: your office, your home, the way in which you commute, etc. Adding gratitude in each of these areas by recognizing certain objects or people you're grateful for will strengthen your gratitude muscle.

**Duncan:** The philosopher Cicero is credited with saying that “gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others.” In what ways does gratitude foster other personal virtues and behaviors?

**Dargin:** Gratitude lives in the positive side of the brain with joy, happiness, optimism, trust, and mindfulness. The opposite side is the negative, where you'll find survival mode with fight, flight, or freeze. That's also the side where blame, anger, hatred, and fear live.

Once you're in a positive state, all the other positive emotions are more readily available and accessible. It's like a river and its current. Gratitude and mindfulness push you into the positive current and keep you there. The more grateful and mindful you are, the harder it is to go against the current into the negative, and the more fully the other positive things are experienced.



### **Personal application:**

- What leaders in your experience seem to be good at expressing gratitude? How do they do it?
- Which individual people or teams in your workplace might benefit most from an expression of gratitude for their work? So, what will you do?
- What practices (like keeping a gratitude journal) might work best in reminding you to be more grateful and express that gratitude to others?





Exclusive conversation with  
**Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall**

## What If What You Think You Know Just Ain't So?



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

If you've ever studied semantics, organizational behavior, or even history and politics, you've likely heard some variation of this:

There are *known knowns*. These are things we know we know. There are *known unknowns*. These are things we know we don't know. There are *unknown unknowns*. These are things we don't know we don't know. And there are *unknown knowns*. These are things we know, but don't realize we know them.

There's a lot of wisdom in that tongue-twister. In every aspect of our lives we must constantly juggle what we know with confidence, what we'd like to know but don't yet know, what we don't even know we don't know, and what we unknowingly already know.

The humorist Mark Twain is often credited with a variation of this: "It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so."

Ironically, despite the frequent attribution to Twain, we can't be sure who actually coined that pithy thought.

Misplaced certainly can be dangerous.

That's the point behind *Nine Lies About Work: A Freethinking Leader's Guide to the Real World* by Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall.

Marcus, a global thought leader focused on unlocking people's strengths, is the author of several bestselling books including *First, Break All the Rules* and *StandOut 2.0*. Ashley is senior vice president of Leadership and Team Intelligence at technology giant Cisco and previously served as Chief Learning Officer at Deloitte.



**Marcus Buckingham**

Their research-based views on a wide range of business beliefs and practices are, to say the least, provocative. If you enjoy having your own thinking challenged, this conversation is for you.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** Throughout your book you refer to the "free-thinking leader." What exactly are the mindset and observable behaviors of such a leader?

**Marcus Buckingham:** Freethinking Leaders stand for the truth that the power of human nature lies in each human's *unique* nature, and that work is a magnificent place to unleash that power. They stand against organizations, leaders, practices and tools that systematically or carelessly crush that power.

They know this:

- The crazy, wonderful, weird uniqueness of each individual is a mess worth engaging with—all good things come only from this.
- Left to their own devices, organizations can operate as if their identity and their sanctity is more precious than the lives of the people within it. Freethinking Leaders reject this.

- Emergent patterns are always more revealing than received wisdom.
- We must put our faith in evidence over dogma. There is no dogma in science.
- The only way to make the world better tomorrow is to have the courage and the wit to face up to how it really is today. The brave build only on truth.
- “That’s not how we do it here” is the trigger to keep doing it, only more, and faster, and better, and with as many people as possible. Only challengers make change.

Freethinking Leaders are most easily spotted by their frequent requests for reliable data, by their impatience with the corporate Kabuki of yearly goal setting, ratings, and calibration sessions, and by their willingness to treat each person on their team differently, according to the uniqueness of each person’s performance, personality, and tenure.

**Duncan:** Is it possible for a “traditional” leader to become a freethinking leader? If so, how?

**Ashley Goodall:** Yes. Be skeptical about the received wisdom of organizational life, and be curious about real people in the real world and what makes them tick.

If your organization, for example, says that all successful people have a particular set of abilities or competencies, ask yourself if you see that in your corner of the world (spoiler alert—you’ll find you don’t). And then get really curious about the people you know—what energizes them, what they volunteer for, what they run towards.



Ashley Goodall

Think about the world one human at a time. Resist simplistic categorizations. Find the sparks.

**Duncan:** You assert, unequivocally, that people are horribly unreliable raters of other people. Why, then, do so many organizations persist in asking people to appraise others’ performance? What’s a better approach to helping people develop?

**Buckingham:** It’s less an assertion than a finding. Ever since the British Army, just after WW II, introduced the world to the idea of competencies—that one could define a job or role by a list of skills-plus-attributes and that the best way to develop people was to identify the competencies they lacked and then remediate these gaps—we have been on an unending quest to measure these competencies accurately. After all, if we can’t measure these competencies how will we ever know which ones a person possesses, and whether this person acquires more over time?

Well, despite 80 years of effort, the unequivocal finding is that these competencies, despite their allure of bringing order to the messiness of real people, are unmeasurable.

In part this is so because a competency—such as Strategic Thinking, or Business Acumen, or Executive Presence—is not an objective thing existing in the real world. Instead, it’s an abstraction existing in the theoretical world. Abstractions, by definition, can’t be observed and measured.

**Duncan:** So, you’re saying competencies are unmeasurable because different people have different views on what exactly constitutes a particular competency?

**Buckingham:** Precisely. Competencies are unmeasurable because we’ve discovered that other people are incapable of holding each competency definition stably in their minds, reaching into another person’s psyche, rating him against the definition, and then turning their attention to a different person, reaching into her psyche and doing it again.

If people were capable of doing this, then when they rated different people on different competencies their scores would change—because they are looking at different people, with, presumably, different levels of each competency. But, in oft-repeated studies, we find that the scores do not change. Instead, the pattern of scores of one rater remains surprisingly consistent no matter who is being rated.

It turns out that each of us has an idiosyncratic pattern of rating, which travels with us no matter whom we are rating, and which seems to be entirely independent of the person being rated. It’s almost as if we can’t see the other person at all. This effect is called the Idiosyncratic Rater Effect. It is large, and it is stable. And it means we can’t rate other people on anything. Thus any tool, system, or research finding that’s based on raters rating other people is without any foundation and should be viewed with extreme caution. All 360 degrees surveys and studies are an obvious example of this.

**Duncan:** What, in your view, is the solution?

**Buckingham:** A more effective and reliable approach to development is to throw out the models, with their goal of homogeneity and their flawed measurement systems, and instead base everything on the truth that each of us is a reliable rater only of our own *reactions*.

Just as the patient—not the doctor—is the best rater of the patient’s pain, so each of us is the unequivocal source of truth only of our own experiences and feelings. If we want to help someone else grow and get better, we should avoid rating them against a model, and instead share with them our own reactions. People on the receiving end of what we share can then use our reactions—which are humble but unimpeachable—as input to help them decide how they might create more of those reactions—if they were positive—and less of those reactions—if they were negative.

Our input can help people gain insight about themselves. But the insight, and the growth, will always be of their own making.

**Duncan:** You say “people need feedback” is a lie, yet you report that “positive attention” is 30 times more powerful than negative attention in creating high performance on a team. How do you draw a distinction between feedback and attention?

**Goodall:** The distinction is this. Feedback, at least as most of us understand and practice the concept, is about my telling you about your performance and what I think you need to do to improve. The effect this has is to appoint me the arbiter of good or bad (which is strangely arrogant, if you think about it) and to imply that my way of doing something should necessarily be your way of doing it—or at least, that you can learn from my way. But all the evidence suggests that (a) I can’t ever see inside your brain to understand exactly what you did, that (b) you learn by building on patterns of thought

“ If we want to help someone else grow and get better, we should avoid rating them against a model, and instead share with them our own reactions.

and behavior that are uniquely yours, and that (c) as a result, great performance is uniquely different for each great performer.

The idea of *attention*, on the other hand, invites us to stay on our side of the conversation—not to reach across and judge you, but instead to share our honest reactions to what has worked or not, and our curiosity about how you did those things.

Much feedback today boils down to our telling people they would be better if only they were a bit more like us. Attention, however, and a focus on sharing *our reactions* rather than our judging *your actions*, is humble, curious, and respectful of how each of us grows in our own way.

**Duncan:** Work-life balance seems to be a goal for many people. But you say love-in-work matters most. What does love-in-work mean, and how does it differ from work-life balance in terms of personal satisfaction?

**Buckingham:** Balance, when you think about it, is an odd metaphor for living a fulfilled life. Not only is it virtually impossible to find that one precise point where everything in your life is perfectly balanced, but, more confoundingly, if you ever were to, if one Thursday afternoon at 3:00 PM you were to all of a sudden realize that, finally, all aspects of life were in balance—the kids were happy, the spouse content, the finances ticking along, the job challenging but not too challenging—what you would want to hiss-whisper is “Nobody move! I’ve got it. Finally. Shhh.” Balancing is precarious. Balance is stasis.

This isn’t as tricky, or as theoretical as it sounds. You are wired to get a kick out of certain activities, situations, contexts, people, and those you get a kick out of will be utterly unique to you. For no good reason, other than the clash of your chromosomes, you may love that moment when you empathize with someone else’s emotional state, or when you persuade someone to do something they didn’t intend to do, or when you are on all fours playing a woolly mammoth with your four-year-old, or when you sit quietly searching for patterns in data, or when you buy just the right gift for your second cousin, or when you polish the gas cap on your restored ‘57 Chevy. Or you may loathe all or



most of these. What is certain is that you are set up to love—“love” meaning, lean into before you do it, time speeding by while doing it, a feeling of wanting it to happen again after you’ve done it. Life, as you move through it, will keep offering actions and situations up to you. The responsibility lies with you to catch them, cradle the feeling they create in you, and then honor this feeling by deliberately orienting your life so that you experience more of them.

We call these actions and situations your “red threads.” Our lives are a fabric woven with many threads—black, white, gray—but some of them appear to be made of a different substance: things-we-love, for no good reason. Our challenge is to take these red threads seriously and then weave them into the fabric of our lives. Research by the Mayo Clinic suggests that we do not need to weave for ourselves an entirely red quilt; that, instead, if 20% of our life is spent on activities we love then we are far less likely to burn out. A little love, it appears, goes a long way.

“Much of feedback today boils down to our telling people they would be better if only they were a bit more like us.

**Duncan:** So, you’re suggesting that a change in language can be helpful with this issue.

**Buckingham:** Burnout is not the absence of balance, but the absence of love. When it comes to balance, imbalance and living a fulfilled life, we have gotten our categories wrong. We say that the key categories are “work”

which is generally depleting, and “life” which is generally uplifting, and that the challenge is to balance the heaviness of the former with the lightness of the latter. But “work” is not the opposite of “life.” It is merely a part of life, as are family, and friends, and community. No, the proper categories here are not “work” and “life,” but “love” and “loathe.”

Each of us has certain activities—in all parts of our life—that we love and others we loathe. Our goal should be to intentionally *imbalance* our life toward more of the former and less of the latter. Nearly 75% of us say we have the freedom to modify our job to fit our strengths better. Yet only 17% of us say we play to our strengths every day. We know we *can* take our red threads seriously, weave them into the fabric of our lives, and so imbalance our lives toward love. But, in practice, it seems we don’t.

**Duncan:** How do you explain the difference in feeling between aspiring to balance and aspiring to love?

**Buckingham:** Balance feels antagonistic, many things, outside of you, pulling you one way, then another, coming at you, a torrential assault from which you must protect yourself, deflect, shield, barricade. To strive for balance is to strive for a brittle, short-lived, short-tempered state. This leaves you, in the end, standing all by yourself, hardened to life, doomed to fall.

Love-in-work asks you to pull down the shields, and instead to open yourself to life. Your life contains moments, activities, situations that, if you let them in, can warm you, can bring strength in, can, from the Latin, “invigorate” you. Your life is sending you signals, is communicating with you in a language only you understand. Love-in-work asks you to pay attention to these signals, and to let them in. Once in, they confer on you feelings of flourishing, of authenticity, of wholeness, of being lit from within. They don’t keep you at bay; instead, they bring you closer to you, and thence, to others.

**Duncan:** Multiple studies show that 80% or more of employees are not fully engaged in their work. If more focus were given to challenging the assumptions behind the nine lies you write about, what effect do you think such focus would have on engagement in the workplace?

**Goodall:** We now know—and can measure—quite precisely the particular set of experiences at work that lead to increased performance and fulfillment. This is the most useful way to think of engagement—experiences that predict results, for employees and for companies.

We also know that the experiences fall into two groups. The first addresses our need to be seen and valued for who we are, whether through being empowered, through being

“**Burnout is not the absence of balance, but the absence of love.**

asked, repeatedly, to do what we do best, through recognition, or through being challenged to grow. We can think of these as the “Best of Me.” The second group addresses our need to be part of something bigger than ourselves—through a visceral sense of mission

and the possibilities of the future—and to feel supported by those around us in a shared endeavor. We can think of this as the “Best of We.”

We also know from the data that these experiences are created, first and foremost, on a team—that our interactions with the people we spend the most time with always outweigh our sense of the broader company.

Put simply, the Nine Lies stifle our paths to experiencing the Best of Me and the Best of We at work. Our neglect of teams and our over-rotation towards “company” and “culture” steer us away from the most important experience-creator we have. This leads us to remove accountability for the experience of work from our team leaders, who in fact should be where we focus the vast majority of our attention.

**Duncan:** So, what are the common practices that get in the way?

**Goodall:** Our over-reliance on planning neglects the intelligence of our teams, and suggests to them that what they see on the ground is of secondary importance. Our cascading goal systems elevate the “what” over the “why,” and deceive us into thinking we can pay only lip service to the purpose of our work.

Our addiction to normative models of performance—and in particular to competencies—sends a strong signal to our people that we neither see nor care about their unique and wonderful abilities.

Our insistence on persistent corrective feedback squashes our curiosity about how another human being might, in fact, do what they do, and how they might do it more.

Our measurement tools privilege our demonstrably wonky judgments of others over our humbler and more useful reactions.

Our casting aside of those who we (erroneously) feel lack “potential” suggests that we don’t care to see them at all.

Our tired yearning for balance leads us away from asking what each of us, uniquely, loves.

And our mistaken focus on leaders, rather than on followers, pulls us toward generic abstractions and away from understanding how we might help all our people perceive the future a little more clearly.

If, on the other hand, we can embrace our teams as our homes at work ...

... if we can empower them with real-time intelligence about the world they face every day ...

... if we can deliberately and persistently show them what we’re here to do together ...

... if we can point our curiosity at each person’s spiky abilities and at how they do what they do ...

... if we can base our measures on nothing more than our reactions to one another ...

... if we can explore each person’s journey through life ...

... if we can help our people do more, each day, of what they love ...

... and if we can use our unique gifts to help those around us feel more confident about the future we face together ...

... then, surely, we will help each person share the Best of Me, and each team harness the Best of We.



### **Personal application:**

- Which of your closely held beliefs about workplace practices were challenged in this conversation?
- What changes, if any, will you make in your own workplace practices as a result of the views shared by Buckingham and Goodall?
- What value do you see in being a Freethinking Leader? What could that mindset do for you and the contribution you make to your workplace?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Paula Rizzo**

# Stressed? Maybe Rest Can Be Your New Hustle



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Paula Rizzo was sitting at her desk at Fox News Channel in New York City when she felt a dull pain below her belly button. Like many hard-charging people might do, she ignored it. After all, she was busy. She had a demanding job as a senior TV producer. She had obligations as a wife, daughter, and friend. She had no time for a stomachache.

Two days later she was in the hospital ER. Her appendix had burst, spreading bacteria like a toxic cluster bomb. She could have died.



Rather than killing her, the episode caused Paula to rethink her priorities. During her recuperation she took everything off her plate. The unscheduled outage gave her a fresh perspective on how to take charge of life.

A year before the appendix incident, Paula had published her first book, *Listful Thinking: Using Lists to Be More Productive, Highly Successful and Less Stressed*. She's now taking her own advice in seeking a less stressful life. Today she's a media trainer and strategist, and a full-fledged advocate for living a calm (and well-organized) lifestyle. Her latest book is *Listful Living: A List-Making Journal to a Less Stressed You*. I enjoyed my calm and stress-free conversation with Paula.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** Anyone can make a list. What's the key to making to-do lists that help produce better patterns, better habits, and a more organized life?

**Paula Rizzo:** Intentional list making is the key. Making sure the right things get put on your list every day is how you'll be able to get more done and have more control over your life.

Of course, it's more difficult than it sounds. In a world obsessed with more and where being busy is viewed as a badge of honor, it takes work to identify what will really make you more productive. And that which makes you more productive sometimes doesn't make you less stressed. It's a balance to make these two things work together.

The first step is to make sure you have the time and resources to do the tasks that you're putting on your list. We often will put too much on the list and then feel bad about not getting to everything. But in reality, we weren't setting ourselves up for success.



**Paula Rizzo**

A list should be used as an action plan. It's not enough to just write things down. You need to be able to set that list into motion.

**Duncan:** What do you see as the role of effective lists in reducing stress in one's life?

**Rizzo:** Making a list is an instant stress reliever. Oftentimes we think we have so much to do, and it stresses us out. However, when you sit and write out a list of what really needs to happen, you'll quickly start to feel better. That's because you won't have to keep all that information and

stress in your body anymore and you can see it clearly. Also, we often notice that we don't actually have as much to do as we thought.

**Duncan:** You say "rest is the new hustle." What do you mean by that?

**Rizzo:** My appendix burst and I had emergency surgery. That's a very dramatic way for your body to tell you to slow down and reprioritize.

I needed to get back on track. After writing my first book *Listful Thinking* I was doing too much. When I landed in the hospital, I had no choice but to embrace a new mantra, “rest is the new hustle.” I took everything off my plate, including all appointments, projects, and everything else. Sometimes just washing my hair was the one thing I did for the day. It gave me a new perspective into how much we put on our plates and what really matters most.

One of the early readers of my book *Listful Living* put it best. She said, “the hustle that got you here won’t get you there.” I was stressed, unhappy, and needed structure to identify

“ Making a list is an instant stress reliever.

what was truly my priority. So, “rest is the new hustle” is a mantra I use when I think I need to do more. Sometimes it’s about doing less and allowing yourself some time to pause and evaluate before jumping in.

**Duncan:** Another of your aphorisms is “slowing down is prioritizing on steroids.” How does that work?

**Rizzo:** To be able to truly slow down and take things off your to-do list means that you’ll need to be super in tune with your priorities.

When you slow down and choose to take things off your to-do list, you are forced to focus only on your priorities. Not what you wish you *could* do or what you think you *should* do, but what you actually *need* to do.

We often put things on our list that we don’t actually have to be doing ourselves. A lot of that is fed by ego or the idea that if I look busy I must be important. This list of priorities will change. But when you’re super clear on them, then every decision you make becomes much easier.

**Duncan:** How does “listful living” help people identify and act on their core values?

**Paula Rizzo:** We’re not just talking about lists, we’re *living* them! Keep a journal that helps you identify your core values, how you work best and then sets you up for success to get more done and work in self-care too. No one wants to experience burnout. Instead, you need to align yourself with what truly matters. Not what you think should matter or what you wish would matter. But truly what matters to you and your core values.

For instance, let’s say you value sleep. If that’s your priority, then every decision you make has to be made in consideration of your sleep schedule. So, if you’re invited to a networking event in the evening, you’ll know you need to decline because that will interfere with your (sleep) priority right.

**Duncan:** As a TV producer focusing on health, and now as an author focusing on productivity, what have you learned about dealing with—or better yet—avoiding burnout?

**Rizzo:** Pause and prioritize. We’re so used to jumping in and doing that pausing feels unnatural. It takes some practice, but it really does work. This works for opportunities we

say yes to, things we're asked to do, and the goals we set. We are quick to jump and say yes. Instead, pause and check in with yourself and see if a particular activity aligns with your priorities right.

According to Stress.org, up to 90% of all doctor visits are related to stress. Stress can affect every part of our bodies—from headaches and heartburn to certain kinds of disease.

I meditate for ten minutes a day using an app called Calm. I find that ritual in the morning makes me more aware and more productive throughout the day. I like to think of it as a time I give myself.

**Duncan:** “Mindfulness” seems to be all the craze these days. What does it mean to you, and what’s your advice on how best to practice it?

“When you slow down and choose to take things off your to-do list, you are forced to focus only on your priorities.

**Rizzo:** We all get self-care and mindfulness very wrong. It doesn't have to just be about taking a weeklong vacation or getting a \$300 massage.

There are other ways you can be mindful and take care of yourself throughout the day. That has to do with how you set up your schedule, what support system you have in

place, what commitments you say yes or no to. I always give myself an extra day to decompress after traveling. I give myself a chance to catch my breath before jumping back in. This is an act of kindness and self-care.

People around the world are doing it better than we are. A Danish word related to this is *hygge*. It essentially means “kindness to yourself.” This could be by giving yourself permission to enjoy a good book, cozy up with your cat, or sitting by the fire.

**Duncan:** What do you do if something keeps popping up on your list over and over again?

**Rizzo:** Reevaluate that item. Do you even want to do it anymore? Maybe it's something for the future or something you can cross off your list forever.

I once interviewed a woman named Karen Rizzo. We aren't related but we love lists the same. She wrote a memoir in list form and “Learn Italian” kept popping up on all her lists. I asked her if she'd ever done it. And she emphatically said “No!” She realized that it was pressure she was putting on herself for no reason and that she didn't even want to do it anymore.

Sometimes you need to give yourself permission to cross things off your list that you'll never actually do. And that's perfectly okay!



### **Personal application:**

- How can you incorporate the “rest is the new hustle” idea in your own life?
- How can slowing down help you prioritize you many activities?
- How can a renewed focus on your values help you be more mindful about how you use your finite resources like time and energy?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Mark Perna**

## Bridging the Gap to Reach the ‘Why’ Generation



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

In many situations, the smartest questions you can ask will begin with the word “why.”

Think about that. Have you noticed the inquisitiveness of young children? As long as they’re encouraged to do so, they seem to ask questions endlessly. They want to know how things work. They want to know the purpose of things. They want to know *why*. And their thirst for knowledge and understanding accelerates their learning.



In countless workplaces over the years, I've noticed that new hires often ask the best questions: *Why* is this procedure in place? *Why* was this process adopted? *Why* is this step required? *Why* hasn't this been considered? A fresh set of eyes can often spotlight something that warrants a new look.

In that environment there may be stereotypes that need to be jettisoned. Sure, some in the younger generations may warrant the negative labels, but most do not. Many in the so-called Why Generation are ambitious and entrepreneurial. They are bright and creative. They are kind and generous. They are our future. So, shouldn't we do everything possible to help them find their way in the marketplace of ideas and worthy work?

Mark C. Penna thinks so. His book is *Answering Why: Unleashing Passion, Purpose, and Performance in Younger Generations*. Frequently cited as a national expert in education enrollment, retention and performance, he has ideas on how to empower upcoming generations to turn the business world on its head.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** Despite record low unemployment rates in the U.S., there's still a gap between the professional skills needed to thrive in modern business and the actual skills possessed by many of today's workers. What can individual workers do to ensure that their own career development activities make—and keep—them competitive?

**Mark Perna:** Actually, it is both technical and professional skills that are lacking in today's workforce. Technical skills are the “hard” skills required to perform the work. They're crucially important, but they're no longer enough by themselves. Today, successful workers need professional skills (or soft skills) more than ever.

Professional skills are the personal attributes to succeed in the workplace, such as work ethic, communication, ability to accept feedback, confidence, leadership, flexibility, integrity, work-life balance, punctuality, stress management, and many more. According to a *Wall Street Journal* survey of more than 900 executives, 89% said they have a very difficult or somewhat difficult time finding hires with these skills and traits.

Professional skills will never go out of date. These crucial character traits and values were essential yesterday and will continue to matter in the age of Artificial Intelligence—perhaps more than ever. By developing and enhancing professional skills, candidates can create a significant competitive advantage for themselves, effectually future-proofing their careers.



Mark Perna



Building your own competitive advantage is similar to the personal brand advocated by many employment coaches, but it takes that concept a step further. Candidates who stand out in the hiring field are those who create their own perfect intersection of academic knowledge, technical competency, and professional skills—realizing that they must continue learning and retooling throughout their careers.

**Duncan:** Many people in older generations label younger people as entitled, unfocused, and even lazy. Many younger workers—the so-called Why Generation—attach equally unflattering labels to their seniors. What’s the key to—not just calling a truce—but mutual understanding and appreciation so the generations can learn and collaborate together for the greater good?

**Perna:** The first thing we in the older generations need to do is rid ourselves of the negative stereotypes that may be lingering in the back of our minds. If we can free our minds from these preconceived ideas about the Why Generation, we can then see why they have the potential to be our next “greatest generation.” They’re tenacious. They’re smart. They’ve been reared for achievement and when they see a compelling reason to put forth that effort, they can achieve almost anything.

“Candidates who stand out in the hiring field are those who create their own perfect intersection of academic knowledge, technical competency, and professional skills

I call today’s young people the Why Generation because they always want to know the reasons behind what they’re asked to do. Older generations often perceive this as a challenge to authority, but generally that’s the last thing the Why Generation intends. Young people ask why because the answer validates their fullest effort and contribution. They want to see the big picture because they care about the quality of the work and want to innovate the process and make it

better for everyone. Understanding that simple trait can defuse that dynamic between older and younger generations working together.

On their side, the younger generations can recognize the fact that the older generations can’t read their minds. The older generations don’t hear “why?” the same way that those age 40 and under do, and may mistakenly think there are subversive motives behind the question. If you identify with the Why Generation mindset, sharing your big-picture reasons for asking why can go a long way toward making the older-gen worker an ally rather than an adversary.

**Duncan:** What can organizations do to improve performance and retention of younger people who value workplace “meaning” more than many in previous generations?

**Perna:** It’s all about creating a compelling purpose and vision and then communicating that message in both the recruitment process and the ongoing retention strategy. Companies that embrace this reality will take a step back to evaluate their culture and company vision. Does it have value that goes beyond stock numbers, shareholder returns, and simply making money? Does it make the world a better place in some way?

If a company does not have a vision and culture focused on doing something positive for the community, younger workers are much less likely to want to invest their time, energy, and career there. But when a meaningful, world-bettering vision is consistently communicated and prioritized as a cornerstone of the company, employees are much more likely to buy into that narrative and contribute their best effort to the outcome.

Today's younger workers can be more than employees; they can be tremendous allies in the pursuit of heightened organizational performance. But this will only happen if they want to go where the company is headed.

**Duncan:** What role have social media played in the work preferences of the Why Generation?

**Perna:** Social media has changed our world and culture forever, and smart companies are embracing it. Negative reviews and comments can go viral quickly, which is why some companies employ teams of Millennials and Gen-Zers to trawl the web and respond promptly to negative feedback before it spirals out of control.

Gen Z often sees the workplace as an extension of their online presence and social media circle, and they will talk about their workplace experiences online. This can be a positive thing for employers, especially if the company is active in the community, promotes volunteerism, and creates other opportunities for employees to contribute and give back. Younger-gen employees will see these opportunities as fun experiences they want to share with their social circles, creating positive buzz around the company.

**Duncan:** What can parents do to help prepare their children to succeed in today's economy?

**Perna:** As parents, we have to recognize that our children will only grow into their independence by venturing out on their own to earn income, pay taxes, budget effectively, and experience the full freedom of being the captain of their own destiny.

“Today's younger workers can be more than employees; they can be tremendous allies in the pursuit of heightened organizational performance.

This builds a sense of pride, self-satisfaction, and accomplishment that cannot be achieved by adult children living with their parents. That is what I wanted for my sons. I didn't want to kick them out of the house, but I wanted to eliminate the safety net. And so I planted the seeds early on that sometime in the summer after their graduated high school, they would be moving out—to college, to the military, or to some other rewarding pathway. Bottom line: they would be moving out.

My plan was inspired by Hernán Cortés, who in 1519 ordered the scuttling of his ships once his expedition reached Mexico to ensure that his crew would be motivated to conquer and succeed in this new land. If the ships were in sight, available for a hasty retreat, once the going got tough they would become the easy choice for the crew. He

secured his crew's motivation, dedication, and teamwork by destroying the safety net—the ships. I, too, wanted my sons to be motivated to conquer and succeed in their lives. And that's why I pushed them toward independence and resisted the temptation to make everything too easy for them.

**Duncan:** At what point should a young person's career exploration begin? Why then?

**Perna:** The career exploration process should start as young as middle school, so young people can move forward into their education and training pathways with confidence. No one should go to college to figure out their life and direction—they should go with a defined purpose and goal already set. College is the most expensive time of life and while it can be a great experience and asset, it can also create needless debt and frustration if used as an exercise in career exploration. Robust, comprehensive, purpose-driven career exploration should become a cornerstone of every public school system in America.

**Duncan:** There are many satisfying—and high-demand—careers that require qualifications other than a traditional college degree. What can employers do to make these career more attractive to the Why Generation?

**Perna:** First, we have to realize that it's not just a skills gap—it's an Awareness Gap. This is the chasm between what people think they know about a field or industry and its actual reality. Economist Gad Levanon says that skills-gap professions like machinists, electricians, plant operators and rail transportation workers aren't the "cool and sexy" occupations that young Americans want. While I agree that Generations Y and Z are looking for exciting, cutting-edge professions, these types of critical jobs *can* be the new sexy careers of the future—both for the work itself, which is rapidly becoming more technologically advanced, and for the lifestyle such high-paying careers can make possible.

Employers must overcome the Awareness Gap, not just about the careers they're offering but also about the lifestyle that such a career can help you afford. The Why Generation is all about experiences and lifestyle. The career, believe it or not, is secondary to those things.



### **Personal application:**

- What are you doing to ensure that your professional and technical skills stay current?
- How can you contribute to the “cross-pollination” between generations in your organization?
- What can you do to monitor social and business trends to keep yourself marketable?





Exclusive conversation with  
**Rosanne Thomas**

# Why 'Etiquette' is So Much More Than Just Saying Please



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

It's been said that the test of good manners is the ability to put up pleasantly with bad ones. But in a world where in-your-face behavior is sometimes mistaken as a strength, it's often hard to understand the rules of etiquette.

*Etiquette.* It's a fussy word that almost defies definition. I grew up at a time when I'd get extra homework if I dared say "Yeah" to a teacher rather than "Yes, sir." Men stood when a lady entered the room. I never referred to my parents' friends by their first names. I asked to be excused before leaving the dinner table.

Those “Leave It to Beaver” days seem very distant now. But I still want to behave in ways that show respect for others without coming across as an antique from another era.

I’m apparently not alone. And thanks to a fine book by “professional presence” consultant Rosanne Thomas, there’s guidance on everything from first impression management to social media savvy. The book is *Excuse Me: The Survival Guide to Modern Business Etiquette*.

I talked with Thomas to explore some of the more pressing “etiquette” concerns borne of blended generations, mixed cultures, omni- present technology, and gender issues. Whether you’re a novice or an experienced professional, her advice is well worth considering.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** Most people would agree that a respectful workplace is a more pleasant workplace. What are some of the measurable bottom-line advantages that accrue to organizations that insist on respect and civility?

**Rosanne Thomas:** Unreturned phone calls, condescending remarks, public reprimands, angry emails—just some of the countless ways in which incivility rears its head—come at an enormous cost to employers.

Unlike bullying, which is a coordinated, persistent effort to cause someone physical or emotional harm, incivility is often played down as relatively harmless. In fact, it’s estimated that workplace incivility costs companies an average of \$14,000 in lost productivity *per employee, per year*. Organizations also face exposure to increased legal, medical, and hiring costs because of incivility.

And it’s contagious. Employees subjected to incivility often act in the same manner toward coworkers and customers, resulting in fractious relationships and increased customer service issues. Incivility also negatively affects co-workers who witness it, causing them stress and job insecurity. Conversely, organizations that insist on respect and civility see teamwork fostered, morale improved, problems solved, and productivity increased. Their reputations are burnished, enabling them to recruit the best and the brightest talent. An enhanced bottom-line is virtually inevitable, and happy shareholders are the ultimate result.



Rosanne Thomas

**Duncan:** You rightfully say the foundation of civility is respect, which is the outward expression of esteem or deference. Yet social media, political discourse, the diatribes on talk shows and virtually every other public example of human interaction is rife with disrespect and put-downs. With that as a backdrop, what can an organization do to promote a culture of civility and respect?

**Thomas:** An organization can remember that incivility as a model for life or work is unsustainable. It threatens the well-being and existence of what we need most in order to survive: other people.

The abuse of power—incivility at its core—works only as long as individuals are captive audiences. Once choice is restored—where to work, what establishments to patronize, with whom to associate—incivility, along with the individuals and organizations that tolerate it, will be rejected. Savvy organizations know this. And they clearly communicate their Codes of Conduct. They invest in civility training to reinforce best behaviors. They hire for attitude over experience, recognizing it's much easier to teach technical skills than it is to instill qualities of empathy and consideration. They provide safe channels for the reporting of disrespect, and when it's reported they take swift and appropriate action.

**Duncan:** The culture of any organization is shaped by the worst behavior the leader is willing to tolerate. What can people do when the leader tolerates behavior that violates the organization's professed standards?

**Thomas:** When a leader tolerates or engages in bad behavior, especially when it runs counter to the organization's avowed standards, credibility is lost. A confused and demoralized staff is left wondering exactly what is expected of them. Is it really okay to

“The abuse of power—  
incivility at its core—  
works only as long as  
individuals are captive  
audiences.

cut others off in the middle of sentences, openly criticize their intelligence and abilities, and engage in baseless, reputation-ruining gossip?

Employees have choices to make. While adapting to one's corporate culture is generally recommended, emulating a leader's bad behavior is not. Instead, employees need to think about their own reputations and personal standards of

conduct. They can become role models themselves by extending simple courtesies such as listening attentively and valuing others' opinions. They can challenge and report disrespect when they experience it or witness it. They can and must take responsibility for their actions. And if the culture becomes just too toxic, they can leave and find a respectful work environment. They do exist.

**Duncan:** It's widely agreed that people don't leave jobs, they leave people. In light of this obvious truism, why do so many organizations tolerate disrespectful behaviors?

**Thomas:** Presumably recognizing the harsh prospective consequences, it's difficult to imagine why an organization would tolerate disrespectful behavior. But some do. It might be because they are under pressure and feel there's no time for niceties. It could be because they view politeness as a weakness and want to be seen as aggressive and strong. They could be testing employees to see how they respond to incivility and whether they brush it off, defend themselves, retaliate, complain, or sulk. They might be trying to evaluate an employee's trustworthiness and loyalty or they could be



encouraging rivalries. It could be a power play, or they may just delight in disharmony. They might be unaware of the consequences of disrespect or they simply might not care.

Creating a safe, civil workplace takes deliberation and resolve on the part of management. Respect always starts at the top.

**Duncan:** What are some specific practices you've seen that encourage (and reward) respectful behavior in the workplace?

**Thomas:** It's not dissatisfaction with money, benefits, or workloads that cause people to leave organizations. Lack of appreciation is the reason 79% of employees give for quitting their jobs. Given the high costs of turnover and its effect on productivity, why showing appreciation is not at the top of every boss's list is inexplicable. Thanking someone in a company newsletter or at weekly or quarterly meeting costs nothing. Yet, it reaps exponential returns in terms of morale and goodwill.

Zappos, the online retailer, rewards good behavior with "Zollars" (Zappos dollars) and peer-to-peer "Wow" awards from coworkers. Anything from holding a door open, to smiling, offering help, volunteering, or tie-dying a common area might qualify someone for a \$50 reward. Rewards are getting creative. Among the available options are professional development opportunities, charitable donations, travel subsidies, memberships, VIP parking, house-cleaning, meal deliveries, and the always popular time.

Simple is often better. A handwritten note of thanks from the company president is still the most sought-after and valued recognition of all.

**Duncan:** Professional reputation—or personal brand—is vitally important. As Amazon founder Jeff Bezos says, "Your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room." In today's workplace, what are the three or four most important ingredients of a positive personal brand?

**Thomas:** "Personal branding" is not new. One's reputation and all of the things that contribute to it have always mattered. The Internet is what makes the concept of personal branding so topical today.

“One's reputation and all of the things that contribute to it have always mattered.

Today we are all under a magnifying glass with our personal brands visible to the entire world. While all elements of a personal brand are significant, some are of even greater importance because other elements derive from them.

First up is attitude. It's estimated that attitude accounts for 85% of success. Treating everyone with respect and dignity, maintaining a can-do approach, and offering help, congratulations, thanks, and apologies are just some of the ways our positive attitudes come through.

Attire is also critically important. It conveys competence, judgment, and respect, or the lack thereof. Appropriate attire is always dictated by the culture of the organization that employs us. Whether in a buttoned-up suit, a uniform, or a hoodie, we dress to meet expectations, not to defy them.

Work ethic is certainly among the top three. Are we team players who meet deadlines, or do we make excuses? Is the quality of our work exemplary or is it incomplete and error-ridden? Do we give credit when due, or keep it all to ourselves?

Paying attention to attitude, attire and work ethic practically guarantees a brand that reflects well upon the individual, vital in an increasingly competitive global workplace.

**Duncan:** Ignoring relatively benign disrespect can send the unintended signal that increasingly boorish behavior might be tolerated. Without coming across as haughty or unapproachable, what can a person do to set boundaries on behavior that is acceptable to him or her?

**Thomas:** Disrespectful behavior is rampant, but it's not always intended. Any combination of stress, fatigue, and fear can get the better of an otherwise amiable coworker. To make sure you don't personalize what is not meant personally, try to understand and empathize with the person. (This is a good strategy because you may need someone's understanding in the future.)

Next, consider the environment. If you recently joined a corporate culture where profane language and ribald humor are the norm with no particular harm intended, any attempt to change it may label you prudish or judgmental. Do not lecture or complain. Instead, avoid uncomfortable situations or ignore them as much as you can. Choose battles and approach them carefully. If someone makes a remark that sounds disrespectful there's a chance it was misheard or taken out of context. Approach the person privately to clarify what was meant. Then share the impact of the words and ask if she could use different words in the future. If the behavior continues, let the person know your concentration and productivity are being affected, and your ability to work with her compromised. Communicate that you plan to seek a new team/position/ location within the organization and to enlist the help of management to do so.

Being civil does not require that we accept legitimately unacceptable behavior, only that we confront it in a civil way.

**Duncan:** Many people seem to be almost anatomically attached to their cell phones. What is some of the cell phone etiquette you recommend?

**Thomas:** It's not just millennials who are glued to their phones. People of all ages use their phones constantly, and in every setting imaginable. Weddings, funerals, churches, synagogues, doctors' offices, locker rooms—apparently no place is off limits. This non-stop usage takes a huge toll upon relationships, safety, and sleep.

To keep in touch and keep relationships intact, use good judgment. Even if the culture of a group condones it, don't be the first to use your phone because a domino effect will

rapidly take hold. Generally, do not use a phone at a family, business, or social meal, in others' homes, or without permission. Certainly, do not use a phone in serious or somber settings where someone's concentration or sensibilities may be affected. If you must use a phone while walking or driving, be keenly aware of pedestrians, objects, and traffic.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, each day nine people die from distracted driving and more than 1,000 are injured. Remember that the person physically in front of you takes precedence over any incoming or outgoing text or call. Yes, you may need to respond to an emergency message, but most communication is not worth the risk of damage to a relationship.

**Duncan:** Social media have created a broad panorama of challenges and opportunities. What advice do you offer professional people regarding their digital footprints?

**Thomas:** The current conversation about enhanced Internet privacy notwithstanding, we should understand that anything we share in cyberspace is viewable, or at least accessible, to anyone else—forever.

It remains to be seen whether, when, or how Internet service providers improve their protection of users' privacy. Even Google's new "Confidential mode," which prevents an email from being printed or forwarded, doesn't actually delete email. It merely revokes a recipient's access to it after a designated period of time.

Our "digital footprints" are growing bigger by the second. With every post, share, tag, snap, or like, we leave traces of digital DNA that cannot be expunged. And we jeopardize safety, reputations, and finances—ours and others'—in the process.

But we can take some control. Start by conducting an online audit and deleting any questionable posts. Ask friends to do the same. Share nothing that could possibly be deemed racist or sexist. Always use good taste—no photos of risqué clothing, offensive gestures, drunken revelry, or other less-than-discreet activities. Avoid venting anger, arguing, or over-sharing online. Treat others with respect, be accountable, and strive to post relevant, useful information that you would be comfortable with anyone seeing, future employers and grandmothers alike.



### **Personal application:**

- What are some of your conscious behaviors that you intend to demonstrate respect for others?
- What are some things you can do to improve in your practice of appropriate etiquette?
- How can you best demonstrate appreciation for others in your workplace?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Kevin Sheridan**

## What ‘Engagement’ (Or Lack of It) Means for Your Organization



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Most everyone seems to acknowledge that employee engagement is a good thing. But what exactly produces employee engagement is still an open question with many.

Is it ping-pong and foosball in the employee lounge? Is it locking arms and singing Kumbaya? Or is it things like clear objectives, compelling purpose, and interesting work?

Kevin Sheridan can provide informed insight into these and related issues. He's recognized as a global influencer on the subject of employee engagement, and the author of *Building a Magnetic Culture: How to Attract and Retain Top Talent to Create an Engaged, Productive Workforce*.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** Most everyone in business acknowledges that having an “engaged” workforce is a good thing. But, of course, that involves much more than employees’ “feeling good” about their jobs. What are the key signs of employees who are actively engaged, those who are ambivalent, and those who are actively disengaged?

**Kevin Sheridan:** Actively engaged employees share a strong desire to be part of the value the organization creates. They're also the employees who choose to exert discretionary effort to provide better outcomes for customers and the organization. In addition, they take personal ownership of their own engagement levels.

The most apparent characteristics of actively engaged employees are that they are loyal, self-motivated, committed to quality, optimistic, supportive of coworkers, and eager to provide good customer service. A strong work ethic is part of their DNA.

The middle category of engagement—those who are ambivalent—includes people who are neither engaged nor disengaged. We might refer to them as Workplace Zombies. They don't accomplish much, have no passion or energy for their job, and simply drift in a stupor throughout the day.

Ambivalent employees typically do just enough to get by. They seldom exert extra effort. They rarely volunteer for extra work. They are “clock-watchers,” often late to work and cannot wait to leave for the day. They have no passion for the work that they do. They are not prideful about where they work. They are in the wrong role, yet do nothing about finding a different role that they could get passionate about.

**Duncan:** And what about employees who are actively disengaged?

**Sheridan:** Actively disengaged employees display the most apparent signs of their disengagement. I refer to this toxic population as “workplace terrorists” because they are just that. They deliberately try to tear down the positive efforts and goals of their more engaged colleagues. They are full of negativity, actively bad-mouth their managers (behind their backs), and are often found at the watercooler spreading gossip and mistruths.

It's not possible to coach these actively disengaged employees toward engagement. The only valid management choice is to terminate or transition them out of the organization.



Kevin Sheridan



**Duncan:** What are the quantifiable personal and economic benefits of an engaged workforce?

**Sheridan:** There are myriad benefits to employee engagement. Various studies conclude that best-in-class engagement—that is, the top 10% of engaged employees—will, on average, yield 300% more innovation, 44% higher retention, 37% higher sales, 125% less burnout, 66% lower absenteeism, 51% less turnover, 31% higher productivity, and much better safety.

Moreover, best-in-class engaged organizations are three and a half times more profitable than organizations with average engagement levels. In addition, they have superior levels of customer satisfaction.

“Best-in-class engaged organizations are three and a half times more profitable than organizations with average engagement levels.”

Finally, engaged employees are in better health than the non-engaged.

**Duncan:** A “magnetic culture,” you say, is the key to attracting and retaining top talent. What does that kind of culture “look like” in terms of observable behaviors and practices?

**Sheridan:** For three years running, the surveys of C-suite executives by both SHRM and The Bersin Institute have found that the number one issue top-of-mind is talent attraction and talent retention, which is synonymous with employee engagement. One of the primary reasons is that we are currently experiencing the tightest labor market in history. Best-in-class organizations use their culture as a magnet to draw top talent in and make it difficult for people to leave.

**Duncan:** You advocate educating a job candidate on the position and organization before there’s even a hiring decision. Tell us more about that.

**Sheridan:** It’s called pre-boarding and its whole purpose is to see if there is a good match between the candidate and the job position and organization culture. Clearly establishing whether there is a match will save everyone a lot of time (and money). The similarities to on-line dating are uncanny.

**Duncan:** In today’s business world many organizations have employees from as many as three or four generations. What challenges and opportunities does that mix present?

**Sheridan:** More than seven in ten American workplaces report generational friction in their organization, with the majority of this tension being between Baby Boomers and Millennials. Like any aspect of diversity, the solution is to “bridge the gap” by really trying to understand the other generations’ perspectives.

For instance, many Millennials want to be recognized seven times a day. Rather than finger-pointing and making fun of that, Boomers should realize that the Millennial



generation grew up in a whole different way. They were consistently told how “special” they were. They were on soccer teams that went 0 for 21 and yet everyone received a trophy.

Contrasting that, as a Boomer myself, there was no “Baby On Board” sign in our station wagon, and probably were not even seat belts. So, Boomers need to “bridge the gap,” maybe telling the Millennial that they will not be recognizing them seven times a day, but rather three times.

**Duncan:** It’s often said that people don’t leave their jobs, they leave their managers. How does a “magnetic culture” reduce the likelihood of that?

**Sheridan:** The ownership of nearly all the top drivers of engagement rests on the shoulders of the immediate manager. Take the top three drivers for example: recognition, career development, and the relationship one has with the manager. All three are really about the manager. Who should be recognizing and thanking employees? The manager. Who should be having regular career path discussions with the employee? The manager. And who has the most impact on how employees perceive the manager? The Manager.

Building a magnetic culture through great and well-trained managers significantly reduces the likelihood that employees will leave.

**Duncan:** We live at a time when—despite all the high-sounding talk about inclusiveness and tolerance—people in some organizations are decidedly intolerant of backgrounds and perspectives different from their own. How does a “magnetic culture” avoid such an incongruity?

**Sheridan:** Again, like any aspect of diversity, the solution is to “bridge the gap” or really try to understand the perspectives and backgrounds of people. Great employers provide the education needed to fully understand, and be sensitive to, the differences. They also do not tolerate any form of discrimination.



### **Personal application:**

- What can you—personally—do to help build and maintain a high engagement culture in your organization?
- How engaged are you in your work? How do you know?
- If you’re in a manager role, what can you take from Kevin Sheridan’s views that can help your team?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Tamra Chandler**

## How Effective Feedback Can Build Trust and Confidence



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

If you were to write the job description for “leader,” one of the bullet points would likely be something related to “engagement.” The leader’s responsibility is not to create followers. It’s to create more leaders. This cascading effect is what gets things done. It requires appealing to people’s heads, hearts, and hopes.

While it’s true that self-starting achievers typically don’t need a lot of strokes, giving too little feedback is a common trust buster.

I once heard a so-called leader say “My people should just be grateful to have jobs. If they do something wrong, I’ll let ‘em know. Otherwise, they should just press on. There’s too much work to do to take time with a bunch of backslapping.”

In that same conversation, this guy wondered aloud why his people didn’t seem very engaged in the work. It’s been said that feedback is the breakfast of champions. Unfortunately, a lot of the feedback offered in the workplace is a meal worth missing.

Here’s an example. Let’s say you’re talking with Phil about his job performance and you deliver a speech that goes something like this: “Okay, Phil. As you know, we’re raising the bar around here. We need to get more out of you this coming year. It seems like you’re not really stretching, and you need to stretch. You’re definitely in the ‘Needs Improvement’ category, and we need you to step up to the ‘Meets Expectations’ slot. So get out there and show us what you can do.”

That little speech may sound like something from a Saturday Night Live skit, but it’s virtually verbatim from the kind of drivel that some people try to pass off as helpful feedback.

If you’re the Phil in that scenario, you’ll likely go home and tell your wife: “I don’t know what those people expect of me. I’m already working my tail off and all they tell me is that I need to ‘stretch.’ What’s that’s supposed to mean?”

Frustrating? Yes. Does feedback need to be an unpleasant, even harmful experience? Absolutely not.

Tamra Chandler, former partner at Ernst & Young, offers some great tips on how to help people grow and develop through insightful observation and coaching. She’s author of *Feedback: Why We Fear It, How to Fix It*.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** What is it about “feedback” that seems to make many people break out in a cold sweat?

**Tamra Chandler:** Most of us have been conditioned—through bad experiences that start in our youth and continue throughout our lives—to expect feedback to hurt. This conditioning creates connections in our brains that trigger our “fight or flight” reactions when presented with feedback.

When we look closely at what really frightens us about feedback, it boils down to this: identity and connection. At the heart of our fear is our identity, and how that identity is shaped and reinforced by our connections to and affiliations with the rest of the world. Humans are social beings; we instinctively want to be included and valued. The need to stay connected with and accepted by our communities drives our actions without our intellectual complicity. In the end, this desire for belonging gets seriously in the way of giving and receiving feedback.

**Duncan:** When people are struggling with “ghosts of feedback past,” how can a leader help them shift to a more pro-feedback perspective?

**Chandler:** We need to wipe the slate clean and start anew. Our first step is to redefine feedback to support our true intent and desired outcomes. I propose this new definition—

Feedback (NOUN): Clear and specific information that's sought or extended for the sole intention of helping individuals or groups improve, grow, or advance.

Pay particular attention to “*with the sole intention of helping.*” Too often in our interactions, the feedback we receive is simply not helpful. If it isn't intended to help individuals or teams thrive and grow, then why offer it or seek it?

It's equally important to tune into what's *not* in our definition: feedback is not intended as evaluation, blame, or judgment. We see feedback as *insight* that helps us look forward, to a better version of ourselves, our organization, or our team. Raking our past performance over the coals and attaching an evaluative label to it will not create a better you, me, or us.



Tamra Chandler

**Duncan:** Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck has done years of research on mindset, which she describes as a self-perception of self-theory. How does mindset affect people's resistance to—or effective use of—feedback?

**Chandler:** Mindset is a key factor in influencing our potential to grow and improve. Dweck coined the terms “fixed mindset” and “growth mindset”. People with a fixed mindset believe that their intelligence and talent are fixed, that talent alone creates success. People with a growth mindset believe their talents and abilities can develop with hard work—they believe growth and improvement *can happen*.

When managers and organizational cultures adopt a growth mindset, people are more willing to ask questions, venture ideas, embrace challenges and focus on progress over perfection. To use feedback effectively as a catalyst to change, shift, grow and improve, both extenders and receivers of feedback need to operate from a growth mindset.

**Duncan:** Every great feedback experience, you say, is anchored in fairness, focus, and frequency. Please elaborate.

**Chandler:** *Fairness*—For feedback to work, there must be trust, and trust is built through connections and experiences with others. If a relationship or exchange is tainted with a perceived lack of fairness, it breaks trust, and feedback won't work. While most of us have the best intentions to be fair, our human bias can get in our way. To operate with fairness when receiving or extending feedback, we need to accept our own imperfections and recognize that our views are tainted by our experiences and assumptions.

We can do this by leaning heavily on what we've witnessed and noticed. If we bring what we're noticing into an open conversation without judgment or evaluation, amazing things can happen, and trust will grow.

*Focus*—We already have loads of information to process these days. If someone offers five pieces of feedback, even if they're positive, it can be overwhelming. Focused feedback is like snacking on positivity and possibility, rather than gorging on performance reviews and lists of strengths and weaknesses.

If you're seeking feedback, make it a focused ask for perspectives on just one thing. If you want to tell someone they rocked it, share the one thing you noticed. If there was one change that would have led to greater impact, share just one.

*Frequency*—The more often we connect, the greater the trust we build. For this reason, frequency is a critical foundation for strong, helpful feedback. Offering feedback

“**Mindset is a key factor in influencing our potential to grow and improve.**

frequently improves the quality of our relationships and tells others, “I’m paying attention, and what you do is important and notable.”

**Duncan:** In a low-trust work environment, how can feedback be introduced in a way that won't be met with a wave of cynicism?

**Chandler:** If we're starting with low trust, we need to begin with the basics—connecting first at a human-to-human level. Connection builds trust and trust is vital to the flow of feedback. Connecting doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as simple as chatting over a cup of coffee, or more intense like tackling a hard project together. Simply, the more positive connections we share, the more trust grows.

Secondly, share the good stuff. Frequently call out the value brought by those around us and make it a norm to share gratitude among a team or person-to-person; this is a powerful way to begin to shift a culture. This will begin to change the feedback experience, build trusted connections, and give people insights into their own strengths and impact.

**Duncan:** How can a person create safety in giving feedback to someone of higher rank or position?

**Chandler:** This is a great question as sadly people in higher positions often miss out on the value feedback can provide them, both because they fail to ask and because many people fear offering.

Creating safety (for you and the receiver) in extending feedback to anyone is about setting the stage properly. Taking the time to strengthen your connection may be the right first step. With a solid relationship in place, simply *ask first* if you can share your feedback; offering unsolicited advice can leave the receiver feeling blindsided even if you're wishing to highlight their superpower as a leader. Find out if it's a good time to

share the feedback, and make sure you're in a comfortable space for the receiver where they feel like they can speak freely.

When providing your feedback, stick to the core elements of fairness and focus. Focus on one topic and offer what you've witnessed (without judgment). Keep your comments short and sweet, and engage them in the conversation with a few catalyzing questions (Was this information helpful? Do they see their strength or opportunity in the same way?). This will help you learn more about the nature of the feedback they are open to receive, as well as their boundaries (what might push their buttons), and hopefully set the stage for an ongoing and fruitful feedback relationship.

**Duncan:** What are some good behaviors a leader can model to help make feedback an accepted (and even widely embraced) part of organization culture?

**Chandler:** Leading doesn't mean adding a slide to the presentation for the annual meeting to let folks know you're pro-feedback. If you own that leader label, go "kick some ask." Be the first in your organization to consistently ask for feedback. Openly

“The more positive connections we share, the more trust grows.

share with others what you're up to, invite them to share their perspectives, and listen to the feedback you receive.

Then encourage others to become fellow seekers! Your actions will give impetus to the movement you're trying to create and send a

strong signal about your leadership style. You'll also benefit from the information you glean.

**Duncan:** At the end of a feedback encounter, what's a good way for a leader to solicit meaningful commitments from the recipient?

**Chandler:** Many of us struggle to make the shift from the traditional "direct and solve" style (affectionately known at my firm as "yell and tell") to a coaching and connecting style of feedback. A powerful strategy to make this shift is to encourage dialogue, particularly when that dialogue is intended to create a shared vision of success.

As a leader, when you create a shared view of your people's desired future, and you truly commit to joining forces with them in working toward that outcome, you build trust, and a stronger relationship. This shared vision of future experiences, expertise, skills, or behaviors is really about the possibility, the dream and the vision—all of which are ideas that drive commitment, energy, and passion.

Recognizing that the value is in the conversation—an exchange of ideas, not a unidirectional tell—is the most powerful way a leader will inspire commitment.





### **Personal application:**

- What can you do to make honest feedback a more accepted—and expected—component of your organization’s operating culture?
- What can you do to make it safer for people to offer honest feedback on your performance?
- How can you offer feedback to others in a way that’s safe for both parties?



Exclusive conversation with  
**John Eades**

## Why ‘Love’ and ‘Discipline’ Are Keys to Effective Leadership



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

College football’s championship bowl season always seems to be an exercise in same old, same old. One more chance for the players to strut their stuff. And another round of post-game interviews with the coaches.

Soaked in celebratory Gatorade, the coaches often sound as though they use the same crib sheet of clichés: “Our guys came to play.” “We managed to overcome adversity.”

The post-game interviews have a strange sense of sameness. But then what should we expect when the questions—like “How does it feel to win the big one?”—are often so predictably inane?

But if you care to listen carefully, you might pick up an interesting theme. It’s the theme of love and discipline. Good coaches seem to love their players, and good players seem to love each other. And discipline? Sure, being an accomplished athlete requires lots of personal discipline. But being a winning *team*—especially at the end of a long season—requires *collaborative* discipline.

Interestingly, love and discipline don’t seem to be mentioned very often in discussions of leadership.

But John Eades talks freely about both. He’s the author of *Building the Best: 8 Proven Leadership Principles to Elevate Others to Success*.

I talked with John about the nature of leadership and the role of love and discipline in boosting performance.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** “Leadership” is one of those words that seems to have dozens of definitions. What is your definition, and why do you define it in the way you do?

**John Eades:** It’s easy to see why there are multiple ways to define leadership. Many tremendous leaders have left us with their input. The definition that I commit to memory and hold myself to is this—“Inspiring, empowering, and serving in order to elevate others over an extended period of time.”

These words are chosen carefully and for great reason. The word *inspire* has its origin from Latin, and it means “to breathe life into.” *Empower* means “to give control over another’s life and the authority to do something.” *Serve* comes from the Latin word servant, in a modern context it means, “to devote (part of) one’s life or efforts to others.” All three are paramount to elevating others, which is the key to successful leadership today.

**Duncan:** In response to the “nature versus nurture” debate, research clearly shows that although some leadership ability may be attributed to genetics, most leadership ability is learned. You say an ideal way for someone to cultivate leadership ability is to be “elevated.” What do you mean by that?

**Eades:** Great leadership is often caught and not taught. So the single best way to teach it is for a leader to model it by “elevating others.” This will allow people being led to have an example of “what great looks like” so they can learn and model it when they have the opportunity to lead.



John Eades

It's important to note, I didn't use the word "perfect" because no leader will ever be perfect. It's all about leaders' actions being in the best interest of the people they lead and not themselves.

**Duncan:** Love and discipline, you say, are key ingredients in effective leadership. In a business environment, what does that look like in terms of observable behavior?

**Eades:** Before we make any kind of Human Resources violation it's important that we define these two terms. Love is defined as "contributing to someone's long term success and wellbeing." Discipline is defined as "promoting standards in order for individuals to choose to be at their best."

A great example of this in action would be a leader setting a new standard such as, "each team member remains coachable." Then the leader gives praise, acknowledgment, or shares disapproval with a team member when the standard is or is not met.

The observable behavior would be the creation and communication of a new standard that not only solves a problem, but helps team members for the rest of their lives. This should be followed up by the leader having a direct dialogue to hold team members accountable for meeting or exceeding the new standard.

**Duncan:** What role does mindset play in a person's leadership development efforts?

**Eades:** Mindset is critical in the development of leadership skills or for that matter any skill. Specifically, one kind of mindset, a growth mindset. The term growth mindset was coined by Carol S. Dweck, and it means we can grow our brain's capacity to learn and solve problems. Unfortunately, the majority of professionals fall into the category of a fixed mindset by believing they were either born with the ability to get the job done or they weren't.

Once a professional has their mindset on one of growth, then they will begin to take proactive measures to develop themselves as a leader. Until this happens, it doesn't matter what leadership development content an organization provides them, it won't go very far.

**Duncan:** You quote Starbucks founder Howard Schultz as saying, "the most undervalued characteristic of leadership is vulnerability and asking for help." Give us a couple of examples of that.

**Eades:** The business world is moving too fast for a leader to know everything or assume that a standard that exists one day will stay the same way forever. This requires leaders to be vulnerable in front of their people by admitting that things need to change and asking for help on an ongoing basis.

An example of this in the workplace would be, how leaders should introduce a new standard to their team. Instead of just telling them the new standard, they should start with something like this: "I realized I failed you from a leadership perspective, (vulnerability) and here is how I propose we solve it (new standard)."

By using an approach like this you put the blame on yourself for a current problem instead of putting it on your team which drastically improves your odds they buy-in.

**Duncan:** How can a leader best influence people to rally around a cause or purpose?

**Eades:** Each leader not only has the ability to connect his or her team to being purpose-driven, but it's also a requirement in today's modern business world. With so many options for professionals to choose from when it comes to where they work, those leaders who are intensely connected to their purpose stand out. Why? Because people persevere because of purpose, not pay.

Once this purpose is in place, the best way to influence people to rally around it is to make them feel connected to it. One of my favorite examples of this comes from a front line manager at Movement Mortgage. Her team was responsible for preparing final loan documents for the closing appointment for all parties to sign prior to the transfer of the deed. She asked Movement loan officers who were at the closing to send her pictures of Movement clients executing the final paperwork.

Soon after, a photograph of a single mother with her young daughter arrived. Both of them beamed with pride as the mother signed the paperwork finalizing the purchase of their very first home. Immediately her team felt more connected than ever to the purpose of their work.

“Mindset is critical in the development of leadership skills or for that matter any skill.

If you are struggling with influencing others, try showing them pictures, videos, or even data around the impact their work is having toward the cause.

**Duncan:** A lot of goal achievement approaches are mostly rah-rah slogans. You recommend what you call “the GPI System.” What is that, and what's its advantage over other approaches?

**Eades:** The verb form of the word team means coming together as a group to achieve a common goal. Having a system to help everyone on the team be aligned and rowing in the same direction towards the goal is key to achieving it. This is why the “GPI System” is so effective. The GPI acronym stands for Goals, Priorities, and Initiatives.

First, the leader's job is to define a clear team goal. The equation I use to teach leaders how to do this effectively is Clear Objective + Completion Date + Carrot. Once a clear team goal is set, then it's time to set priorities in alignment with achieving the goal. These are specific things that are regarded as more important than other things. When evaluating specific priorities ask yourself a simple question, “will focusing on this help our team achieve our goal?” The last part of the GPI System is Initiatives. These are the actions each team member executes on a daily basis in alignment with those priorities.

The beautiful thing about the entire GPI System is that all three parts work together. Every leader, regardless of experience level or role in an organization, must make the team aware of a clear goal and get buy-in.

**Duncan:** How can people who aspire to be good leaders hold themselves accountable for development if they have no mentor and little or no access to formal training? In other words, how can they “elevate” themselves?

**Eades:** Start with a convicted hope that you are enough. You are worthy to be not only a good leader, but a leader who elevates others. Hope is critical because without it you won’t be able to sustain the self-discipline required to reach it. The definition I like to use for self-discipline is the willingness and ability to sacrifice what you want now for what you want more later on.

Holding yourself accountable to your development as a leader will require you to sacrifice what you want now (self-pleasure) for what you want more later on (being a great leader). It will require hours of study, practice, coaching, and developing others.



### **Personal application:**

- How do love and discipline play a role in the leadership you exercise?
- Noting what Howard Schultz said about vulnerability, how can you most appropriately factor that into the way you relate to others in the workplace?
- How can you use the “GPI System” when leading others?





Exclusive conversation with  
**Kathryn D. Cramer**

## What Great Leaders See, Say, and Do



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Whether they involve politics, business, sports, education, science, or any other field of endeavor, daily headlines often focus on leadership. And the defining moments are often about what real leaders see, say, and do. After all, clear vision, clear communication, and meaningful action are the hallmarks of effective leaders.

Dr. Kathryn D. Cramer, who died of cancer in 2016, was a licensed psychologist and executive consultant. Her book *Change the Way You See Everything* was a *New York Times* bestseller and landed her two spots on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. In her last book *Lead Positive: What Highly Effective Leaders See, Say, and Do* she showed how leaders can produce better results by shifting what they see, say, and do toward assets and possibilities. Her insights in this conversation are well worth sharing.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** You write that leaders build self-confidence and inspire allegiance by acting “intentionally” in key, defining moments. Can you offer some examples?

**Katheryn Cramer:** Let me first explain what I mean by “intention.” Highly effective leaders are always on the lookout for what is valuable, working, strong and possible—at every turn of the bend. In other words, they are actively and intentionally seeking the assets present that will bring them closer to their goals.

As your question suggests, there are key moments when searching for and acting on assets make a big difference in achieving important goals. I often use Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey framework to illuminate these key moments of transformational change. (For a little background, when well-known mythology professor Joseph Campbell conducted comparative research on the timeless stories of heroism found in all cultures, he found similar themes and patterns that he characterized as the Hero’s Journey.)

For example, the first milestone in the Hero’s Journey is “The Call.” It is a time when the leader (i.e., the “hero”) must get very clear about how his particular goals relate to his deepest desires and values, and most importantly, to his sense of purpose (i.e., his “call”). The leader’s internal assets are put front and center to strengthen his commitment and determination to see the entire change effort through.



**Kathryn Cramer**

The second milestone in the Hero’s Journey narrative is called “The Resistance.” Normally, we think of resistance as applying to followers. In this case, Campbell wisely points us again in the direction of the leader. Every leader on a mission is faced with internal resistance—his or her own initial qualms, concerns, and worries. Sometimes this internal anxiety mounts so high that he can talk himself out of pursuing his goals altogether.

In Campbell’s model, leaders overcome the resistance by reaching out for support from mentors and guides. This support usually includes feedback that focuses on the leader’s strengths and capabilities, as well as the benefits of achieving the goal. Once leaders are shown how to

leverage their own strengths to achieve their goals, the anxiety and the resistance goes away.

**Duncan:** You talk a lot about Asset-Based Thinking, or ABT. Exactly what is ABT, and how can it help people be more effective?

**Cramer:** Asset-Based Thinking is a way of shining the spotlight of your attention on what is strong, valuable and possible in yourself, in other people, and in every situation—welcomed or unwelcome. It is an intentional effort to overcome the brain’s negativity bias, which makes us much more sensitive and reactive to problems, mistakes, and what’s missing than the things that are going right. This focus on the negative is what I call Deficit-Based Thinking (DBT). DBT leads to a “fix-it” mindset,

which may be helpful in creating narrow solutions, but leaves a lot of opportunity on the table.

With Asset-Based Thinking, leaders identify and leverage the upside of what they themselves have to offer, what others can contribute, and how the situation can have wide-ranging benefits. This mindset opens you up to creative solutions that help you go further, faster.

**Duncan:** As mayor of New York City, Rudy Giuliani was widely praised for focusing his attention on the positive and the possible during the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. How can that kind of focus be helpful under more common circumstances like running a business?

**Cramer:** There are three sources of transformational change: crisis, chance, or choice. Many businesses go through periods of crisis, for example, losing market share, customer complaints, or a disengaged workforce. If you look at crisis through an ABT mindset, you will find that it presents opportunities to come back even better than before. By shining the spotlight of attention on what is being done to redeem the crisis, you rally employees, customers, boards of directors, and other important stakeholders, motivating them to higher levels of performance. This is essentially what Rudy Giuliani did by making the acts of heroism more important than the acts of terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11. In any kind of crisis situation, I believe one of the jobs of the leader must be to make visible what employees and other stakeholders are doing to rise to the occasion.

**Duncan:** You suggest that leaders can benefit from carefully analyzing the “return on investment” of a specific initiative or project. What do you have in mind?

**Cramer:** It is typical for leaders and people at every level to focus on the quantitative metrics associated with achieving results. This is certainly important. But there are two other variables that are pertinent to the bottom line. The first is lessons learned: No matter if we achieve the results we seek, it is important to harvest the lessons. They are invaluable in replicating success or improving on failure.

The second but most neglected bottomline variable is: What did we experience? Experience here refers to the emotional quotient of pursuing objectives. How did it feel? If individuals and teams achieve results but experience enormous amounts of stress and anxiety while doing so, there is cause to worry. Why are engagement, productivity and optimism suffering when people pursue tough challenges?

In contrast, if the emotional quotient in the process of achieving important goals was positive (e.g., people felt inspired, experienced a high sense of solidarity with their team, and were satisfied with their performance), noting this effort can help build an even more competent and engaged culture.

My recommendation is that leaders think about all three of the bottom lines as they challenge their teams and organizations to reach important goals. The trifecta of

achieving results, learning valuable lessons, and having the experience of a “great ride” is a formula for sustainable success.

**Duncan:** You differentiate between leading by lightning and leading by listening. Give us examples of each, and tell us what you think of the implications.

**Cramer:** I developed this leadership style dichotomy as I was studying the work of Chris Argyris, one of the first business theorists to study organization development, which focuses on the importance of having advocacy skills and inquiry skills to effective leadership.

In my system, leading by lightning is associated with being a strong advocate for a new idea. The new idea pops into the mind of the leader and he is then able to rush in and enroll others in their cause. In contrast, leading by listening is most closely associated with having the probing skills of advocacy. Leaders using this style listen deeply to others who are exchanging ideas, discussing options, and voicing opinions. He is then able to blend what he hears into a coherent picture of the future that takes into account multiple points of view.

In my work I have found that each leader has a home base tendency. By nature and nurture, they are more skilled in one style than the other. For example, being the first-born child in the family may cultivate strong leader by lightning tendencies. Then, other variables, such as personality, gender, peer group status, and leadership opportunities, converge to form one’s home base tendencies. A good balance of leading by lightning and leading by listening is the goal for optimal effectiveness.

“A good balance of leading by lightning and leading by listening is the goal for optimal effectiveness.

**Duncan:** In promoting something as seemingly pedestrian as performance improvement, how can a leader “say it with substance, sizzle, and soul” so it doesn’t come across as just another pep talk?

**Cramer:** My colleagues and I at The Cramer Institute have created an ABT tool called “Courageous Conversations,” which is useful for giving people feedback about how they can improve their performance. This is a comprehensive process, but I always say, what starts well usually ends well—especially when it comes to feedback people might not want to hear.

The first step in Courageous Conversations is “Tell the Truth Fast.” The framework for this step involves giving people feedback using the following stem sentence ...

“When you \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with the area for improvement, for example, procrastinate, are late, miss deadlines, etc.) then \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with the negative impact of the performance deficiency, for example, others feel left out and unimportant, the standards of the whole team are lowered, etc.).

Then you follow up with:

“I know you don’t want to impact the team’s performance or your own performance in a negative way. Would you be willing to talk to me about how you can change your behavior as well as your impact? I believe we can work this out together and improve your performance so that it is at a level you can proud of.”

In this example, there’s plenty of substance around the specific behavior that has specific negative impacts. When it comes to sizzle, the person giving the feedback is doing so with an encouraging tone that is devoid of negative judgments.

Perhaps the most soulful aspect of having a “Courageous Conversation” is revealed in the positive image of the future that the leader provides in the closing statements.



### **Personal application:**

- How can you employ Asset-Based Thinking (ABT) in your leadership work? How can you encourage others to use ABT?
- In planning and executing initiatives in your organization, how can you use the return on investment ideas outlined by Dr. Cramer?
- Where could you put the “Courageous Conversation” tool to good use?





Exclusive conversation with  
**Adrian Gostick**

## Lackluster Teamwork? Tips for Boosting Performance



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

You've seen most of the teamwork clichés:

- Together Everyone Achieves More
- Great things never come from comfort zones
- Teamwork makes the dream work
- Individually we're a drop, but together we're an ocean

But of course posters on the employee cafeteria wall do not transform glib slogans into reality. Effective teamwork requires a deep understanding of human behaviors and a disciplined approach to execution.

Both of those ingredients are abundantly present in *The Best Team Wins: The New Science of High Performance* by Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton.

Undergirded by 850,000 employee engagement surveys and volumes of other research, Gostick and Elton offer a clear roadmap to the kind of teamwork that most leaders only dream about.

Their previous books—*The Carrot Principles* and *All In*—were #1 *New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Wall Street Journal* bestsellers. *The Best Team Wins* has earned the same accolades.

I visited with Adrian about teamwork issues that matter to leaders everywhere.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** Your research shows that many of today's younger employees—having grown up as recognition junkies—seem to be more strongly motivated by recognition for their good work than do workers from previous generations. How can leaders best accommodate Millennials' desire for recognition without turning off older workers who are motivated by other things?

**Adrian Gostick:** True. What our new research shows—as we've done in-depth interviews with more than 25,000 Millennials—is that younger workers' need for extrinsic recognition from their bosses is three times greater than for older workers.

However, we find that they aren't looking for meaningless pats on the back. What they are looking for is reinforcement that their work matters and that it's on track with the needs of the organization.

In other words, they're looking for more feedback—of the positive and constructive types. The benefit of offering more and better recognition is a leader is providing more feedback to her people—younger or older—and few workers are going to be turned off by receiving more of that.



**Adrian Gostick**

**Duncan:** What are the keys to effective recognition?

**Gostick:** When it's offered, smart recognition is tied to the organization or team's core values, it's given soon after the achievement, and it's frequent in a team. Most importantly, the recognition is tied to what motivates a person.

Smart leaders use a knowledge of a worker's individual motivators to tailor expressions of gratitude to each team member.

For instance, someone driven by concepts such as autonomy and excelling might feel best recognized when given a chance to work independently on an important project, while someone who is more motivated by concepts such as teamwork and friendship would likely feel more valued when thrown a party with work friends in celebration of a big win. It all depends on the individual.

**Duncan:** The philosopher Frederick Nietzsche famously said that “He who has a *why* to live for can endure almost any *how*.” What are some good ways for a leader to help workers connect the dots between their work and their values?

**Gostick:** We’ve found believing in a noble cause raises all ships in the harbor. For instance, a strong *why* makes older employees more willing to spend time mentoring younger team members and be more open to sharing with them.

For Millennials (whom we often call the *Why Generation*), clarity about the cause helps them believe that, even as entry level players, they are making a significant contribution to a mission that matters.

To connect the dots between work and values, we encourage leaders to get input on a purpose statement from their team members. In other words: Don’t do this alone. With that said, we do not recommend asking your team the question: “What’s our purpose?”

“Believing in a noble cause raises all ships in the harbor.

Instead, make it more human by asking, “Why do we exist as a team?” or “What job do we do for customers?” or “What gets you excited to come here every day?”

**Duncan:** In many organizations, the performance review is poorly regarded by givers are well as by receivers. Because good coaching is important to a person’s development, what approach do you recommend regarding the appraisal process?

**Gostick:** Instead of relying on the once- or twice-a-year formal review, many of the best leaders we’ve interviewed hold one-on-one performance review sessions every week or two with each member of their team—even though many of their people are remote and around the globe. “What do you want to talk about?” is a great first question.

Many prominent firms have decided to either substantially alter the annual performance review or to abandon the practice entirely—replacing it with other processes for evaluating and developing employees that are more timely, frequent, and in the control of the immediate supervisor. We call this *the continuous review*. The biggest reason for the change: In today’s fast-moving business environment, a yearly (or half-yearly, for that matter) appraisal is simply not responsive enough to address changes that teams are facing and help people respond.

People need much more regular feedback and guidance—especially younger workers who are unwilling to wait an entire year to learn about their strengths or needed-improvement areas.

**Duncan:** The culture manifesto at Netflix is often referred to by people wanting to build a high-performing organization. One section of that manifesto says this—“On a dream team, there are no ‘brilliant jerks.’ The cost to teamwork is just too high. Our view is that brilliant people are also capable of decent human interactions, and we insist upon that.” What can leaders do to operationalize that philosophy when forming and managing their teams?

**Gostick:** Terrific question. One CEO we interviewed told us his company’s number one salesperson had just been let go because he had been found to be sexually harassing female staff members. As the CEO told us, “While you may pay top performers differently and reward them differently, the rules have to apply to everyone exactly the same.” Many organizations might try to sweep his actions under the rug because he was

““ In today’s fast-moving business environment, a yearly (or half-yearly, for that matter) appraisal is simply not ... enough.

such a high performer, but the CEO said: “How long would that have taken to get out? A few days at most. And it would have given our company a black eye. There are no secrets in an organization.”

**Duncan:** One of the disciplines you recommend for leaders is “manage to the one.” What does that look like in actual practice?

**Gostick:** Managing to the one means focusing on one-on-one career

development. The good news is this is a relatively low-cost way to keep employees and keep them engaged, and it’s something well within the control of each manager. We found considerable payoffs in increased commitment, creativity, and productivity when leaders take even a small amount of time to personalize responsibilities based on team members’ individual drivers.

In most high-engagement teams, we discovered variations on a practice we call *job sculpting*, in which managers give each employee some work to do that is especially motivating to him/her, while altering or transferring other work that might be demotivating (if at all possible).

**Duncan:** Can you share a specific example?

**Gostick:** One vice president at a large bank had an employee who had been there for 30 years. Over time he had developed a passion for public speaking, but his job didn’t involve that.

The VP said, “He and I built that into his job in a way that his colleagues doing the same job don’t have.” That includes going to community colleges to deliver presentations on career planning. She added, “It’s important to him, in terms of getting a sense of satisfaction and feeling good at what he does, that the job has elements of what he loves to do.” His smart manager found a way to sculpt in just one new activity that meets so many of his needs. It’s a small adjustment that has kept him engaged in all aspects of his

work, and all because he sat down and told his manager what motivated him. And she listened! That's how it all starts.

**Duncan:** You suggest that harmony is overrated and that team members should be encouraged to engage in civil disagreement. What's the advantage of such interaction and what are some good ground rules for facilitating it?

**Gostick:** Feeling able to express your views, take smart risks, and being given roughly equal time to speak up in a team on a given day are the hallmarks of psychological safety. Research shows that fostering this is vital for effective problem-solving and innovative thinking within a fast-moving team. We also found a remarkable payoff of having at least one team member who regularly challenges assumptions and the approach on a team—having a *radical*.

Keeping debate from escalating into dissension and backstabbing, while assuring that all team members get a roughly equal hearing, can be tricky. Therefore, just about every team leader we interviewed had established ground rules for debate within their teams. We recommend considering these:

- Treat each other with respect (challenge the position not the person; don't make it personal)
- Listen to one another carefully before responding, and ask for clarification if needed (seek to gather facts; do not jump to conclusions)
- Come to the debate ready to present facts and data (not supposition)
- Remember you are *not* in a competition to win (debates are opportunities to find the best ideas, be enlightened, and learn—not score points or ram home your position)
- After the team makes a decision collaboratively, we are going to support it (even if it wasn't our idea or we might have reservations)

**Duncan:** “Define wow” is among the 101 ideas you offer for inspiring a team. Can you give us an example of how that works?

**Gostick:** While we found breakthrough teams always include competent people, most are not Dream Teams. In fact, in our research we met breakout groups composed of people who up to that point in their careers had been more supporting players than stars. We began to realize that world-class results come only partly from *who* makes up these teams, but more importantly *what* these teams *do*. They were extremely focused on wowing each other and their customers.

That begins with a simple question: Does every employee on a team have a clear focus and understanding of what wowing your customers really means? And, as a leader, how can you help them define that?





### **Personal application:**

- In your work environment, how can “recognition” be appropriately personalized to accommodate the preferences of people from different generations?
- How can you help people on your team connect the dots between their work and their personal values?
- In your workplace, what does “wowing a customer” look like? What can you do to make this more common than it currently is?



Exclusive conversation with  
**Kevin Cashman**

## Stories: The Effective Leader's Must-Have Tool



**By Rodger Dean Duncan**

Good stories have a power all their own. They can make complex issues understandable. They can give people a sense of community. They can call people to action in ways they never imagined.

As a young journalist many years ago, I covered large events ranging from business conventions to religion conferences to political rallies. I always watched and listened to the speakers very carefully. But most revealing was what I observed in the audiences.

When a speaker said something like “Let me illustrate with a story,” the audience would *always* become more alert and attentive. It was as though the listeners were thinking “Okay, here comes the really good stuff.”

So, why don't more leaders have storytelling in their toolbox of skills? That's always been a mystery to me. But one thing's for sure: the value of good stories and effective storytelling cannot be overemphasized.

Kevin Cashman certainly knows this. In the updated edition of his fine book *Leadership from the Inside Out* he highlights many of the whys and wherefores of good storytelling. He shared some of his insights.

**Rodger Dean Duncan:** You say that spreadsheets are the language of management information and stories are the language of leadership inspiration. How can a leader go from mere storytelling skills to using stories to connect people's self-awareness to service and performance improvement? In other words, how can good stories go beyond mere rah-rah and really inspire people to want to improve?

**Kevin Cashman:** Numbers are numbing to most people while stories speak to the whole person, both head and heart. Using an authentic, relevant story draws people in, engages our imaginations and our memories so that even if the exact experience didn't happen to us, we feel like it did. It resonates with meaning. So rather than grind through numbers, goals or updates, share a story that illustrates what you value, admire or celebrate in the organization. Research shows that character-driven stories enhance empathy and cooperative behaviors, such as engaging employees to help customers solve problems and feel good about their part in finding a resolution. Telling founding stories connects people to purpose, the original passion behind the enterprise.



**Kevin Cashman**

**Duncan:** How can stories become part of an organization's culture, part of a team's DNA?

**Cashman:** Telling founding stories is an excellent way to connect everyone to the original passion behind the enterprise. Keeping that story at the forefront with the organization's purpose and helping individuals connect to it with their own purpose story is a great foundation for an organization's culture.

The privilege of a leader is to inspire new narratives. Recognize that every experience is a potential story that is part of the organization's DNA. People may *already* have a story about you, your team and your organization. The real question is: what is the current story and how do you want to change it?

**Duncan:** The sweet spot of an effective story seems to be the intersection of the storyteller's authenticity and the relevant needs of the listeners. How can story mastery be learned and constantly improved?

**Cashman:** Effective stories require that we go deep to know our deepest narratives of character, learning, loss, recovery, privilege, and values. This is the journey to authenticity. Relevance requires that we understand the needs, fears, concerns, and

struggles of others. Relevance is the journey to emotional intelligence and connection. Story mastery is going deep to touch others. Reflection and connection are key practices throughout these journeys.

**Duncan:** How can a leader build up an inventory of authentic stories that engage and inspire others (and even motivate the storyteller)?

**Cashman:** Notice that stories, inspiring stories, are already within us and around us. First, know your own stories. Reflect on the highs and lows of your life to inventory your learnings, loss, and values.

Second, begin to notice stories around you, on your team, in your organization, in your family, in your reading, the media ... everywhere! Recount these stories to celebrate the character you admire in others.

“Telling founding stories is an excellent way to connect everyone to the original passion behind the enterprise.

Know the inventory of stories is already there, but we may not “have taken stock of our story inventory” inside and outside of ourselves.

**Duncan:** What are the must-have ingredients of a story that inspires people with a desire to do better and be better?

**Cashman:** Ingredient #1: the story moves you. If it is not inspiring to you, it will not inspire others. All inspiration begins with self-inspiration.

Ingredient #2: The story moves others. This involves crafting the narrative in a way that transcends itself and reminds us of a universal challenge, character trait or important consequence. When it does, relevance dawns, inspiration happens and scientists tell us that the hormone, oxytocin, associated with trust and connection, literally flows in our bloodstream!



### Personal application:

- In communicating about the challenges and opportunities in your business, how can you replace numbers and other data with stories that engage people’s heads, hearts, and hopes?
- What is a good “founding story” that can remind people of the original passion or purpose behind your team or organization?
- What are some good resources for building up a good inventory of relevant stories for your use?