

Interview with Ben Pring

VP, Head of Thought Leadership & Managing Director - Center for the Future of Work

Episode 10

As a leader, talk is cheap. Action is what counts and practice makes a difference. Below are practical steps to improve performance.

- Broaden the formal and informal groups around you to expand your perspectives. Otherwise, you risk an echo chamber where all you hear are your own opinions and the people around you agreeing to them. You need others in your circle who can help you see your blind spots. Aim to be like Clive Davis, the A&R Executive whose been impacting music and culture for decades because he's smart enough to listen to others. Join a CEO group, expand your advisors, and by all means keep listening to the Frustrated CEO Podcast! 😊
- Create a compelling narrative that aligns your organization around the need to change and engages your people to want to participate. Why do you need to change? What will the journey look like? How will everyone be impacted? What does the promised land look like? Use logic and foresight to make a clear and compelling narrative so employees, stakeholders and shareholders understand why change is necessary, then passionately deliver that message to rally the troops.
- Embrace the art and skill of practicing empathy even if it's not the norm for you or your business. People need to know you care about them and it must be genuine or they'll see right through it. Caring for and about others is what leaders do.
- Consider transforming your physical office space into more of a social space, even going so far as tearing down the cubicles to create space for collaboration to occur. This might have been preposterous in 2019, but the hybrid work models that grew out of the pandemic call for transformational thinking to foster and facilitate as much creativity as possible when your employees are on-site. You need to make it fun, productive and engaging to get the most out of them, and nothing about a cubicle is fun.
- If you haven't already done so, start thinking of yourself as a technology company. Operate under the assumption that everything that can be automated will ultimately be automated, then create a strategy to allay fear of AI and technology in your organization and assess what roles will be impacted and how those employees need to transform to prepare.

Let's Get Practical

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- Separate your ego from what the market really wants! Be cognizant of the consumer of your products and services and always ask if you're creating products, services and experiences THEY want or YOU want. Be humble enough to acknowledge when you need to bring in fresh eyes and new perspectives.
- If you hope to survive in business, do whatever you must to get the next generation of digital talent into your organization. This should cause you to ask tough questions about why you're not attracting them today, because you cannot survive if they're going to your competitors and not to you. Get over your disdain for them, drop the "snowflake" and "participation trophy generation" labels, and recognize how much you need them to help you survive the paring-down of companies that's happening today.
- Examine the investments you've made specifically into talent and technology. Is it appropriately balanced or weighted too heavily in one over the other? Both are equally important, so analyze and rebalance, if necessary. All the talent in the world won't help you if you can't get products to market innovatively in ways your customers can consume them.

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