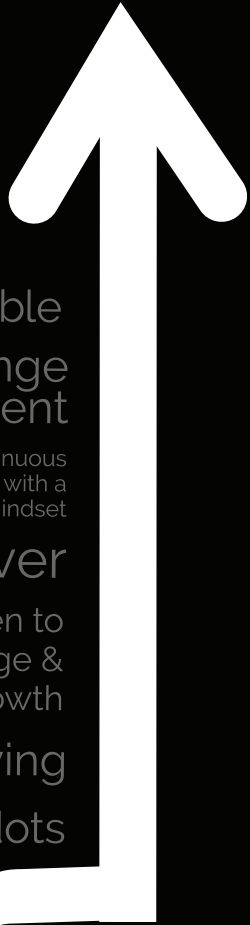


people matters

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The Agile Leader

Adaptable and Flexible
Change Agent
A continuous learner with a growth mindset
Problem solver
Open to change & growth
Unifying
Connects the dots

Not about one-size-fits-all
Learns Adapts
Grows Moves Fast
Mentor Teacher
Creative
A way of working
A way of being
Coach
Innovative

Empowering

LEADING A WORKFORCE FIT TO WIN

BIG INTERVIEW

Ferran Adrià

Acclaimed Chef,
Culinary Genius & Innovator

INTERVIEW

Doug Lipp

Former head of training at the Disney University
and the author of best-selling "Disney U"

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CCL & SHRI Asia Study

Architecting future fluent
culture: Critical role of HR

WHEN IT COMES TO LEADERSHIP, EVERYTHING COMMUNICATES



Doug Lipp, renowned international consultant, former head of training at the Disney University and the author of best-selling “Disney U” talks about **agility** in leadership, cultivating a **culture of honesty** and how aspiring leaders can find a balance between **reflection and action** needed for **transforming** in an age of **digital overload**

Q What is the biggest challenge you see in leaders in the organizations you work with?

A One of the biggest challenges that organizations face in leadership is creating and sustaining a culture of honesty and trust. Leaders who encourage their teams to be honest with them—and who accept that honest feedback without punishing the messenger—create resilient cultures open to change. Contrast this with the culture of fear generated by those leaders who either don’t accept honesty or, worse yet, punish honesty. Lack of an honest, trusting leadership culture is one of the most detrimental patterns I have seen in organizations and such organizations suffer every decade and every year regardless of new technologies or market pressures.

Q Agile and Agility are the two buzzwords today. What does leadership agility look like to you?

A Agile leaders surround themselves with contrarian thinkers in their leadership teams. These leaders hire and promote people who think, and act, differently than they do, (the contrarian thinkers) and then welcome the contrasting perspective. Tremendous agility results when those who offer differing ideas are encouraged and celebrated. After all, differing perspectives offer leaders a lot more data and ideas to work with. Conversely, if everyone on the executive teams says the exact same thing or gives a unanimous group-think perspective, then organizations run a tremendous risk of missing opportunities in the marketplace. Instead of looking for chances to improve services or products, these organizations strive to maintain status-quo. This creates rigidity ... quite the opposite of agility.

Q Leaders need to have the knowledge and ability to think and act as 'Lean-thinking manager-teachers.' Do you think organizations are doing enough to cultivate this knowledge and ability?

A I believe everyone who is in a leadership position is teaching. Teaching moments appear in various forms, such as through a leader's speaking or writing style, their tone of voice, choice of words, or behavior/action. Lean-thinking manager-teachers know the power their messages carry with their employees or teams. Lean-thinking managers don't waste time undoing the confusion caused by sending mixed or confusing messages. Think of it this way: when a leader's words, tone, and actions are not congruent, employees become confused and, worse yet, distrusting of leadership. This results in massive waste and lost opportunity ... quite the opposite of lean.

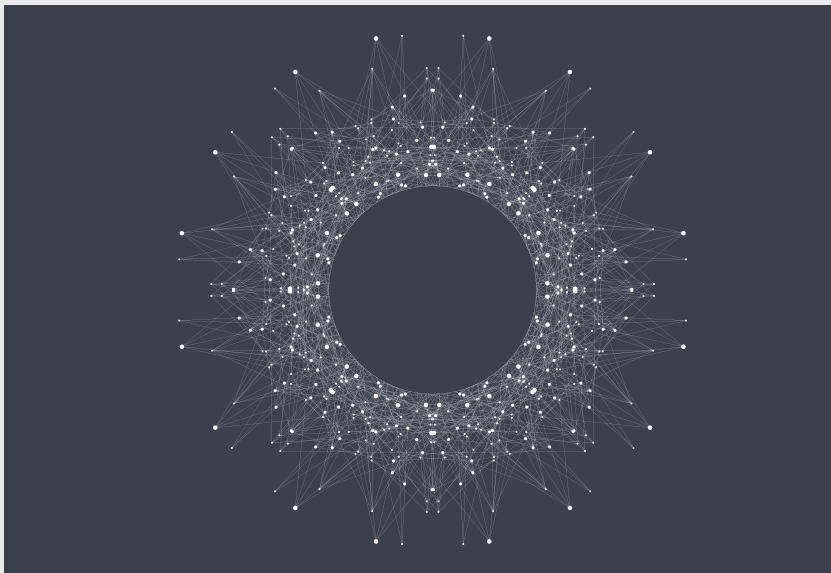
Developing more lean-thinking manager-teachers is a tremendous opportunity overlooked by far too many organizations. Yet, instead of embarking on paths of true improvement, I see many organizations simply searching for the quick, simple fix. I see organizations busily hiring consultants, or putting up posters with motivational slogans about engagement, vision, mission etc., but the real heavy lifting of addressing "Are we an honest culture?" is rarely addressed. And why is this? Because it's difficult! Organizations must look beyond the superficial "feel good" initiatives that trap so many:

- "Let's create an egalitarian culture by changing how we refer to our employees; they're not employees, they're associates!"
- "I think we should offer free food and table tennis tournaments in the break rooms!"

Let's face the truth, many of these superficial initiatives (while done with the best of intentions) are short-lived. Think of it this way, does a new coat of paint on an old building make the walls or foundation stronger? Of course not, and lean-thinking manager-teachers understand this. Instead of wasting time and resources on superficial culture-change initiatives, (painting the walls) these leaders address what really matters in their organizations (the foundation). After all, the prettiest of walls eventually crumble if the foundation is weak.

Q How can leaders or aspiring leaders find a balance between reflection and action needed for transforming, or even just surviving, in an age of digital overload?

A The most resilient and creative teams strike a delicate balance of having some leaders who excel at reflection (thinking), and those leaders who excel at action, (doing). This goes back to our earlier discussion of cultivating contrarian thinkers on your team. Rest assured, a well-balanced



WHEN TEAMS OF THINKERS AND DOERS ARE BOUND BY HONESTY AND TRUST, THEY LEVERAGE THEIR COLLECTIVE WISDOM TO MOVE—WITH GREAT SPEED AND AGILITY—FROM THE FRUITFUL DISCUSSION STAGE TO ACTION

team will self-regulate; when the Thinkers get too theoretical, the Doers will drag them back to reality. Likewise, when the Doers get caught up in the minutiae of daily operations, the Thinkers will help lift them out of their ruts! When teams of Thinkers and Doers are bound by honesty and trust, they leverage their collective wisdom to move—with great speed and agility—from the fruitful discussion stage to action.

With everything we've discussed, there remains one of the toughest litmus tests of leadership agility; asking recipients of your services (whether internal customers, employees, or units within the company etc.) for feedback. What do they like about how you treat them? What do they dislike? And, truly agile leaders go beyond the data mined from customer and employee surveys. Truly agile leaders leave the comfort and safety of their offices and get out into the field. Truly agile leaders interact with their customers, in person!

Given that we've devoted a good deal of time during this interview to the topics of culture, honesty, trust and agility, I challenge the leaders who read this to ponder the following: When was the last time you engaged directly with your employees and customers, gathering feedback about your strengths and areas for improvement? And, if you're truly agile, you won't be satisfied with the answers, you'll act on them. 