

Jacob Morgan 03:28

Hello Hello Hello hello, hello, hello. Hello. Hi, how are you? Hello. Thanks for joining. Sure. This is gonna be audio, right? Yeah, we'll just do audio only. So that's why I don't have my camera on. And this is my wife's Zoom account. So ignore the picture. It's a nice picture. I'm turning my camera off. Okay, sounds good. Well, do you have any questions about the podcast that I can answer for you before we jump in? No, let's,

Professor Kanter 05:59

let's, um, I'm looking forward to it. We've had enough delays. Let's jump in.

Jacob Morgan 06:05

Okay, sounds good. Um, so just so you know, I'm gonna reserve maybe the last 10 or 15 minutes of the podcast to focus more on like the action items, what people should do stuff like that. And then the first, you know, 3040 minutes is more kind of educational, informative, and we'll get a lot of to the action items towards the end. Okay. All right. So I'll introduce you really quickly, and then we'll jump in. I'll do a much longer intro later. For now. I'll introduce you as the professor at the Harvard Business School author of 20 books. And your most recent book, I believe, it's called Think outside the building, right? Yes. Okay, cool. So I'll mention all of that, and then I'll introduce you. Great. Okay. Hello, everyone. Welcome to another episode of leading the future of work. My guest today is Rosabeth Moss Kanter, she is a professor of business administration at the Harvard Business School and the author or co author of 20 books, including her most recent one called Think outside the building, how advanced leaders can change the world one smart innovation at a time. Rosa, thank you so much for joining me.

Professor Kanter 07:06

It's it's my total pleasure. It's such a great topic.

Jacob Morgan 07:10

It is yes. So I have so much to talk to you about. But first, give us a little bit of background information about yourself. Maybe take us back to your younger years. How did you get to where you are now? Being at Harvard.

Professor Kanter 07:26

So I have always wanted to influence leaders to make it a better world, which sounds like a little bit of a cliché. But that's it's true. I feel in fact, I feel right now, there's a big world to fix. And we need all the leaders we can get to fix it. Because by itself, it's only there are many problems that just go unsolved, or get worse. So that's what leaders do. Leaders do turnarounds, leaders solve problems, leaders make fixes. And I've always been fascinated by that.

Jacob Morgan 08:07

And then what about when you were when you were younger? Is this something that you knew you wanted to do when you were a child? You always just focused on influencing and trying to drive change?

Professor Kanter 08:17

Oh, yeah, absolutely. Since I was young, I wanted to inspire people. I wanted to motivate people, I wanted people to do something about the wrongs in the world. And today, I feel even more fired up about it. Because there's such a litany of, of problems. There's so many things that people find overwhelming. And so I'm looking for those steps that leaders can take and what kind of leadership is required to really solve problems.

Jacob Morgan 08:55

Yeah, yeah. Well, good for you for figuring that out. At such a young age. I think when I was younger, I wanted to be a trolley car driver or maybe even a trash truck driver. So

Professor Kanter 09:06

well, well, noble ambitions, but no, I, it may have had to do with wanting to have a lot of power and influence. But um, I did feel that way from a young age and I kept pursuing it.

Jacob Morgan 09:20

Well, what are you focusing on these days at Harvard? I mean, obviously, you're teaching what's your, your focus on and what are you teaching students in today's environment? Well,

Professor Kanter 09:31

in today's environment, as I said, the issue about big problems plagues us all. So there are a variety of existential problems like climate change. So I'm making my contribution to that topic, through new research on climate action and cities, which turns out to be all about leadership. It's not so much about what kind of infrastructure to build we know, technically what a lot of the solutions are, it's about how we motivate people, inspire them to take action and get the right people to talk to each other so that they can set agendas and make progress. So climate is one big issue. And I know, people really care about that, in fact, young people are actually tired of having the generations that came before them say, All right, we're counting on you to solve the problem. They're tired of that. They want to say what are you doing? So that's one racial justice is another one. Organizations that are equitable and fair, how we recover from the pandemic, and keep people spirits up. I mean, name it in my latest book, people thought I had a crystal ball. Because the first chapter, which went to press in 2019, by the way, starts out by having this long list of conflicts and health disparities and education. And pandemics that fly to us on airplanes I was in 2019, we didn't even know we were going to have COVID. But we've known about these things for a long time, and I get very impatient, I want to say, why aren't we doing something? And we can only do something if we think differently. And we mobilize a different set of leaders. And, you know, conflicts of war. I never, I mean, I wasn't predicting that Russia would invade Ukraine. I mean, these are kind of downer topics. My optimism, though, comes from the feeling that if we get started and we start doing, we can have the optimism of activism.

Jacob Morgan 11:54

Yeah, I like that attitude. So these are all subjects that you're you're teaching you've you've designed courses around, the more these subjects that come up during your courses that you teach.

Professor Kanter 12:03

Well, no, I'm teaching cases, we write cases at Harvard Business School, and we study the situation. And the students put themselves in the shoes of leaders. So I have a lot of conventional cases. So called inside the building cases, about companies, cases about turnarounds, whether in I have sports teams, I have businesses, but recently, I've been writing and teaching cases about solving these bigger problems, because that's an ambition that our students at Harvard have many of the younger generation have. And one of the reasons they want to start their own and lead their own enterprise is because they want to use it to solve problems, or they want to have a different set of values and goals than the old bureaucracy of the past. So yes, I'm I'm teaching about that. We have special programs for executives, and I'm teaching this to a set of executives that are rising leaders in US cities from all over the all over the country.

Jacob Morgan 13:22

And I know you've been teaching for a while. Can you talk a little bit about how has what you're teaching changed over the years? In other words, if you were to look back what we were teaching, or what you guys were teaching at Harvard, I don't know 510 1520 years ago. Are you seeing the topics in beings? are? Are there some common elements there? Or is it just completely different stuff?

Professor Kanter 13:46

Yeah, well, I mean, so far in the conversation, I haven't cracked jokes or been funny. And I tend to be very funny when I speak. But these are very serious things and very serious times. One of the things has changed that's changed is students ambitions. I mean, students really feel that they can make a difference. And we stress that and we now admit people for leadership potential, not just did they do a great job in accounting classes, and were they fantastic fraternity brothers in like the army or navy if they have fraternities but fraternity brothers on campus. So we have a whole different approach in which we're trying to reflect the world that we want our students to lead and we we look for leadership more than test scores, or quantitative. And I started a program across all of Harvard, which has been absolutely fantastic for later stage leaders, leaders who were transitioning from their income earning years to their next years of service. And it's been and wildly popular? Because people later in life say, What have I made my life? And why can I tackle some of these problems, and they often have a lot of skill. They also often have a lot of arrogance, you know, they feel they can do anything. So we sometimes have to hold them down a little bit. So it's really a different environment today. We don't have people who who want to come just to learn about how to read a balance sheet. They want to know instead about impact investing, you know, how to make money while investing in social good. That's a big change.

Jacob Morgan 15:41

Yeah, it seems like a, the, I don't want to call it the like the consciousness, but the behaviors, the attitudes, the values of, of what students are expecting, and what they believe in themselves has changed. Because like you said, it's no longer about test scores. I mean, I remember when I was in college, literally, it was about test scores. And if you do a good job on your test, you know, you you pass, and that was the primary focus. And it seems like over the last 15 years or so there's been a big shift, I hope, to teaching people to learn how to learn towards really helping them understand how they can drive change and make an impact. So it's, it's a positive thing.

Professor Kanter 16:24

Yeah, I mean, you said it very well. Um, we're trying to teach people to use judgment. And that's one reason we use case studies cases have wonderful, their stories, you can put yourself in the situation, there's no one correct answer, you can debate the topic. And so what you're learning is judgment. And then you're learning the perspective of a lot of other people that you're with to. So we are all about discussion. We don't do anything that is the old multiple choice test. But remember, I'm talking about a business school, a professional school of graduate school, undergraduates, too, we tend not to do multiple choice or any of that. But in some classes, you have to learn the facts. But what are the facts about leadership? You know, there's some truths of history, although those are being debated today. But for leadership, it's judgment, and its presence. And it's the ability to make your case and inspire other people. So they want to go where you want them to go.

Jacob Morgan 17:31

Yeah, yeah. Well, that kind of ties well, and that I was going to ask you, which is how do you actually define the word leader? So you know, if somebody comes to you, and they're, they're like, You know what, Roosevelt High? I don't know what that means. I've never heard that phrase before. How do you explain what it means to be a leader? Or what leadership is to someone?

Professor Kanter 17:53

Oh, so it's a really great question that gets, because I don't spend a lot of time a lot of time defining it. I just know it when I see it. And there's a lot of that, by the way, no. But leaders are able to mobilize other people to take action. It's not the actions that leaders take themselves is that they mobilize other people to take action, people want to follow them. And so it's not necessarily the person with the big title, or the big office. It is people who in that situation can inspire and motivate and mobilize others, get them on their feet, wanting to move and do something. And in every work team, some people emerge as leaders, they're more energetic. Other people defer to their judgment. Other people want to hear what they have to say. And they may not be the one with the fancy title. Although I would imagine that if they do that long enough, they will eventually get a fancy title. But they make things happen. They make a difference. I used to say, because when I was studying sports teams, in lieu long, losing streaks, and long winning streaks, and then how leaders turned it around, from losing to winning, and I began to realize that that's the only time leaders make a difference. Once you have the momentum of success, and everybody knows what they're supposed to do, and you have a strategy, then you don't really need leaders, leaders are the ones that can break a negative cycle. Leaders are ones that can stop you from losing and move you to a culture where you can win where you can succeed. And that's when we need leaders most when there are problems when we need to turn around. That's what great coaches do. I remember that President Clinton once said that he would never be seen as a great president. And we could pause there and say, maybe there were lots of reasons. But he said, I'll never be seen as a great president, because I wasn't president at a time of crisis. So I couldn't solve problems. It was prosperity. We were at peace in the world. We were getting the internet, we were having a global economy. So I'll never be seen as a great leader.

Jacob Morgan 20:31

That's very interesting. Yeah. And I love that, because oftentimes, we don't think of that's what leadership is, we always think of leadership as growth and more money in the business is flourishing.

But to your point, I think the real leadership shows when we have times of crisis tragedy, something like the pandemic that we've been going through, and, you know, the issue in Ukraine, with Russia, and then so much other stuff that's out there.

Professor Kanter 20:54

Yeah, I mean, that that definitely separates the leaders from many everybody else. I mean, just to not to be on a down note here. But just to take Ukraine for a minute. A lot of people were very skeptical about a comedian, being elected President of Ukraine, boy, has he proven to be a leader, he is willing to be out there in front, he dresses like the people, he goes on zooms like we are all over the world, to get other people to contribute to Ukraine, and he's done so much for mood and morale, that we don't know what's going to happen. But so far, they've really hung in there. And that requires somebody that pumps you up, gives you confidence. And I think that's what leaders do leaders give you confidence in advance of victory. They make you feel that it's possible to win. And therefore, it's not that feeling that causes you to win. It's the effort you put in and leaders inspire that effort.

Jacob Morgan 22:06

Yeah, I love that. I mean, most people, I think they assume that the whole conflict with Ukraine would be over in a week, maybe two weeks. And here we are months later. And you know, that they're still fighting and still holding on. It's precisely because a lot of the reasons that you mentioned being able to kind of motivate and inspire people want them to keep fighting. It's interesting, because in to your point earlier, you said that you oftentimes don't really define leadership, you kind of know it when you see it. And a couple of years ago, I worked on a book called The future leader, and I interviewed 140 CEOs. And one of the things I asked them was to define leader and leadership. And what I find fascinating is I got very similar responses in terms of most of the CEOs said, oh, you know, nobody's really asked me that, or I haven't really taken time to think about that, which I find very interesting, because these are CEOs of multibillion dollar companies responsible for the lives of hundreds of 1000s of well, millions of employees collectively. And here, they are not thinking about how to define leader and leadership. And the inner of the responses that I got back from a lot of these CEOs, there were some common themes in there. But the responses were very different. Some CEOs focused very much on the growth of a business. Other CEOs focus more on kind of a human aspects of work. But the most fascinating thing for me is that all these CEOs are still running multibillion dollar companies, yet they have different definitions of what it means to be a leader. Have you thought about or explored that at all? Like, is there a right or wrong definition? Or is it just a very subjective thing for all of us.

Professor Kanter 23:38

So I'm not sure that all of those CEOs of billion dollar companies were necessarily even leaders themselves. Some of them may have had a really good strategy and a great product. And so there's a lot of momentum, whether or not you have people leading, but I know other CEOs, I know them really well. I worked with them. For example, a former CEO of Procter and Gamble, in fact, several former CEOs of Procter and Gamble, they thought about leadership all the time. They thought about cultivating it, in their young recruits, they thought about cultivating, cultivating it in their managers, and they would define it in terms of a sense of purpose and meaning, always questioning what you were doing. Was it good for the ultimate consumer? What was the purpose behind it? What are your values? How do you treat people do you treat them with respect, so it was very human, but it was also oriented toward

setting up a culture and so that culture would help them make the right business decisions. So in that sense, leaders are about creating the culture of an organization or the culture of a country. And then from that stems all kinds of actions like they encourage their people that People come up with innovations. The people talk closely to customers and hear, hey, there's a need, we're not satisfying. And they created a new product. So the business stuff tends to fall out of the culture. And if you ask a lot of leaders today, maybe not at the time you were doing your book, but I know today, if you ask a lot of leaders more and more or more CEOs and mean, CEOs, I don't want to say they're exactly the same thing. If you ask a lot of CEOs, a lot of them will say that the job of a leader is to create the culture, and then let other people run with it. It's to empower people to take action, because you can't possibly make every decision yourself at the top. In fact, when you know, there's a little rise of authoritarian leaders today not so good. We'll see. We'll see how long they last in this time. When employees and young people all want voice, they want to speak up, they want to do it themselves. They want their own ideas to be heard. You know,

Jacob Morgan 26:11

you also brought up something else interesting, which is why I mentioned these CEOs. And you said, Well, you know, I'm sure a lot of these CEOs maybe had a good strategy, and they had a good plan, but they weren't leaders, which actually is an interesting point. So how do a lot of people get into these positions? If they're not leaders? Can you talk a little bit about how like what the conventional criteria was to get ahead inside of organizations? And is that changing today?

Professor Kanter 26:38

Well, it's it yes, it's changing a bit. But immediately when you said that, somebody flashed into my mind, that I wouldn't necessarily say is a leader, fully, but has enough of it in him that he can collect other people in his fold, and also have brilliant ideas. Sometimes you just have a brilliant idea, and you're persistent with respect to that idea. And then you have to surround yourself with leaders, the person who came to mind is Elon Musk. Because he had a brilliant, he's had brilliant ideas. And so he's managed to surround himself with people who sometimes have skills that he doesn't have. Because he doesn't seem to be to always exercise the best judgment, he seems to upset people inside Tesla. He certainly upset people at Twitter will sue. When has we talked today, I don't know what's going to happen on the Twitter story yet. But some Silicon Valley people just have a truly brilliant idea. So Mark Zuckerberg, a Harvard student, that he was Harvard dropout, had a brilliant idea. And he had a couple of people who really helped him move the idea forward. And one of them Sheryl Sandberg, was often smoothing feathers and doing a lot of the leadership tasks within Facebook. Now she's in some trouble too, because nothing lasts forever. So you can if you have a brilliant enough idea, and you attract people, because of the power of the idea, you can have surround yourself with people who will make up for your inadequacies. But I'm also thinking about this as a kind of vaguely interesting story. It's in Canada, a company that a bank, that's a cooperative, and many banks and insurance companies are actually cooperatives, they're owned by their members, and so forth. And so to become CEO of the bank, this was in a very large bank, this woman had to be elected CEO. It wasn't like just having somebody above her who loved her wanted to promote her, or starting the bank. No, she had to be elected. And so there were seven men and her who were had to be elected by people who were chosen by the bank branches. And one of the people was the favorite of the former CEO, she won anyway. And she won by creating a vision of what they could do together, that satisfy the needs and

interests of people in the branches, spoke eloquently about it, and went around and made a relationship with every single person. So you know, it's kind of like being a politician. I mean, many people become CEOs without having ever had to learn those skills. Because somebody above them likes them or think they look alike or something and wants to promote them. That's the way it used. To be UGA, by on favoritism.

Jacob Morgan 30:04

Does that still work now?

Professor Kanter 30:06

Well, less often because there are so many things that can go wrong, that if you're just there because you were the chosen successor, it doesn't always work. Yeah. And, um, you know, the children who take on take over from their parents, you just, you just can't tell in family businesses and other businesses, you know, sometimes people are short lived, because that's not enough. They have to be able to move forward. And the problems, whether it's customer problems, supply chain problems, angry customers, because they can't get your product. Those those problems require somebody at the top who really understands what I keep saying the same thing. Modify, mobilize, inspire.

Jacob Morgan 31:00

Yeah. Okay, so it sounds like you wouldn't classify Elon Musk as a leader, according to your definition. He's one of those people. To your point, he had a really brilliant idea. You got the right people around him. But he would not. You wouldn't say he's a leader.

Professor Kanter 31:19

So we'll see what what he does from here. I mean, he certainly picks fascinating investments, and he has enough money that he can go into space. Now Jeff Bezos is a little different, despite Amazon having a lot of problems now with, with Union drives, etc, etc. Amazon grew because Jeff Bezos could attract people, the ideas kept growing. And his successor is somebody who happens to be at Harvard Business School alone. But somebody who worked for the company a very long time, and has a somewhat warmer touch than Bezos had. But people really wanted to work at a company with somebody that brilliant, who gave them so many opportunities. But now Amazon also has to become a gentler software company or they won't find anybody to work. That's why they're doing all this. television and video, internet and facade advertising about family leave, imagine that. They're having people come to work and tell them from the beginning, you can have multiple weeks of parenting leave, and they show men with their babies, and they're talking about their wages. They used to try to be the cheapest, and they're not anymore. So they're trying to foster a culture that attracts people.

Jacob Morgan 32:49

It's interesting. You reminds me of, you know, Microsoft was Ballmer and Microsoft with Satya and you know, you. I wonder if you could argue the same thing with Steve Ballmer leader because he or even Jack Welsh, for that matter, because you hear some of the stories of Steve Ballmer and Jack Welsh, and they sounded like I mean, I don't want to say evil, but they sounded like really frickin mean people that they were running these multibillion dollar companies and people wanted to work at GE and they wanted to work at Microsoft. And now you see, you know, Satya Nadella, totally different CEO. But I

think a lot more people would look at Satya and say, Okay, that's a leader compared to Steve Ballmer, who might say, I mean, I don't even know how people would describe Steve Ballmer, if they would say he's a leader or not.

Professor Kanter 33:34

Well, I say executives, I just try not to use the word leader, just because somebody is number one in a hierarchy. Yeah, because Ballmer was also running the company into the ground and people were leaving Microsoft in droves. Maybe they had wanted to work there at one point, but they were leaving under Ballmer and they made some product mistakes. So yes, Satya Nadella, totally different. Totally different tone. Totally different animal. I would say Jack Welch. He used to be lionized, but that's in a different era. Now. These people are remembering that he used to be called neutron Jack. And he also ran GE into the ground. His successor Jeff Immelt inherited a company that was going downhill fast. And so sometimes you it's very hard to turn around. So the the Jack Welch kept doing more of the same and you know, they seem to be doing well but it turned out they really weren't and you know, another thing I found, um, other researchers had seen this, then you can sometimes tell that accompany or community or a situation is running downhill, like headed for bankruptcy 10 years before it happens. Wow. Yeah, yeah. Isn't that Amazing. Yeah, the signs are there in the culture. People are showing up late to work, calling in sick, people are going passive. They're not innovating very much. And you can often see those signs of running downhill 10 years in advance. So, um, leaders take those situations, and they turn it around, we used to say the turnarounds that was another old fashioned idea about leadership that is a turnaround leader was somebody who cut costs, cut expenses, so that they have because of a problem when you're having problems is the money, you don't have enough money. That doesn't work. In fact, then somebody else has to come in and repair the culture. You know, one of my favorite recent cases, that's a warm, cuddly case, is Sesame Street. You know, everybody knows Sesame Street, all those lovely little furry Muppets? Well, it was bleeding money, it wasn't going to be able to make any more programs, it was stuck in old thinking. And they got a new CEO. And he turned it around by creating a culture of open communication and trying new things. That's the other thing leaders do. They empower people to try what was previously seen as impossible. And miraculously, they got new deals, they did a deal with HBO to fund new episodes, and then they'd be shown for free in public on public broadcasting later, they went on to do miraculous things. This is very recently, they now have the street actually named Sesame Street in Midtown Manhattan. Wow. Because because they had done such a good job. They were getting all these accolades. And so anything can run down, including nice little furry Muppets. And leaders don't just cut costs, they figure out where to invest. They figure out who has potential, they give them bigger responsibilities. They encourage them, they open up communication. That's the culture of success.

Jacob Morgan 37:29

Yeah, I like that. And I also really liked that you said that you differentiate between an executive versus a leader because I think that's a it's an important point, because somebody can be a leader who's mid level, or somebody could be an executive, you know, CEO, but not a leader. So to your point earlier, it's not just about the title that you have, it's about the work and the impact that you're able to do.

Professor Kanter 37:50

Yeah, that's true. I mean, look at the impact is a really great word. You know, when we were choosing people who we honored by bringing them to Harvard as advanced Leadership Fellows, later stage leaders, we would pick people who were doers, they had proven, they weren't necessarily the number one person, but they had proven that they could convince other people mobilize other people create a culture where people work together as a team to accomplish something big.

Jacob Morgan 38:23

Yep. Yeah, no, I love that. Well, if you compare those two, I mean, what's more important, because some people might be thinking, Well, is it more important for me to be a leader? Or to have a great idea? I mean, obviously, if you can have both, that's great. But where do you see more of that value? Because you have people like Elon Musk, who I think a lot of people would agree with you. They're not sure about that leadership potential. But, you know, brilliant person, amazing ideas, able to bring the right people around him. But you know, maybe not. A lot of people in classifies a leader, what's more important leadership or the idea?

Professor Kanter 39:00

Well, you know, that's a, that's a good question, hard to answer. Because, ultimately, if we're going to solve big problems, we need both. Because no one person, no matter how great a leader, they are, do it all themselves. I'll tell you somebody that I still hold up as one of the greatest leaders of recent years, the late Nelson Mandela in South Africa. I mean, he turned around a country that was going to explode in conflict. And he had been in prison for 27 years. They let him out of prison. He was the first democratically elected president of South Africa, and quite a hero. And he kept encouraging the people he would say even about the former enemies, he would say they're going to come right in the end. He did something amazing. Many people may have seen the movie Invictus, with Morgan Freeman playing Nelson Mandela. Well, the all white rugby team was playing in a global match. And you know, they were the former oppressors, and there were no black people. And Mandela went to the game, wearing their uniform and walked onto the field wearing their uniform to congratulate them. He was inclusive. He embraced everyone, because he needed everybody. And I knew somebody who was in London, when Mandela went to London and gave a speech in Trafalgar Square, encouraging all the South African expats, including leading bankers to come back and do it in South Africa. He said, because we need you, we can't do it without you. And so what a great leader does is they know they can't do it without everybody. The great leader is not necessarily the person with the best ideas. They know how to find the best ideas.

Jacob Morgan 41:03

And I completely agree with you on that as well. Have you ever looked at what causes I don't want to say downfall but leaders to lose track? Because for example, you mentioned Sheryl Sandberg earlier who was you know, of course, Chief Operating Officer at Facebook. Now she's in the news, because she apparently or allegedly appropriated money from the company for, you know, personal expenses and stuff like that. And we've heard stories over the years of leaders who, apparently, you know, top of their game, and then they get derailed off course. Why does that happen? So if you look at, for example, Sheryl Sandberg case, do you see any common patterns on how great leaders get derailed or pushed off course and why that happens?

Professor Kanter 41:51

No, that is, that is such a good, such a good topic to look at.

Jacob Morgan 41:57

She's like she doesn't need she's got more than enough money. And so have lots of other CEOs out there are leaders. Yeah, you know, no reason.

Professor Kanter 42:05

They may have stayed too long. I mean, I would say that what happens with a lot of CEOs like Jack Welch, they stay too long, you know, had they stepped down a few years earlier, they wouldn't have necessarily left such a mess. I know only one out of all the great CEOs I know. I know only one that has managed to continue to reinvent himself. He's the head, he's in Paris, he's the head of a global marketing and communications firm number three in the world. For the most part, that's because he loves to learn. And because he also has a personal relationship with the clients. Otherwise, CEOs stay too long. They don't know how to step aside, let a new era come in and circumstances change. So the things that made you great at one point, don't necessarily make you great in another. I know, we started with the big problems of the world, like climate change, and racial justice and Ukraine and all of that. You can not know what to do when faced with problems well out of your control. That's why the title of my newest book is Think outside the building, you have to think beyond talking to the same group of cronies doing everything the same way. Thinking about your industry, your sector, I mentioned the turnaround of Sesame Street that happened in part, because they could, this nonprofit could make a deal with a for profit, commercial television, channel, HBO. So that was that took getting out of your own thinking. And when people are in positions of power, which you are when you're a CEO, the power can go to your head, and you begin to think you already know everything. You have all the answers, everybody comes to you to get the answer. So you stop learning. That's one thing. You stop being curious. You stop listening to new people the best I can think of some other really great leaders among CEOs, who would spend a lot of time learning from young people. When John Chambers was CEO, Cisco. Great tech company. He was CEO for Chairman for a very long time. He used to get a teenager in the office of the chairman every year. Now that sounds kind of funny, but of course, when you think a teenager could be a 19 year old Stanford Engineering whiz, but still, that attitude that I don't have all the answers, there's new knowledge I have to learn it. That's What Keeps Leaders refreshed. Otherwise, I think people can just be in a position way too long. I am a believer in term limits for CEOs as well as others.

Jacob Morgan 45:13

Well, I only have around the 15 minutes left, I wanted to use this last 15 minutes or so to specifically focus on the action items, the things that people should be doing the things that you are telling leaders to do. So why don't we start there? And when you just kind of think about all the changes that are gotten going on in the world of work, and and people out there who want to be better, more successful leaders? Where do you where do you begin in terms of how to think differently? Because I know in your book, when you talk about how to be an advanced leader, one of the themes that you talk about it's you requires additional skills? So what are those skills that have an advanced leader? And how do you put them into practice to learn them?

Professor Kanter 45:55

Yeah, well, I mean, since you know, we're back at workplaces, and not necessarily these huge problems, the world, but those use huge problems to the world come inside your workplace, because your people experience them. So your people are the ones who experienced the terrible issues with childcare, for example, or health disparities during COVID. And so one skill that leaders need to cultivate is empathy is really understanding how people are feeling and being able to respond to it. You know, it's like that II in CEO should become empathy, Chief empathy officer, checking in with people knowing how they're doing, communicating often. And that keeps you from being blindsided, that is a skill that's really worth cultivating. And again, I know, great CEOs leading great workplaces who would make a point of going, in fact, during COVID, even I know one who still went to the offices around the world, even though nobody was in the office, but he was there. And he would talk to some of the essential workers who would be around. And once in a while there would be a couple of people, but it was the symbolism of really caring. So you show that you really care. And there was a little bit of resentment on the part of employees about CEOs that had two or three homes and they could be working remotely easy for them, no commutes they were by the beach or by in the mountains. So he kind of show you care, and you really care about the people. And that's what Amazon is doing with all of its ads about a human workplace. But of course, they're also being threatened with a union. So that's one thing I've

Jacob Morgan 47:59

practiced that by the way that the empathy piece, how do you get good at that?

Professor Kanter 48:04

You check in with people all the time and say, How are you doing? And you learn from not necessarily everybody, you might have hundreds of 1000s of people, but you might only have 200 people, you learn the names of their children. You know, there's a nice task for somebody who's really smart, memorize the names of the children of certain sample employees who are leaders to other employees. So those are some things you can do you know, things about people, you, you inquire about their situation, you are empathetic about their transportation problems. And even though your company might be they're not there to solve climate or transportation problems, you are ready, when there's extreme heat in your cities to say come to the office and cool down in the air conditioning. Bring your kids after work. Because it's a cool place. I mean, there many things, little symbolic things. It goes a long way. So that's that's one new skill.

Jacob Morgan 49:14

Okay. Go for.

Professor Kanter 49:18

That wasn't say learning, because curiosity, and learning new things. We have a world that's changing every five minutes and seems and you have to know what's going on and you can't have the information filtered from lots of other people. So that's a second one. You have to educate yourself. You have to have people around you who have knowledge about the new developments in the world and you have to track many more things going on. You might appoint people to track them, but you might meet more often and hear about them. And you might encourage your people to do something

different. That indicates that they're learning there's the CEO of a large, a large telecom company, who tells his direct reports every week, do something new and different, and come and tell us about it. And so you open people's minds. So that's a second, very important thing to do. And then you focus a lot more on partnerships. A lot of companies turn inward, you got to partner not only with your own employees, but you partner with lots of companies outside. At the beginning of the pandemic, a couple of people had this idea of a great partnership to have a private sector response to the COVID pandemic in March 2020, they called a few friends and overtime, they had 1000 companies, who signed up and started doing things like changing manufacturing, to make personal protective equipment. While that was very inspiring to the employees. And there's going to be a lot more of that these coalitions and partnerships, that's the only way you deal with big problems. And the thing you do is you let your employees be part of this, too. People want to volunteer to make a difference. They really do. You know, I started out by saying, since I was a child, I had this desire somehow inculcated in me now, just about everybody is until you give employees a chance, sometimes on company time, to volunteer to make a difference. You show what the company is doing, you show that you have partnerships with leading community organizations, you're going to do something about clean energy, for example, and you let your employees participate in that highly motivated. That's energizing, instead of people going passive being tired, they can't wait to get off zoom, if they're not going to work yet. This makes them want to come to work.

Jacob Morgan 52:08

What if you're not in a leadership position, and you want to be there because some of the things, for example, building partnerships, or you talked about what leaders can do to create that culture on their teams. But what if you're not a leader? Maybe you're an entry level? Or you're just beginning your career where you don't have that leadership role yet? Is there anything that you can do if you're not in that position of power to better focus on becoming a leader?

Professor Kanter 52:31

Yeah, I love that question. Because I'm often asked that question through the years. And one thing I will say is, there are always some things you can do. You can mobilize your peers, you can find people who feel the same way that you do about an issue. And you can talk to them. And you can create a positive idea, not a destructive protest, but a positive idea. And you can take it to the bosses and shop it around. You can start a book club, anybody can say, Let's have lunch together and discuss a book or discuss the situation. And that's also positive and productive. And you can feel in doing that, that you have efficacy, you are taking action. Because of that you're more energetic, and you also get noticed, because you're the one who's making that happen. If it's a decent company, sometimes they want you to just be in your coop your cubicle, and never do anything else. That's not necessarily a company you want to stay with very long. I have a recent student who my adore, who is a Latina woman work and she was working for an investment bank. And you know, they work long hours, she wanted to make sure that they recruited more Latinos, and that it was a favorite and a favorite environment for them. And on her own, despite the long hours, she would volunteer, she would call meetings of other people of her heritage, they would talk about what changes they might suggest they invited bosses to come to their meetings. And boy was she noticed, I mean, she really had a lot of potential, she got awards, and it was all very positive and productive. I know other people who've tried that a woman in a pharmaceutical company who did it in a highly hostile and oppositional way. You know, let's get

together and tell the bosses what's wrong. Well, you know, that didn't fly. But my former student who was so positive and say we want to help and we want to help make this a friendly environment for our counterparts. help you recruit, we'll help in any way that's positive that you can do at any level.

Jacob Morgan 55:06

Yeah. And I like that you said, worst case scenario, if you're not a part of a company where that culture is embraced, it's time to get out. I always tell people, I think the worst thing that you can do is nothing. You know, if you're, if you're part of a toxic environment, and you just sit there and complain about it, then you're just as guilty as everybody else, if you just

Professor Kanter 55:24

you're also you're also helping make it more toxic. Because then it becomes a culture of complaining and whining. And where nobody says anything positive. That's pretty depressing. Who wants to work there?

Jacob Morgan 55:38

Yeah. Well, any other action items that you can think of, for people, you know, it, let's say people just finished listening to this podcast and thinking, you know, what, I want to be a better leader, or I want to become a leader. Anything else that we didn't talk about, or mentioned, as far as what people should either be doing or thinking about?

Professor Kanter 55:57

Well, you know, get into training programs, but particularly ones where there's a project you can do get to meet people outside of your own work unit, build a network, and make that network as broad and wide as possible. Because leaders can tap people because they get mentioned. So make sure that you're known to other people, make sure you know them, and return the favor, speak up positively about people you've met, and then let them speak up positively about you. And then you get noticed. And you know, I again, I want to come back to I know this is about work, but to the big problems in the world, because they do plague us, you know, join a group or network, maybe outside the company, maybe inside the company that is concerned about climate, and bring what you learn back to the workplace for informal conversations, people will see you as somebody who can teach who can bring ideas, and those are all traits of leadership.

Jacob Morgan 57:07

Yeah, those are, those are great ones. And I think people can really put those into into practice. I like that you mentioned get into training programs, because I feel like a lot of people think that they only get into training programs when it's offered to them. But being more proactive and asking to be part of those training programs and finding them and seeking them out, I think is something a lot of people don't do a good enough job of, and maybe even a worst case scenario. If your company turns you down, for whatever reason, you can also turn to things like YouTube. And I think there are a lot of free resources out there for people who want to become better leaders, and they can just be more proactive.

Professor Kanter 57:47

I love that idea of being proactive. I sometimes say that any action is better than none. Yeah. That you can't sit in wait to be chosen. And you have to put yourself forward and volunteer there. Oftentimes when there's a little bit extra that needs to be done. I'm not saying volunteer to make the coffee, but you can volunteer to find something out. You can volunteer to report back about something to the workgroup, and you'll stand out because of that, and besides that, you'll learn.

Jacob Morgan 58:23

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. Well, we are out of time. Rosabeth, where can people go to learn more about you? Anything that you want to mention for people to check out?

Professor Kanter 58:35

Well, thank you. I'm on Twitter at Rosabeth Cantor with a K. and N He K and TR. I'm probably all over the internet. But I don't look, because I only look forward. That's why I had trouble with your childhood question. I only look forward. That's another by the way good attitude that leaders can have. Don't spend a lot of time belaboring the past. Just look ahead. So I have a lot of books. I'm all over the web. Twitter is a really good place to find me. Try to tweet something hopefully and inspirational nearly every day. So I wish your listeners really good luck. And I greatly enjoyed the conversation.

Jacob Morgan 59:21

Yeah, me too. And I love that advice of only looking forward. Last Last little nugget there to throw it people. Were Thank you. Thank you very much for taking time out your day. I really, really appreciate it.

Professor Kanter 59:32

My pleasure. And good luck to you with your work helping shape the future of work.

Jacob Morgan 59:39

Thank you. Thank you so much. So I'll send you a link. As soon as everything goes live. We'll email it to you and your team and we'll promote it everywhere.

Professor Kanter 59:46

Wonderful. So we on Twitter, and other places. So thank

Jacob Morgan 59:50

you. All right, my pleasure. Have a great rest of the day.

Professor Kanter 59:53

Thank you same to you.

Jacob Morgan 59:55

Bye bye