

*The 2020*

# FORWARD THINKING SUCCESS SERIES

HOW TO CREATE THE  
FORWARD THINKING WORKPLACE



# THE 2020 FORWARD THINKING SUCCESS SERIES

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How Do We Create the Forward Thinking  
Workplace?

Bill Fox

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*This book is dedicated to the forward-thinking leaders who contributed their time, intellect, and wisdom to the Exploring Forward-Thinking Workplaces conversation. Thank you for being part of this journey.*

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# Introduction

How do we create the forward thinking workplace?

What started out as an experiment has now evolved into a growing and ongoing conversation with over 75 business and thought leaders.

In these conversations, I begin each interview with the same six opening questions -

1. How do we create workplaces where every voice matters, everyone thrives and finds meaning, and change and innovation happen naturally?
2. What does it take to get an employee's full attention and best performance?
3. What do people really lack and long for at work?
4. What is the most important question leaders should ask employees?
5. What is the most important question employees should ask leaders?
6. What is the most important question we should ask ourselves?

This book is an abridged collection of the most intriguing insights that were curated from each leader's response to question #1:

How do we create workplaces where every voice matters, everyone thrives and finds meaning, and change and innovation happen naturally?

This question helps get at the essence of what's missing in most workplaces, and it opens up a space for people to freely describe how to create an ideal workplace.

Change and innovation may be top of mind for most organizations today, but they still struggle to implement it.

The answers to this question reveal how organizational change and innovation can occur naturally, if we start with the inner change of the human participants.

For further reading, links are provided to each leader's complete interview.

However, please note that interviews published in my book *The Future of the Workplace* are available only in the book because of my agreement with the publisher.

I hope you enjoy reading this book and find it valuable.

Please feel free to email me at [bill@billfox.co](mailto:bill@billfox.co) or by phone below if you'd like to discuss further.

To your great work life & success,



Bill Fox, Co-founder

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# Just Decide & Do It

Alan Seale in How to More Effectively & Authentically Respond

It's about simply making it clear, "You know what, in our workplace, everybody matters." Invite people into that conversation and just make that choice. You don't need a big model or sophisticated thing or need to hire some expensive consulting firm to help you do that.

## How Do We Transcend Fear in the Organization?

Andrew Bennett in The Surprising Secret of Magic in Business

Another part is about freeing the mind. I think so much of what unconsciously is at play day in and day out is fear. No one wants to talk about fear. We're afraid of talking about fear, but it shows up in the work environment. The workplace is fertile ground for fear to grow because of all the different power structures.

Freeing your mind is about being aware of the role that fear plays in your life, but particularly as a leader in understanding how fear and anxiety influence how one leads. Becoming curious about that is super important. Being willing to have the humility and

courage to lean into that and ask, where might I be unconscious of how fear is getting in my way? What can I do to not make it go away, but how can I work with it in a way that allows me to transcend it? And how do we address that as an organization?

# A Flat Hierarchy Allows Everybody to Contribute

**Andy Yen in Space to Speak Honestly Gives Us Power**

Inside our company, one thing that's helped us a lot is having a rather flat hierarchy. Everybody can contribute ideas no matter what their level is in the organization. The open sharing of knowledge and ideas helps us be more innovative and allows us to change and adapt more quickly.

# Take Action & Make the Hero's Journey Yourself

**August Turak in Take Action & Make the Hero's Journey Yourself**

People have to step forward. As I said in my book, *Business Secrets of the Trappist Monks*, one of the most important reasons I started my company was as an exercise to prove to myself and other people in my organization that I wasn't full of it. Nothing succeeds like success. We have to get other people to follow our lead by doing it ourselves.

In the last chapter of my book I say, "Listen, everything I've said, everything you've read, is worthless unless you decide to take action and make the Hero's Journey yourself and become transformed." You're not going to build the transformational organization unless we have a transformational leader. Building the transformational organization means people have to take the plunge and say, "Listen, I'm going to transform myself," which means making transformation a priority in your life.

# Anchor Questions in the Desired State

**Aviv Shahar in How to Elevate Yourself, Your Conversations & Your Future**

I prefer to re-frame your question just slightly to help me find a different entry, one that can provide for both of us an elevated access. Here is how I will re-frame the question.

I would say:

*Imagine a workplace where every voice matters, everyone thrives and finds meaning, and change and innovation. They happen naturally. Imagine such a workplace. Now tell us please what had to become true to enable such an emergence.*

It's the same question just restated, and this is a formulation that provides a faster entry and a life-affirming path because it is anchored in the desired state rather than in the place of want and scarcity.

# Create the Discipline to Pause & Reflect

**Bob Gower in How to Give People Voice the Natural Way**

To continuously improve, it's not enough to have a small team, but that team has to be working on a cadence that allows it time to reflect on a regular basis. This comes straight out of Toyota production system and the Agile Manifesto where we're going to pause and reflect at regular intervals and figure out how we can get better. Whether you're committing to a retrospective no matter where you are on the project or a post-mortem after the

project, just creating that discipline to pause and reflect, even if it's just a quick 5-minutes.

# Put People in an Environment that Fosters that Culture

**Bob Schatz in Exploring the Forward Thinking Workplaces with Bob Schatz**

This is a great question. I've always been someone that really wants to create a workplace described in those words. I know in my career as a leader, I've tried to create that type of environment for people. Now, as a consultant, I go from company to company and see what they're doing, and I try to help them get to a better place where continuous improvement is the daily goal. In my heart, I want to believe something like you're describing here can happen, but then I think about it and see what the reality is. What we can do as leaders is put people that want that type of workplace into an environment that fosters that kind of culture.

# Surround Yourself With Things That Make You Feel Comfortable

Brian Gardner in How to Be Intentional to Design an Authentic Life and Better World

First off, it depends on whether you're referring to your own workplace at home — for those who are solo entrepreneurs like myself — or those who work in buildings and offices with other people. For me, the best way to create a workplace that works is to surround myself with the things that make me feel comfortable. As a creative, it's very important for me to have a palette that allows me to paint the pictures I want to paint. If I have a busy atmosphere, then I'm not going to be able to clear my mental clutter and create the things I want to create. I think a lot of it is just the general space you're in. Whether it's pictures, or furniture or even music in the background. For me, those are all key elements to creating something that helps me thrive.

## Lead from a Place of Aspiration — Not Fear

David Marquet in Give People More Control

We all know the situation where the leader gave an order and there's this foreboding sense of this is perhaps not right or maybe we'll get away with it. Then the organization does it and then it turns out that people die. It's a legitimate fear. I tell people you don't need to be pushed into it out of fear, I hope you are not. I much rather you see this as "the light on the hill" and move in that direction not from a place of fear but from a place of aspiration.

# The Challenge Today Is Leadership

David Shedd in [How Do We Get Less Command & Control Leadership?](#)

Many, if not most, leaders are comfortable with the old style of command and control. Unless we change this style of leadership, we can't possibly get to a place where we hear everybody's voice. There are lots of people out there who have learned from the military of the past. That is, command and control. But, today, military leadership is much more enlightened. It is actually about getting the best from the people. If you think about the Navy Seals and how they do the work they do, it isn't

top down. The individual units have to make all the decisions when they are out in the field by themselves.

# Enable Everyone to Have a Voice in the Governance

Dennis Wittrock in Creating a Work Environment I'd Actually Like to Work In

Holacracy also works for other people too, and it does it by enabling everybody to have a voice in the governance of the organization and how the work should be done. My engagement with Holacracy also led me into working for encode.org where we are exploring the questions on how to work, earn, and live on purpose. It's a more in-depth exploration on some of the questions that Holacracy created.

# Posing New Questions Opens Up New Possibilities

Dianne Collins in How to Be a Powerful Agent in the World

It's also important to distinguish here that the question you're in is also creating a context and giving a trajectory of where we will go. It's going to influence what line of thinking and actions we will take.

As a simple, quick example, let's say your team is trying to decide on a business model to implement. You can see two options in front of you. Yet, neither of those business models will lead to the accomplishment of the desired goal. You can pose a new question and something new will open up.

# State of Mind Is the Biggest Determinant of How Productive People Are

**Dicken Bettinger in The Most Important But Least Recognized Variable in Business**

I worked for 16 years doing executive leadership, staff development, and cultural change programs. Repeatedly, we began to see the most important variable—and the least recognized variable regarding importance in a business setting—is the state of mind of people within the workplace. It's critical. It's the biggest determinant of how productive people are, how

well they listen, how well they communicate, the quality of the decisions they make, the ease with which a group can make decisions, and their ability to solve problems in a collaborative fashion. All these qualities are determined by state of mind.

## It's All in the System

**Eva Maria Schielein in Letting People Do What They Really Want to Do**

There are many components that matter to create creative and better workplaces. To me, it's all in the system. It's about the organization letting people do what they really want to do and developing their strengths, but this only happens when the system is there to allow them to be themselves.

## What Do I Need to Embody?

**Felicia Spahr in What Do I Need to Embody?**

I think that's such an interesting question especially the part where we talk about how these things can happen naturally. You can't force something onto other people, so as I thought about this question, I thought a lot about parenting. Even though I don't have children, I feel like there are many similarities there

when you are a parent who is embodying the things you want them to absorb and to learn. It is so much easier for the child to pick it up than if you were saying one thing that you wanted to teach them, but you were embodying something else. Children watch what you do, and they don't necessarily take what you say at face value. Even though there aren't five-year-olds running around in a corporate company, I think the same principle still applies. It's so much more important to start from the inside-out. That means that the people who are in charge at the top from the CEO on down have to be the ones first to let go of the question —how can we get people to do X—and start thinking about what do I need to embody.

# Management Systems Don't Help Us Control Much at All

Gwen Kinsey in [How Do We Create that Environment that Uses Natural System Wisdom](#)

We spent seven decades getting smart about what processes we could create to help individuals reach discreet, replicable goals. We used mechanization and efficiency frames. We designed systems to refine individual control—control for efficient replication become our primary focus. We used that

same frame in our education system. We stopped teaching children how to learn and started turning out employees. Heck we even apply efficiency goals to our private lives.

# We More or Less Copy Things

Helena Lass in Who Is Leading Our Lives

Taking personal responsibility and developing our interpersonal skills have been left behind and more in the background.

Professional skills have been too much in the forefront. That's why we haven't developed our capacities to have more insights and to intentionally apply our awareness.

# Leadership That Understands Intrinsic Motivation

Hrund Gunnsteinsdottir in Shifting the Center of Gravity

I also think in essence it's about leadership within that workplace that understands the incredible value of intrinsic motivation.

You're willing to do so many things when you are intrinsically motivated. My friend Gordon Torr, who wrote *Managing Creative*

*People*, said if you have a room with five highly creative individuals and you want them to come up a very original creative idea, then you don't say to them, “You know, if you do this in a week then you'll get a free parking space for a year or I'll give you a pay raise.” It's not really going to motivate them in a creative or innovative sense.

# Be Open & Curious to the True Voice of People

Irene Ricotta in Be Open & Curious to the True Voice of People

Let people express themselves without judgment or criticism while being open to understanding their deeper inner voice. This creates an environment of trust that allows them to go deeper into the source of their own creativity, which is the foundation of innovation.

# Everyone Is Responsible for Their Own Meaning & Innovation

**Jeff Dalton in Making Every Voice Matter**

An individual at our company might have 20 roles. For example, I have a role such as “writer of proposals,” and another like “reviewer of financials.” I also have “teacher of classes” (a role others also have) and “planner of retreats. We're codifying all of the roles in our constitution and are starting to become proficient in this self-organization model where every employee is responsible for their own meaning and their own innovation. It's really starting to change the face of our company.

# Work Environments Need to Leverage Everybody's Natural Gifts

**Jim Finkelstein in The Workplace of the Future Has to Honor Mass Customization**

That's a very good question. What we're really talking about is how do we create workplaces and work environments where we're leveraging everybody's natural gifts.

# 70% of Human Talent Are Either Scared, Guarded or Unwilling to Say What They Really Think

Jim Haudan in [Why Are So Many Unwilling to Say What They Think, Feel & Act On](#)

I think it's interesting because we are working on another book and one of the constructs of the book is that it has been almost 30 years since Gallup started measuring engagement in the workplace. For the last 30 years, we have continued to see that 70% of the workplace is not engaged. What that means is almost 70% of all the human talent in all the organizations around the world are either scared, guarded, or unwilling to say what they really think and feel and act on every day. The human talent is not showing up to innovate, change and create better ways.

# Help People Find Meaning in Their Work

John Bell in Voices Will Matter, People Will Thrive, & Innovation Will Become Ingrained in the Culture If...

Voices will matter, people will thrive, and innovation will become ingrained in the culture if—people find meaning. So if people can find meaning, you can satisfy the question. But that begs another question, “How do people find this elusive meaning in their work?”

## Give People the Time of Day

John Ryskowski in How to Get Beyond the Way Most of Us Are Working Today

I believe it’s really important to “give people the time of day.” We recognized this a long time ago with the Hawthorne effect. During this study, they did all these experiments to try and figure out what made people more productive. They gave workers more lighting, and production went up. They played music, and production went up. They put workers in a special room, and production went up. And after many gyrations, they discovered that the only reason production went up was because the workers were being treated like they were special. Management was giving them the time of day.

# Without Systems, People End Up Doing Non-Value Added Work

John Toussaint in Insights from Leading a Lean Healthcare Revolution

If there aren't any systems (or processes) that are standardized and reproducible every day, then people end up doing a lot of non-value added work. If they're doing non-value added work, this then gets back to this point of they're not necessarily doing work that gives their life meaning.

# If We Think of Workplaces as a Community, Our Mindset Begins to Shift

Jon Mertz in Lead More Holistically by Learning the Secrets of the Aspen's

It's a subtle mind shift, but we think of workplaces as being more cubicle or office oriented, which are staler and more sterile. If we

think of our workplaces as a community, our mindset begins to shift. Not only as people working there but as leaders. We start treating people a little differently, and we collaborate a little more closely in the work that we do. Through that we'll get better results and more innovative solutions as well.

# **This Is a Time Where We Need to Crack Open a New Model in Our Heads & in Our Hearts**

**Judith Glaser in How Do We Tap into the Best Conversations that People Can Have?**

We have so many misunderstandings between what human beings thrive with and strive for versus how we label people to appreciate or not appreciate certain environments. This is a time where we have to crack open a new model, a new algorithm in our heads and in our hearts about what it means to have to have the kind of environments you're talking about through your questions. Every human being thrives in them whether you're an accountant or see yourself more as analytical. That doesn't stop you from appreciating and being excited by participating in things that are very innovative.

# A Workplace Where People Can Comfortably and Safely Speak Up

**Karen Mack in Culture Makes the Difference**

If the culture in the workplace is such that people are comfortable speaking up to express their truth, I believe the workplace will be better overall because more people will be heard. More issues, concerns, and how to do things will be communicated and (hopefully) explored. This way, you can make different choices versus simply having top-down decisions that may or may not be connected to real needs.

# People Function Naturally When They Don't Have a Lot of Noise in Their Head

**Ken Manning in What Does the Wisdom in Me Move Me to Do Right Now**

Everyone is designed for success—everyone has built into them a design to be at their best. People function naturally when they don't have a lot of noise in their heads. A company that is operating in a culture with this understanding is in deep respect of the human dynamic—the way it's naturally designed. I believe this would be an environment in which people look forward to having less noise in their mind and would be able to sit in their natural abilities operating innately from the inside out.

# Help Employees Engage in Accordance with Their Deeply Held Beliefs

**Kent Johnson in How to Help Employees Engage with Passion**

The starting point is to truly value our employees. Not to merely look for what they can do to help us achieve corporate profitability goals and short-term time-related goals, but to care about them as human beings. My particular focus in this vein is on religious diversity, and here's why: A key hallmark of humanness is our capacity to embrace principles and beliefs that define us and that motivate and inform our daily lives. If we really want to unleash diverse perspectives and energy, we must look

for ways to help employees engage work in accordance with their deeply held beliefs. That crucial connection of passion with work is key to flourishing.

# Stop Focusing on Processes & Mechanics as Firmly as We Have

Lance Secretan in Inspiring Belief Changing Wisdom that Will Change the World

The first thing we need to understand is to stop focusing on the processes and mechanics of the business quite as firmly as we have and quantifying everything. We need to move things up a notch, so we are: 1) inspiring — all the time, and 2) understand the larger picture of what we're doing. We just don't make widgets. We actually try to do something important in the world and how does that transpire and how does it affect the world? I think Starbucks has done a terrific job of doing that. They aren't just making coffee. They're creating a "third place." That's their dream.

# People Feel Respected and Dignified as a Human Being

Lindsay Pederson in What Is the Most Powerful Tool You Have as a Leader?

What a big question. I was thinking about what's the common thread when I'm in a work environment where it feels like there's a thriving, vibrant culture. What's the common thread? What enables that and what I keep coming back to is this idea of psychological safety.

All of the individuals in this workspace or this company feel respected and dignified as a human being. It sounds so negative and necessary, but it's surprisingly rare.

I have noticed that when people feel safe, psychologically, they thrive and find meaning. When they succeed and find meaning, they naturally contribute. Meaningful to the business because they feel cared about, so they care too.

# Learning, Flexibility & Willingness to Listen

Lynne Cazaly in Why You Need to Rattle Your Cage

There's an Australian social researcher by the name of Hugh Mackay. One of the books he wrote some years ago was *Why Don't People Listen*. Mackay says underpinning it all—and the reason why people don't listen—is because they're afraid of what they might hear and how it might change them. I think this is relevant in creating workplaces where every voice matters; it could be a terrifying thing to listen to other voices. If someone is thriving more than you, that could be confronting. If someone is finding meaning quicker than you are that also could be confronting. And looking at change and innovation, if we have to force that on people, there's a sense that they're not taking it up naturally. Above all, I think it's about learning, but having this flexible mindset in being willing to listen to something that might, as Hugh Mackay says, "Rattle your cage a little bit."

## **Our Perception of Reality Is Based on Our Own Thought — Not External Circumstances**

**Mara Gleason in [How to Unleash Your Human Operating System](#)**

When people don't understand that their experience is coming from their own mind, they tend to feel very victimized by external

forces. The feelings that they have seem to be caused by external forces. That means that things like the boss, a deadline, budget cuts or even just the traffic getting into the workplace stresses them out. If you were to ask the average human walking around the streets today, what is hard about their job, most people would give you a list of those external forces. Their list would include either people or circumstances that they feel are completely out of their control and have nothing to do with them. But what's interesting is in the principles that we've uncovered about how the mind operates and how it creates the experience of life from the inside out, it totally flips people's understanding of life on its head.

## **We Already Do That — It's Life**

**Marc Hanlan in Why Isn't It That Simple?**

Those are great questions. I've spent a fair amount of time thinking about this. Let me give you my simple answer, which is actually my true answer, which is very short. Then I'll go back and tie my answers together.

My simple answer is we already do that, it's life. Now to tie my answers together. I was struggling with how I would answer your

questions, but then I realized I was caught up in my own drama. So then I asked, “Why isn’t it that simple?”

The work that I’ve done with organizations and people have really been around a lot of these questions. I’m glad we took days to not do this immediately because I really spent some time connecting with your questions. Not so much thinking about it but feeling into the connections.

So why isn’t it that simple? And my answer to myself is, “It is that simple.” I often talk about looking at young kids. Remember when they were young and playing? For me when I watch young kids at play, they don’t play like we play, and they don’t work like we work\*\*. \*\*They work at play and they play at work! (laughter). We screw it up!

# Human-Centered Leaders with a Natural Understanding of What It Takes for Humans to Succeed

Marcel Schwantes in Human-Centered Leadership Empowers People to Scale Mountains

I think it was John Maxwell who said “everything starts and ends with leadership.” So I have to point at the people you have within your organization that are making decisions and question whether those people are human-centered leaders.

I won't even call them servant leaders yet. I'm going to call them human-centered leaders who have a natural understanding of what it takes for humans to succeed. Human-centered leaders who tap into human emotions and understand what behaviors drive high performance. That solves the culture question and everything else you mentioned in your question.

# **A System Where Every Voice Can Be Heard & Given Fair Consideration**

**Mark Ricketts in A Virtual Space for Collective Minds to Imagine & Create**

We create a system where every voice can be heard and given a fair consideration. That was my top answer. When it came to these Qiark's, I brainstormed myself giving myself the answers I felt were most appropriate and then I brainstormed my reasoning by comparing each of the ideas I put up with each other idea. It

took me about 30 seconds, and that's the probability matrix I came up with. My top answer was “We create a system where every voice can be heard and given a fair consideration.”

## Simply Stated, It's Role Clarity

**Martha Kesler in Why is Role Clarity So Important in Today's Workplace?**

Simply stated, what it really boils down to is role clarity, which is central to the idea of creating work places in which people feel valued and share a sense of trust. To get that sense of trust, I point to the work of Charles Green and Andrea Howe and their trust formula, which includes the elements of credibility, reliability, and intimacy. But it doesn't stop there. You need to balance all three against self-awareness to create trust at all levels throughout the organization.

## People Need to Be in Balance with Themselves

**Masa K. Maeda in Vanishing Mental Barriers that Limit True Collaboration**

I Masa, for example, have to be in balance with myself to be able to do my job better. What that means is that I should be able to have some space and time to myself within the Static and Dynamic environments, and outside the work environment. Time for me to relax, to introspect, to gain motivation and so on. We should be allowed some amount of time every day at work to do that. To isolate from everybody else and spend 10 or 20 minutes just relaxing, doing some meditation, yoga, internal martial art or any other kind of self-health activity.

I'm part Japanese and have practiced internal martial arts (those focused more on health than self-defense) most of my life. I also did Zen meditation at 6:00 AM every morning at a Buddhist temple when I lived in Japan. Being in good mental and physical shape is good not only for oneself but for the business. So, those three environments should always be considered as the work environment.

# Buy-In & Sponsorship Fail as an Effort for Change

Meredith Haberfeld in Leadership Behavior Sets the Tone

In change management theory, a lot is said about leadership buy-in or sponsorship. But, buy-in and sponsorship fail. What causes lasting cultural behavioral patterns in an organization is based on what the leadership embodies. If the leadership is embodying command and control, anxiety driven, fear-based modes of operating, that sets the tone for how that organization operates.

# Figure Out Why the Forward-Thinking Workplace Isn't Happening

Michael Anderson in Let's Figure Out Why That's Not Happening

Let's look at the workplace and figure out why that's not happening because I think when we are at our most centered self—emotionally, mentally and spiritually healthiest—those things do happen. I studied spiritual psychology, and what we do when we find things aren't working the way we want it to, we look into the reason why and take that out. I think our nature is to be like that. To me, evolution is getting rid all the things the way of our most conscious and our being the healthiest we can be.

# People Working Passionately Engage Fearlessly

Michael Bonamassa in How Voices Are Heard, Passion Followed & Innovation Empowered

When people are working on something they're passionate about, they're engaging fearlessly. Then if you're having a dialogue where you're showing interest and truly listening and engaging with them, then they're not worried about judgment. If there are areas where they're seeking permission to create a different type of workplace, you have opportunities to give them permission or allow them to know that their voice is being heard. These are ways I work with associates to ensure their voice is heard, passion is followed and innovation is empowered.

## Create Space to Hear Something

Michael Neill in It's not about working harder, or even smarter

You know to me, a bad meeting is like a Facebook discussion where nobody's listening, and everybody's making points. A good meeting is a meeting where everyone is listening, and there

is space to hear something new beyond what anyone brought into the room with them. But if you don't fundamentally think that every voice matters, then honestly, you could have the best strategy in the world, and it wouldn't work.

# Help People Realize What Goes on Behind the Scenes of Their Minds

Natasha Swerdloff in [Realizing How the Mind Works](#)

The work that I do in businesses today is to help the organization see where innovation and motivation come from, and what it takes to perform naturally.

The way I do that is by sharing with them this understanding that we call the [3 Principles](#) or the Inside-Out-Understanding. This understanding offers a way of understanding how the mind works, and where motivation and well-being come from.

I believe the answer to your question is that we need to help people raise their level of consciousness. We need to help people realize what it is that goes on behind the scenes of our minds. I think it's an educational challenge. It comes from our

heart and insights into the workplace so that people can see for themselves how this works.

# Principles Designed to Bring Out Our Basic Goodness

Nem Bajra in How to Allow Kindness and Compassion to Be the Essences of Work

We have to start with our basic goodness and inherent wisdom as human beings. Then based on our inherent wisdom, we have to introduce principles that are designed to bring out our basic goodness. Our principles help us create a workplace where we can all express ourselves. We have to introduce principles that are designed to bring out our basic goodness. Companies without well-defined principles operate based on transactions. They make a specific product or provide a service, and in return, they get a certain amount of money. In that kind of company, they think of employees in the same way. The business hires employees for their labor and skill only. They think of business in terms of transactions. This distinction is the primary difference between what I learned from Dr. Inamori's Kyocera philosophy that is principle-based versus what you will find in most business books.

# Valuing Transparency and Communication within the Organization

**Nick Hughes in How to Incorporate Purpose & Values to Build a Thriving Community**

It starts from valuing transparency and communication within the organization. If you think about the basis of your question, it's frankly around, do people feel their voice matters? That definitely comes from the leadership that institutes values that are baked into what it means to be an employee of that organization. It shouldn't matter what level people are in the organization. People should feel that their voice matters.

# Challenge People to Ask Questions & Have Them Find the Solutions

**Norman Bodek in Discover the Spirit of Self-Reliance**

Taiichi Ohno and Dr. Shigeo Shingo two of my authors, created the Toyota Production System, (Lean), both were masters of this. Each had a different management style: Ohno would command you. He'd go to you and say, "Look, you have six people working in your area. Do it with four." Dr. Shingo, on the other hand, was a great master and teacher. He could solve probably any manufacturing problem presented to him. However, Dr. Shingo would turn to the people, managers and engineers and say to them very simply, "How can you improve the value adding ratio on this process?"

# People Are Emotionally & Mentally Invested When They Have Ownership

**Patrick Ross in Don't Overlook This Key Distinction When Giving Ownership**

It's a really important question, and it's something every leader and manager should be thinking about. I think one key is the word "ownership." You see startups where the founders all have literal ownership in the company, and that invests them. But you obviously can't do that across a broad enterprise. "Ownership" has different meanings, but if somebody feels that they own

something about their job and their role in an organization, then they're going to be emotionally and mentally invested. So that could be recognizing somebody has a certain talent and has a desire to do a project and empowering them to do it. For example, it could be that while something's always been done one way, an employee has a different approach that works better for them. And if it meets the same end result meets, you allow the employee to own that approach.

# Believe Everybody Has Something to Contribute

**Paul Akers in Leading a Lean Thinking & Lean Health Revolution**

That's really easy and is done if you believe everybody has something to contribute. But if you're a leader and you think you're the smartest one and have all the answers, then you'll never create that environment. And even more importantly, as the leader, you must be willing to celebrate it when people come up with ideas that are more creative and insightful than yours. You must believe philosophically that people are smart and have the capacity to come up with better ideas than you.

# The Workplace Is a Reflection of the Leadership

Paul David Walker in Getting Leaders to a New Level of Understanding

Leaders need to come from a different level of understanding than they may have inherited from the past. They're coming into the 21st century with the way they think. There's no other way to change the workplace. It becomes a reflection of the leadership of the company.

# Coaching Can Help Change Occur More Naturally

Paul McMahon in Is Upside Down the Key to Moving Forward

When it comes to the kinds of changes that really improve performance, often they don't just happen naturally. I view classroom training as just a first step because the kind of changes that are needed to gain real performance improvement are rarely learned in a classroom. This is where on-the-job coaching after classroom activities is critical to help point out

situations where what was discussed in the classroom needs to be converted to a behavior change.

# Do an Audition, Not an Interview

Perry Marshall in How to Get 80/20 to Work for You

When you hire people, it should not be an interview. It should be an audition. People can say anything they want. A lot of times it's not true. Sometimes because they're lying. More often it's not true because they don't understand themselves, or they don't know what they're capable of. Sometimes they're nervous, or they're just trying to find a job, or they're just trying to say what the interviewer thinks they want to hear.

# Create a Context That Allows for the Expression of Intrinsic Motivation & Our Best Selves

Pierre-Boris Kalitventzeff in An Inspiring Adventure in Bringing More Life & Humanity to the Workplace

A context at the workplace is made of three things. Number one is culture, so it's a set of shared values, behaviors, habits, mental models, ways of seeing the world. It's also a vision. It's that subtle and invisible energy that can make people feel they belong to a group. Number two, it's a system that organizes the collective action, so we can call that the management system if you will. And by the way, it's actually not about managing people, it's about managing work. And number three is leadership because the system cannot evolve beyond the limitations of the leader.

# Provide Options for People to Give Feedback

Rob Allen in How to Build Cohesive Teams that Have Impact

Some folks don't like speaking in large groups. For them we need to give other opportunities to give feedback, ideas and questions through forums like Slack, direct message, or smaller groups. Hanging back after a meeting has ended also gives people an opportunity to come up and speak who wouldn't have been comfortable in a larger room setting. It helps to create more space for those voices. This is all suggesting though that the people who are less reserved will not have a problem speaking up. Sometimes that's not true. But they use the same facilities as the people who require more space.

# It's the Job of Every Employee to Discover What Has Meaning for Them

**Robert Fuchs in What If Corporate Culture Is Perfect, but I'm Not?**

Meaning is not something external, but only I can give meaning to the things that happen in my life. Life by itself is meaningless unless I give it meaning. So this is the personal task of every employee, which happens best in collaboration with the rest of the team. Only in interaction and collaboration with others can I find the sweet spot where meaning for the team and meaning for

me personally intersect. Because roles and responsibilities change as fast as the business models they are grounded on, we have to regularly evaluate these tasks and refactor or reintegrate ourselves as we do with software.

# Challenging the Status Quo Is the Only Way That Companies Will Become Skilled at Innovation

Rod Collins in Challenge the Status Quo to Become Skilled at Innovation

What a workplace looks like based on the principle that no one should have the authority to kill a good idea or keep a bad idea is people are not going to be working in cubicles. They are going to be working more in open space. They are going to have processes where they are going to have to tap into their collective intelligence in order to move things forward because if a single person can kill a good idea that one decision maker can stop everything. That's dangerous in a rapidly changing world because if that single leader is wrong, he could take down the whole company. I think when all voices matter and you build

processes like W. L. Gore & Associates have done to tap into the collective intelligence of their people, it leads to long term success. It also leads to an environment that naturally enables innovation. Nothing kills innovation faster than a legion of supervisors all of whom have the ability to kill a good idea or keep a bad idea alive.

# We've Forgotten to Listen to the Voices of Everyone

**Russell Dalglish in The Starting Point is Always Strategy**

It's really interesting for me, I started my career working on the shop floor of a manufacturing facility. In the manufacturing facility, we had a box on the wall called a "Suggestions Box." Any member of the staff could put any suggestion they wanted into that box. If their suggestion was viewed as being good and accepted, there was a prize. But isn't it interesting in this fantastic technology age where we've all got communication with everyone, we've forgotten to listen to the voices of everyone within our organizations.

# When You Become a Good Listener, You Get More & Better Information

Sandra Krot in Do You See the True Paradigm or Not?

Once leaders see for themselves that there is nothing—not the economy, not the deadlines, not the customer, none of those things are the source of their feelings and their stress. Once they truly see this, they can make the kinds of decisions they need to make for their businesses to thrive. And of course, just like individuals, they become better listeners. When you're a good listener, you get more and better information. This really has an impact on the company and on the bottom line.

# Allow People to Use Their Strengths to Find Their Own Method of Achieving Their Goals

**Sarah Elkins in How to Leave People Feeling Confident, Connected and Valued**

When people know their strengths and what they're great at, then instead of giving people a prescribed way to accomplish their goals, allow them to use their strengths to find their own method of doing it. I think it will make a huge difference in the workforce. Whatever assessment you use, it doesn't really matter. Helping people understand how to apply their strengths to solve problems and get from point A to point B rather than telling them how to do it, can transform the workplace.

# Help People Drop the Corporate Mask

**Sarah Rozenhuler in How to Create the Right Conditions for Stunning Conversations**

I think people are increasingly recognizing that we can all wear a corporate mask and that there are parts of ourselves that we think are more socially acceptable or presentable. What is called for here in terms of making a workplace more innovative and more fulfilling for human beings is to help people drop some of that mask and show up more authentically. While it's easy to say, I think that shift is actually quite challenging. Because in showing up more authentically, that also might be sharing parts of ourselves that feel more vulnerable and risky to share.

# Thriving Means People Who Are Engaged in Creating a Better Future for Themselves & the Organization

Sesil Pir in [Why Aren't 21st Century Employees Thriving?](#)

Let's look at 'thriving'. I find two components that make up the language of someone's thriving. The first component is often associated to vitality. It could be a sense of someone feeling alive, passionate or even excited. It has a lot to do with having someone's spirits uplifted. The second component relates to

learning that comes from having a desire to continuously gain new knowledge and skills. When we think of a thriving workforce, I often think of it as one in which employees are not necessarily just satisfied. They're productive and engaged in creating a better future for themselves and the overall organization. There's somehow an intersection that brings in the beauty and makes people thrive.

# Remove the Words Tell and Explain from Your Vocabulary

**Simon Heath in What Is the Most Important Leadership Skill You Possess?**

One of the first things I say to clients is I want to remove the words tell and explain from your vocabulary. I want you to replace those words with inspire and convince. If you can convince people that this is a great strategy or here's the direction that we're headed and why we're headed in that direction, why it's a good thing, and here's how you can help, then people bring their full attention. Why? Because people know why they're doing what they're doing and how they can help. It's essential to move away from telling people information and move towards convincing people of ideas. When you

convince people and focus on inspiring them, then you have their full attention.

# Help People Be More Conscious About What Exactly They Are Doing

Simon and Maria Moraes Robinson in Helping People to See More and Value Everyone's Contribution

We work on the level of consciousness. This means asking questions such as “Why am I doing things the way I am?” Our aim is to help organizations improve relationships between individuals, so we ask people if they are happy with the quality of their relationships, with themselves as well as with others, and if they are happy with the results of the work they do. So, we start to develop inside of people the consciousness about what they are doing in their workplace. We ask questions such as “Why do I wake up every day to come to work?”, “Am I happy with the results of my work?” and “If the quality of my relationships were improved, could I be doing something better?” Asking effective questions is the start of the process of putting these values into action. Quite often a company has a list of values that is

displayed on the wall of their offices. There is a mission, there are the values, but in fact in day after day work, people are not putting this mission and these values in practice. Our approach is to always begin in a manner which allows people to start being more conscious about what exactly they are doing.

# Create an Environment Where People Can Ask the Right Questions

**Steph Holloway in Compassionate Communication Is the Key to Everything**

So how do we create workplaces where more voices matter? For me, I encourage people to ask the right questions. Question one is always about self-analysis — flipping it back to people. “Is there a reason you’re doing this...?” “Why do you think that?” “What would you do Bob/Julie?” How do we create workplaces where more voices matter? I think in some businesses people aren’t used to being asked, they are used to being told. So, create an environment where people can ask the right questions.

# Harness a Deeper Connection Between Individuals

Steve Tendon in Getting Teams & Individuals into a State of Flow

It might seem a bit overused as an ideal, but I really think that the most important aspect is that you must figure out a way to give the organization as a whole a common purpose. When I talk about purpose, I refer to a deeper connection between the individuals of such a nature that it really affects the way of thinking, the ideals, and the decision making of people working together.

# Is Political Correctness Stifling Individual Aspirations?

Steve Tendon in Getting Teams & Individuals into a State of Flow

Companies seldom try to make an effort in understanding what the single individual might aspire to and what their objectives in life are. That support is simply not there. It's even so bad that if you go into a company and ask people why they are there, they

will reply in terms that are politically correct and conforming to the expectations of the business.

# This Kind of Transformation Is Largely a Process of Personal Transformation

Sue Elliott in How to Get Beyond the Way Most of Us Are Working Today

This kind of organizational transformation is, to a great degree, a process of personal transformation. In other words, it's about how we're showing up at work. And it definitely starts at the top: Is the CEO somebody who is closed off and unavailable, or somebody who's open and receptive?

When something goes wrong, do we approach it with an attitude of interrogation, as in: *We must get to the bottom of this!* Or are we coming at it with curiosity, asking, *What's really happening here? I wonder what caused that...* When I say it like that, it's pretty easy to feel which approach is going to get people to open up and share what's going on, and which approach is going to trigger people into being defensive and protective and closed off, right?

It's going to take some work to transform organizations—and the leaders, teams and individuals within those organizations—but it's completely do-able. And it's worth doing.

# Create a Space Where It's Safe for People to Be Authentic

Sue Elliott in How to Get Beyond the Way Most of Us Are Working Today

A big part of the process is creating a space where it's safe for people to be authentic, and where people become aware of and actually use what I call their “superpowers.”

I believe we each have certain gifts, skills, talents and abilities that are innate. Using them feels as natural as breathing to us, so we may not even recognize that we're doing anything special. In fact, we probably think everybody can do these things. But when we're using our superpowers (we might call it being “in the zone” or “in a flow state”), that's when magic happens.

Can you imagine an organization where all the people are using their superpowers? We'd be able to get so much more work done—better—by the same exact people!

To create this kind of workplace, people need to feel safe. They need to feel that it's OK to be authentic. And they need to be in the right seat on the bus, so they can actually use their superpowers every day.

# **We Need to Be Re-Training Ourselves to Be More Human — Not More Automated**

**Susan Taylor in Making a Commitment to Daily Work Activities as a Vehicle for Change**

I think it's a beautiful question. It is a fundamental human need to be acknowledged—to be valued. We therefore need to create workplaces where people matter as much as profit. Let's face it; without people, organizations would not exist. Yet most companies seem to have things backwards—especially in today's VUCA environment where things are much more Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous than even five years ago. And here's the thing... because the world now moves at a speed and intensity unlike any other time in history, we seem to be re-wiring ourselves to be more automated; when we should be re-training ourselves to BE more human.

# Organizations Need to Think About How They Can Transform Themselves to a More Circular Way

Tobias Thiel in How to Create Spaces for Everyone to Grow Their Ideas

It's a leveling of the hierarchy that allows everyone to meet at the same level where people can look into each other's eyes to innovate, discuss and learn. It's natural for road blocks appear within an organization based on the way we organize most of our organizations today.

A hierarchical pyramid makes it very difficult for ideas to grow. If you feed this model again and again and again, you make it harder for your ideas to grow. Organizations need to think about how they can transform themselves to a more circular way of thinking and working. The best advice I have for organizations is to just start. If it works, then you can make it bigger and bigger and bigger. Or if you dare, take a big step and flip your organization from one day to the other—or in several days.

# Getting People Engaged Is Important Because People Become More Committed & Innovative

Tom Cagley in [Why Leadership Needs to Facilitate Engagement](#)

Things that get people engaged are important because it pays off for the organization facilitating people to become more committed and innovative. But from an external point of view, leadership style and management style are important. Servant leadership and participative leadership, those are mechanisms to get people involved because frankly, they get people involved. Participative leadership styles attract followers, and when a person gravitates toward a leader, they are buying into the overall goal of that leader. Buying into a goal or goals facilitates pursuing that goal. So I think those are the relevant constructs.

# The Right Question Can Lead to All Sorts of Innovations

Tom Thomison in How Do We Start & Make It Real

So about ten years ago I got tired of beating my head against the wall. I was continuing to look for better ways to answer that question that you posed and that led me to all sorts of innovations. I crossed paths with Brian Robertson who was experimenting with the same question and with different approaches in his software company. What emerged from that was a company called HolacracyOne that we launched together in 2007 to change: 1) management hierarchy, 2) the power distribution system, 3) the core fundamental operating system of an organization to make that kind of workspace that we want, and 4) bring into reality a place where you can show up—a place where you can lend your time, energy and talent towards a purpose that you care about.

# Recognize There Is a Spectrum in How People Show Up

Valeria Maltoni in Bottom It Up and Top It Down)

There's a spectrum of how we show up. The more we are intentional about our career, the more we desire the things we want to learn and do, working with other people and achieving or solving problems depending on who we are from a motivational standpoint. At the other end of the spectrum is, "I just want to do a good job." Right or wrong, this is what works for you. The opportunity is, how do I bring enough people of enough motivational profiles and working traits and combine them together so that as a collective we can deliver on the vision? There are lots of moving parts.

# About Bill Fox



Hi, I'm Bill Fox, and I help build forward thinking human workplace cultures.

I lead a growing global conversation with 75+ forward-thinking leaders to help you discover new and better ways to achieve your most important strategic objectives. My work will help you discover new pathways, make better decisions, and help solve today's most vexing workplace challenges.

I'm the author of *The Future of the Workplace*, the *Be a Workplace of the Future NOW Series*, and *5 Minutes to Process Improvement Success*.

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# What others are saying...

*“Stepping into the future looks a lot like this. I applaud the direction you are taking with this initiative.”*

—Gwen Kinsey, Leadership Coach

*“This conversation invites and allows whole beings to show up; like whole food, whole beings are more nutritious to the system they exist within.”*

—Anonymous

*“Your questions are more important than our answers! Why? Because every leader ought to be asking him/herself those questions and implementing the forward-thinking insights that will create meaningful purpose, and superior performance.”*

—John Bell, Former CEO at Jacobs Suchard

# The Forward Thinking Approach

“The forward-thinking approach creates an opening in the fabric that’s built from each person’s deep desire to live a life that matters — and a knowing that much more is possible.

In this ever-changing world we find ourselves in, it requires each of us to enter into a quest to transform ourselves and learn new ways of living and working together that elevate everyone.”

— Bill Fox, Co-founder, Forward Thinking Workplaces