

# Seth Godin On Why Work Is So Bad & How We Can Make It Better

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Hey, it's Jacob, I got a question for you, should you be vulnerable at work? What if I told you the answer to that question is no. I'm very excited to announce that my brand new book leading with vulnerability is coming out in just a few months. And I started out with a very simple question is vulnerability for leaders the same as it is for everybody else? It turns out, it's not. I interviewed over 100 CEOs and organizations around the world and teamed up with leadership firm DDI, to survey 14,000 employees around the world to try to figure out how can leaders approach vulnerability into the right way. So that it allows them to unlock the potential of those around them to drive performance to lead through change, and to create trust. If you want to get access to this book, it's coming out October 3, I'm going to have a lot of really cool bonuses for people who pre order a copy, you can learn more at [lead with vulnerability.com](https://leadwithvulnerability.com). Again, that is [lead with vulnerability.com](https://leadwithvulnerability.com). I hope you grab a copy of the book and take advantage of all the preorder bonuses that I have coming out, including five exclusive interviews with CEOs for the book. And these include the CEOs of American Airlines, G, Edward Jones, and a couple others. I'm also going to be hosting a private webinar, and also giving away a couple chapters of the book before it actually comes out again, go to [lead with vulnerability.com](https://leadwithvulnerability.com). And now let's get right into the show. We have become the product and the victim. I don't know what you're talking about stuff. You said employees have too much power at the beginning, I'm not quite sure if it's a good thing or a bad thing was to just start by saying employees are asking for more choice. It seems like employees are asking for more they want more we need managers. Is it bad to be called a manager today? I might be partly guilty of that. It's hard to imagine how much changed? Has there even been changed? The way to move forward is to look back to things as people seek significance, are you giving them a chance?

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Here, everyone, it's Jacob. And today my conversation is with none other than Seth Godin. And Seth Godin has actually been a guest on the show before a couple years ago. And set this somebody that I have, I guess you could say we've known him for around 15 or so years, we've exchanged a bunch of emails we've never met in person or anything like that. But the first email that I sent to set over 15 years ago, and I was telling him about a company I was working with at the time, and how unhappy I was and how miserable I was. And I'll never forget one of the emails I sent him, the response back from him came. And he said something like, Wow, sounds like you should quit and go to your own thing.

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Funnily enough, I ended up quitting and doing my own thing. So yeah, I've been in touch with Seth for ever since then, sporadically via email, having him on the podcast, stuff like that. So this is a very fun conversation for me, he actually has a new book coming out. It's called the song of significance. And it's all about a, or as he calls it, a new manifesto for teams. And so that's a lot of what we talk about today.

I always learn a lot when I talk to Seth. And our conversation today is pretty, pretty wide ranging, we cover quite quite a few things, including why automation is not always a good thing. And when it can actually be detrimental. And so the difference between, for example, focusing on convenience versus focusing on customisation or experience, we talk about the overall challenge that we're seeing in the world as far as a lack of purpose and meaning, right, it seems like so many people in the world, not just in the corporate world, but also in their personal lives as well. We're struggling for the sense of purpose and meaning and it's making our way into organizations and what impact does that have? Well, so look at how leadership is changing. One of the themes that I've been asking quite a few guests over the past few months is if we're seeing a shift in terms of balance of power. I think a lot of employees have the power in today's world. Is that a good thing? Is it shifting, we talked we touched a little bit about on that as well. We also look at how employees and organizations are letting each other down and what we need to do to fix that relationship. So overall, it's it's a really fascinating conversation, we touch on a little bit of the historical aspects of leadership, how we got to where we are today, what's going on in the world, as far as leadership, the difference between management and leadership, if there even is one and how we can move forward and create organizations where pretty much everybody loves to show up to work each day. So I hope you enjoy this episode with Seth Godin. It is a fantastic conversation. I had a lot of fun with it. Remember that if you subscribe on Apple podcasts, you will get access to

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To add free episodes, early access to new content, and also a bonus episode with Seth Godin, where we talk about where to start. So how do you create these types of teams, we talk about how to create significance. And Seth gives this really awesome piece of advice, which I won't get into, but I'll just give you kind of an idea of it. It's all about cracking the egg.

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Well, why don't we start I think a natural beginning would be the new book. So the the title of it called the song of of significance, why that title of the book and what made you even write this book to begin with.

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So I learned a lot about bees in 2022. And I was stunned by what I learned the beekeeping community is fascinating. Bees are basically human brains inside out. Each B is a neuron, and we can learn an enormous amount about how they interact with each other.

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At the end of a long winter,

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if a beehive has survived the colony which is generally led by the Council of maidens, which are some of the wisest bees in the hive, not the queen will get together and realize that it is possible for them to get to the next level. And what they will do is they will instruct all the younger maidens to go out and collect as much pollen as they possibly can. And they will replenish their honey in just a couple of weeks, they will also let the Queen know that she should lay a new queen egg. Even though a bee colony, a hive can only have one queen at a time. And if conditions are right, soon after that, more than

10,000 Bees will leave the hive within 10 minutes all at once, leaving behind all the honey and all the babies and the new queen, taking the queen with them. They will swarm and leave forever. And this is called the song of increase, Jacqueline Freeman named when I heard the expression, the sound of increase. And I thought about these tiny creatures risking everything to leap and go to a new place. Something inside of me lit up. Because I realized that we built the industrialized world. So we get of comfort and convenience, but also so we could live and so we could thrive and so that we could achieve what we needed to as people. Yeah. And we've been stuck in the song of safety, which is hunkering down. We've been trapped by industrialism, which is working faster and cheaper. We've been seduced by management, which is a con in the long run, because it's about racing to the bottom. And so I wanted to write a rant about the alternative, which is to bring significance to people because in fact, I surveyed 10,000 people in 90 countries around the world and found that that's what everyone wants. They want not to get paid a little more, or to get some days off. What they want is to achieve more than they thought they could to be treated with dignity and respect, to be able to show up in a way that they're proud of. And even though we know that's what we want, we keep not giving it to ourselves. Would you say that we are now entering a new era of leadership, post, pandemic and post all the crazy stuff that's been happening over the past years? Are we entering something new or just going back to the way things used to be?

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You know, there's

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a lot of tradition that says the way to move forward is to look back to things as they were. And I know that you've spoken to my friend Tom Peters recently. Yes, Tom has been talking about this for 25 years, but humans have been doing it for 10,000 and we got seduced by industrialism, by factories by piecework, but several things have happened in the last year that have helped us see what a trap it is. The first is billionaire megalomaniacs who are insisting on treating people with brutality just because they can. I don't know what you're talking about.

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I don't know I don't know who you could possibly be referring to.

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It's just astonishing to me that someone thinks that they can shrink their way to greatness.

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The second is artificial intelligence and the understanding that the steam shovel came from the ditch diggers, but we figured nothing would come for us if we just did our mediocre work in front of our keyboard. But AI has made it clear that mediocre work is easily replaced by something that works for free. And the trauma of the pandemic, which led to what was seen as a crisis of quiet quitting and turnover. But in fact, what really happened is people who had choices made choices

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People have choices said, if you're going to keep treating me like this, if you're going to take attendance, if you're going to make me show up in an office, it's a ghost town, I'll go do something else because I can. And when we add those pieces together, you know, we see this company laying off 5000 people, this one laying off 12,000 people, the very fact that they can lay off 5000 people is a testament to the fact that they've been managing their way forward not leading, because if you are surrounding yourself with people who are concerned about the future, the future of work, the future of themselves, the future of what they make, you don't have 5000 people to lay off, you have a community, and the community just doesn't shard itself like that the community speaks up and makes things better. Yeah. So some interesting trends that you that you mentioned, and I'm part of me wonders how much of it is what's going on in the corporate world, versus how much of it is what's going on outside of the corporate world or in our personal lives, because one of the researchers that I had on my podcast hasn't aired yet is Todd Cashton. And he was telling me, I think it was since the 60s, they there's been this study that's just been looking at the overall well being that, you know, the well being of humans, and that it's been going down for quite a while. And some people say it's been going down mainly from social media, it could have been what's going, you know, how corporations had been treating people, but it's been going down even before the pandemic, it's been going down before a lot of these things have been going on. It seems like everywhere you turn now.

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It just in our personal lives, the well being aspect is struggling, we're looking for community, we're trying to find purpose. We're being torn apart politically, you keep hearing about these debates with woke this woke that ESG. And it's just everything is just being torn apart. And people are, in general, it feels like really struggling. Trying to, it's almost like we're grasping to some sense of like, meaning purpose, I want to be seen, I want to be heard. And a lot of that is not even inside of our corporations. But it's kind of pushing its way in. Have you been noticing that too?

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I have I have a couple of theories. The first one is that one of the younger baby boomers, the boomers have always made everything about themselves. When the Boomers were teenagers, it was Woodstock, or Vietnam. And when the boomers needed to make money, it was Wall Street. And we have hijacked culture. And the boomers are dying. And it's the end of the cycle. And so the boomers are spending a lot of time doing things that boomers do toward the end of that cycle. And there's a whole generation two generations younger, who are watching this gap, because it's now it's their turn. And I think we're seeing that generational shift. And then the second thing is Zig Ziglar, used to talk about the vacuum cleaner salesperson who would ring the doorbell and when you open it, dump a bunch of dirt on your living room floor, and then try to use that as an opportunity to sell you a vacuum cleaner. Well, the smartphone might not be that smart. And there's plenty of data that show that as smartphone usage increases, the amount of junk that's getting dumped on our living room floor goes up. So even if our lives are materially improved, better health care, fewer World Wars, so many other things that are all in the positive direction. It feels terrible. Because we're being reminded constantly, that somewhere, something is wrong. And I think when we put those two things together, plus the fact that media companies make a profit, not by making us feel secure or safe, but by making us feel like something is breaking. They even call it breaking news.

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We have become the product and the victim, and it's hard to find the willpower to turn it off.

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That's part of what we need to do.

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With hybrid work as the new normal, how are you collaborating securely and making sure your data is safe in the cloud AvePoint has your back. AvePoint provides the most advanced platform to optimize SAS operations and secure collaboration. No matter how big your business is or what it does. AvePoint can help you modernize your digital workplace, over 17,000 companies trust AvePoint to rapidly reduce costs, improve productivity, and protect your data with the renowned confidence platform. Visit AvePoint today to get started and learn more. That's AvePoint AVEP o i n t.com

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I'm also curious if you think employees have too much power in today's business world and I haven't

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asking a lot of guests these questions and getting some different responses on it. But it seems to me that there used to be a time where the employer had all the power and they picked when you would show up how you would work, everything that you would do. And the employee would basically have to say, okay, that's fine, I don't have a choice. And now in today's world, it seems like the employees are saying, I want more money, I want more perks, I want equity. This is the kind of business I want to work for. And by the way, I don't ever even want to show up to the office, and I just want to be behind the screen. And it seems and I don't know if you would agree with this, the pendulum swinging too far in the opposite direction, and are the layoffs that we're starting to see part of a rebalancing of that, because it seems like it's not, it's not very sustainable to keep going in that direction. And this is coming from somebody who has written a book on employee experience and putting people first and even sometimes I take a step back. And I'm like, I mean, the stories I hear from my friends who are inside of organizations, they're trying to hire people. And the people that they're trying to hire are saying they want more money than their boss's boss. They want more equity than even they have in the business. And on top of that, it's like, oh, yeah, by the way, I, you know what, I don't even want to come into the office. It's like, are you serious? Like, when did it get to a point where we have to incentivize people to show up to work, because I remember, even for my dad, and even for me, work used to be the incentive. I didn't need an incentive to get into work like money, saving up being able to afford a house, a car payment, having a fit, like that was my incentive. I didn't need external forces to get me to want to come into work like I wanted to work. And I don't know, it just it feels different now, and I'm not quite sure if it's a good thing or a bad thing. Why it's happening, too. It's a great question, I need to parse some of the words, you said employees have too much power at the beginning, I think we need to start by saying employees are asking for more choice. And choice comes with responsibility. And the thing that feels weird to some of us, like you and me is you can't have choice without responsibility now. So let's start with that.

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The word jerk, as we use it comes from Henry Ford, and someone who visited the original Ford factory and said that the people who work there looked like marionettes who were being jerked this way in that. And he wrote that they probably have their wives wind them up with the machine inside of them before they go to work.

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The idea of getting jerked around when you have no choice was something that people accept it as a byproduct of the riches of industrialism. And what has happened is people who now see that they have a choice, whether it's, you know, Upwork, or freelancing, or whatever it is, say, You know what I'd rather you didn't take away my freedom and jerking me around. If you want the privilege of my work, I'm going to change the conditions because I do have options. And the last part of my response is

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just the phrase Human Resources gives itself away. Yeah, humans are not a resource. Humans are the point. The commandant of the Marines 20 years ago, Charles Krulak, wrote

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that the wars of the future are going to be determined by the privates, not the generals. And what Coolock meant was that the frontline person, the worker, who is interacting with the customer, who is changing the user experience, is the whole thing now. And so yeah, they have a lot of power. Everybody in the organization has power. And if you're going to try to shore up your race to the bottom industrial entity, by demanding new compliance from new workers, well, in this last moment, when they have power, they're exercising it. And the alternative is to stop managing and to start leading. And to say, we're going over there, we're doing something of significance. And we want people who want to do that dance with us to join us to sing with us. And if you don't want to come, fantastic, here's the phone number of Facebook got meta, go work for them, right? But this is what we do here. And we're not going to have an enormous team of 40,000 people with pay grades and everyone doing what they're told. We're going to put together a chorus of people who are singing in key and in tune because they care. And there's not a lot of people offering that to the talent and caring folks of the future. And that's why they're responding by making ridiculous demands because they don't want you to say yes.

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So do you think that

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or it sounds almost like the corporate

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machines are kind of getting what they deserve. Like they've they're kind of getting what they asked for reaping what they sow at this point, right? Yeah, they're getting what they asked for. I mean, just to put a finer point on it, I spent the last year as a full time volunteer, organizing the carbon almanac. I didn't get paid a penny, I worked 60 hours a week, I was thrilled, I would do it again. And I had 1900 co authors 300. In the core team that started in 40 countries. Every single person worked for free. We

made a 97,000 word 200 page book, wow. Illustrated, footnoted, written, delivered on time, and 152 days, and not one person made a penny.

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That's possible. That's what this environment we live in now made possible. But as soon as you say, Just come here, and let me expand my ego do what I say. And I'm going to argue with you at every turn about how many hours you work and what you produce. Not a lot of people are going to volunteer for that.

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But what about in some organizations? I get I get you're saying right. And in organizations where

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there is kind of that command and control there is that bureaucracy there is that kind of, you know, show me show me how many hours you're working.

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In those types of environments, it makes complete sense, right? Why employees would be asking for what they want and you know, exercising their choice. But what about an organization's where they have been making change where they have been treating people fairly, where they are creating great environments, where they are trying to put people first. And even in those situations, it seems like it's you know, employees are asking for more they want more. Right, right. So what about for those, it's a great point, what I'm what I'm trying to argue in the book is a simple sentence, let's get real or let's not play. Yeah. And what it means to get real, is, this is the way things are around here. This is your power, your choices and your responsibilities. And if you want to sign up for that, we would love to have you. But what's missing from most of the engagements that are going back and forth, is it feels like window dressing to the new employee. That for example, you know, if you think about it, an institution like automatic, automatic, created WordPress, WordPress powers, more than a third of the entire intranet. They have 2000 people, and they don't use email and they don't have an office. Yeah. And if you want to work it automatic, you sign up for reading and writing culture, you sign up to have done the work to be heard, you sign up to be responsible for what you claim you're going to do and doing it, the number of hours it takes is irrelevant. The number of lines of code you commit per hour is irrelevant. What matters is this is the change we are trying to make didn't get made. If it did, we'll give you more stuff to do. And the other work still needs to get done. I need the water company to deliver water to my house by pipe, I need ups to do what UPS does. That doesn't mean you need to work there. Right. And it also means that the mindset of an industrial entity is going to be different. So Amazon has taken this to ridiculous extreme internal memos and Amazon show that it cost them a third of their annual profit just from turnover last year. And that there are many cities in the United States where people internally at Amazon are worried that every person who could be interested in working at Amazon already has and left.

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That is how much turnover they've got in the factory because the factory jerked people around. And they're not that worried because the robots are coming. But if we're going to build an entity that matters,

we're going to have to make a deal with ourselves. And so what I'm seeing is, workers are handing this to their bosses, bosses are handing this to their workers and say, This is what it would be like around here, if we made a deal with each other. I will not call a Zoom meeting, as a form of taking attendance while I lecture at you for 30 minutes just to make sure you're not out doing the dry cleaning. And in exchange, you will refuse to attend a meeting that waste your time. But you better send me something that matters. Because we have to treat each other differently. It's funny, you mentioned Amazon, I was actually just gave a talk for a large manufacturing company, and I can't remember the city or the town where they said they were having this issue. But they said yeah, and you know, in this particular part of the state, we can't hire employees and I said why not? And they said because Amazon's just paying everybody more and taking everybody and we're not as big as as Amazon and we you know, we can't

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Pay \$10 more per hour. So it's funny to hear you mentioned Amazon.

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It sounds like kind of a core issue then is, it's almost like a relationship. Where if you're in a relationship with somebody, and you're kind of going out on a date with them at the very beginning, and I'm just thinking, you know, when I met my wife, we kind of had those agreements on, you know, what do you care about? What do you value? What are your priorities in life? Where do you want to be in the future. But when it comes to organizations and employees, it's almost like that conversation isn't isn't happening, the company isn't explicitly committing what they're going to do for their people. And the people in turn, are not explicitly committing what they are going to do for the company. And it's kind of like, we have these two parties in there. You know, they're in a room, you turn off the lights, and it's like, All right, go find each other, and everyone's just kind of feeling around. So what would one approach be to just take a step back, and I think Netflix does a pretty decent job of this, or they did, where when you would work for them, they would be very transparent with you at the beginning, when you got a job there, right. And they would say, you're going to work harder than you've ever worked at any other company, we're going to pay you fantastically well, you're going to have wonderful benefits, great perks, you're going to be doing really, really hard stuff. But you will be working a lot. And if you are not prepared to do that, then this is not the company for you. And it almost feels like a lot of organizations out there are not willing to come forward. And be honest about what it's like to work there. And we just put all this fake stuff on the career pages, and everyone loves you. And it's great. And then you start working there, and you get this kind of bait and switch. Yeah. So I mean, I, the late Tony Shea created something extraordinary at Zappos, which scares so many people who do hiring. After you signed up to work at Zappos, there was two weeks of indoctrination and training. And at the end of two weeks, if you were good, they sat you down, and they said, here's a pile of money, I think was \$2,000. Yep. If you quit today, you can have \$2,000.

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And the theory was if you were willing to quit for \$2,000, they didn't want you. Yeah.

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I don't know if any other company



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that's done that or is doing that. But it almost seems like I wonder what would happen if that was just the standard for every corporation? Right? If you you know, it was almost like law, you have to give people two weeks still on a work there? And if not, you give them a \$2,000 check. And how quickly organizations would just change. Right? Their honesty policy about what it's like to work there. Yeah, that's interesting. And you don't hear too much about that anymore. But it was a very interesting policy. And from what I recall, at Zappos, not a lot of people took the money. A lot of people actually were so bought into the vision and the culture, and the company that they said, No, I don't need the two grand, I'm happy to work here. Yeah. But today, you know, it didn't have a great ending, because I mean, for Tony, but beyond that, the they made some interesting management slash leadership decisions that aren't part of this part of the conversation. But I guess what I'm getting at, I spend most of my time with very, very small businesses, I run a business with one employee me. But I also spend my time talking to CEOs of some of the biggest, most famous companies in the world, and with people who work there. And these companies don't want to be the low cost, most efficient maker of widgets, they have stated that they act that way.

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But we've been indoctrinated for so long from the time we're in first grade, to ask, Will this be on the test, to have this mindset of command and control that it's really hard to imagine doing it a different way. And if we're going to think hard about the future of work, we paid for all this by burning an enormous amount of oil. by enriching ourselves at the expense of the future by building computer systems that do almost all the grunt work today. A computer can read an x ray better than almost any radiologist on a regular basis for free and instantly. So if you're an average radiologists, you should be able to work because you're doing something a computer can do. And we had no problem when the steam shovel did that to the ditch digger. And what I'm trying to help people understand is we're all ditch diggers now. So if you don't bring humanity to work, and you can't figure out how to build a federated organization that doesn't need to have 100,000 employees to work. Don't be surprised that you're gonna have less freedom than you want. Because you're gonna get undercut

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And I know I'm ranting today. But here's an aside. A lot of high school teachers are freaked out by GPT. Three. Yeah, they say the GPT three undermines everything you teach in English, because the kid can go home and cheat by having GPT. Three, write the essay.

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And I'm saying, what a lazy way to tell if kids know how to think. What a lazy way to outsource your evaluation of kids by saying, well, the only way to prove you read the book is to write me a mediocre essay about it. Yeah, well, if we're going to treat kids, like people who are dumber than AI, then don't be surprised if they use the AI to trick us. And TPD three is a miracle because we get to say to kids, from now on, we're going to train you on how to tell the difference between good GPT three and bad GPT. Three, we're going to train you on how to use tools to make a difference, not push you to be mediocre what a machine already knows how to do. It's almost like if you need a survey to tell you if your employees are engaged or not engaged. That's the problem. You should be able to tell a and and again, going back to the relationship, it's kind of like if I had to give my wife a survey and say, Hey, are

you? Are you happy in this relationship? We're giving my kids you know, are you happy? I'm your dad, if I can't tell from the regular interactions that I'm having with them, what the dynamic is in my household, that's a far bigger problem than you know, asking them a, you know, a survey question. And it's funny that you mentioned technology because I was at the airport. I think two days ago, I was flying back from Florida. And I was I was in the Houston airport. I don't know if you noticed this, but a lot of airports now, you know, especially in airports, they started doing this contactless payment. And at least when I go to a restaurant, I really like when a human comes over to me asked me if I have any questions about the menu, and I can order things kind of the way I like it. I try to eat healthy. So I sometimes give instructions, like please don't put a lot of oil or butter or stuff like that. And I you know, make slight tweaks to the menus. And now with these QR codes that you scan, when you get to a menu, we removed any kind of personalization or customization from anything. It's sort of like this is the menu, put the quantity that you want. And that's it. And you don't know how it's cooked. What's on it. Nothing, absolutely nothing. And I actually tweeted this out a couple of days ago, and I text my wife because there's so much talk about technology and automation. And I'm like, this is one of those areas where the human experience and interaction matters. And I don't know which genius out there thought that in a service industry, we should just automate everything. But it was a terrible experience. So technology doesn't belong everywhere. Just because you could stick technology there

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are so many things. I don't want to break your heart. Okay. So you could do, you could break my heart.

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Almost every time you go to a restaurant for almost everything you eat, particularly something like calamari.

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It was made somewhere far away and primal. And if you go to any of these giant restaurant warehouses, my wife runs the biggest chain of gluten free bakeries in America. So I've been

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there's all this pre made stuff. So what had been going on was a charade, where the human soft tissue that was coming to the table was eagerly listening to what you were doing. And then going into the back and nothing was changing. If you want going forward a tip, print up a bunch of cards in four languages, describing your food preferences and just hand it to the person and they will elevate it to a whole new thing. And they might even make you food from scratch. But leaving that part aside, what we have done, Tim Wu has written brilliantly about this is been seduced by 40 years of one of the five great marketing pitches of all time, which is convenience, we will give up almost anything for convenience. We will pay extra, we will accept lower quality, we will give up our privacy, almost anything. And what you are seeing is a long path that came before, which is that people said well, I'm not gonna get good food at the airport anyway. So it's not going to be good. You better at least make it convenient. And so I know that I'm in an airport in a long time, but I know that you and I are the kind of people who get frustrated when we're not treated like humans, but most people have been so indoctrinated. They want convenience period.

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Yeah, that makes it that makes it certainly certainly tough.

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I want to go back to one of the themes that you meant

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One earlier and that was this this differentiation between management and leadership. And I know that there is different camps on this right some people, was it Henry Mintzberg? I can't I think it was him who said that we should not differentiate between management and leadership, they should be the same thing. And then there are a lot of other people who say, no, they're separate things. It seems like and I don't remember off the top of my head. But if you were to go back to like the 60s 70s, even the 80s, I would bet that even the word leadership was not really used much. And it was all about, you know, management, manage your people. And that was kind of the default, you know, occasionally, maybe you'd hear the word leader or leadership somewhere in there, but it was it was, you know, management across the board. And it seems like now, we're really heavily shifting towards this theme of leadership. But part of me wonders if it's a semantic change, or if we're actually making changes to our organizations to reflect what that shift is. So maybe we can start high level, how do you separate? What's the difference between management and leadership? And do we do we need both?

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The other words matter a great deal.

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And for me, I mean, Henry's brilliant, but I think he might be missing something here. Or maybe I'm not understanding. Leadership

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is voluntary and does not involve authority. Management is the exercise of authority to permit the industrial entity to do more efficient work. We need management managers enabled the shift to start on time, right, you can't get people to show up for their shift if you don't have authority. In the old days, someone, a vice president would dictate a note, their secretary would type the note handed to the secretary at the room next door, that Secretary would hand the note to the Vice President to him next, it was all written and clear. When we shifted from serving machines, to having to create innovation and make decisions, what we discovered is that many people who can make good decisions don't have authority over others to tell them what to do.

37:23

Which means that if you want to get a new idea through an organization, you don't have to be the senior vice president, a friend of mine, helped a packaged goods company get into the toothpaste business and built a billion dollar brand. And as far as I know, she had no employees. So was she a manager? Or was she a leader? Another guy, no. Help General Mills, in the middle of the Atkins thing, switch every one of their cereals to whole grain in 90 days. And he did that by persuading people who did not work for him to make a change happen. That's leadership. So managers aren't going to go away

and we need them. But just because you have a title doesn't mean you're a leader. You know, if you want people to follow you, because they have to, then you're a manager.

38:10

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38:40

And how do you know which one you are? Because in that scenario, I would imagine everybody listening to this would say, oh, I want to be the leader. But I suppose it's also true that not everybody is capable or willing to be a leader. And you can have some really great managers out there. And it seems like

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I don't know, is management management becoming a bad word? Like is it is it bad to be called a manager today? I might be partly guilty of that.

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We need managers I tried to say that often. I'm not trying to denigrate someone who's doing the hard work of being a human

39:21

cushion between the might of the industrialist and what people have to do. But leadership is a choice. And the way I can tell if you're a leader, is what do you do when you have no authority? If you just say, I'm just doing my job, if you angle for authority, then you have a managerial mindset. And one of the lines in my book is how can I get people to do what I want? Yeah. And the answer is, you can't. What you can do is create the conditions for them to do what they want. That's leadership. When we create the

40:00

conditions for others to get to where they are going, we have a chance to be a leader

40:06

like that. So what what has been the big problem, and you kind of alluded to this earlier, and it seems like it's just kind of our old school indoctrination, the stereotypes that we're all used to, because we can all point to leadership books, podcasts, studies, research, that talk about how things are changing, why they're changing, even how to change. And it seems like talking about it, creating these resources out there, you still see and hear the stories. And you know, Elon Musk, for example, right been in the news, quite a bit goes in there cuts the headcount by like, 75 80%. And a lot of people are like, Wow, good for Elon, right? I mean, the company is still operating new features this and that fired 1000s of people. And, you know, of course, a lot of people said it wasn't done in a very, what's the right way to say it human, human or humane way? To put it nicely. But then you look at that, and you say, Wow, well, didn't he do

the right thing? The company's still profitable, it's never been more innovative, the engagement is up, like, what did he do that was wrong? Now, you're just trolling me. First of all, the company is not profitable, the company loses more money every day than you and I make in a year by

41:28

number two, it crashes all the time, the features are worse, the hate speech is worse. And the amount of trust that they have created it for anybody, regardless of how they vote, or what they believe in, has not gone up. There's nothing to be said about the infantile tactics of this person that we can hold up as a good example of what you should do beginning with buying it in the first place. Yeah, so leaving that to the side, because fortunately, no one listening to us today is infantile billionaire.

42:06

The real question is,

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why was it so hard to be Tom Peters starting when I met him in 1983? Oh, watch, I was born to watch Tom Peters on stage, his frustration. Here, I used to do a great Tom Peters limitation, I can't do anything.

42:26

Because he was clearly describing to us what mattered and what was true. And people in power, the Postmaster General of the United States, but 10,000 copies of In Search of Excellence, people in power said, Yeah, we get it. And then it didn't happen. Why is that? Number one, Milton Friedman, fake Nobel Prize winning economist who said that the only job of a corporation is to maximize short term shareholder value. This is nonsense. But it was widely embraced by who, by CEOs who got paid a share of profit, it was in their interest to embrace it. And, surprisingly, by many other people, because it lets us off the hook. This is what builds war criminals. I'm just doing my job. I'm just trying to serve the market. I'm just trying to make a buck. Right, I have no choice. This is how we maximize our profit.

43:29

But it's based on a false set of assumptions that a you shouldn't take responsibility. It's just blame the system and be that the only reason we're here is to make the shareholders profit. No one ever wrote that down. That's not in the law anywhere. And so what I'm trying to help people realize is, we only get this precious life, this precious day, one time. And if you have tomorrow to do over again, would you choose to do it? Because right now your tomorrow is all lined up to be about Milton Friedman, and not taking responsibility. But the happiest people on this planet? Aren't those people that, you know, if we think about

44:12

what has happened to happiness as the income gap has increased? Are people who are truly truly truly, financially wealthy happier? The answer is no, they're not at all by every measure. Because when you remove your humanity from the system, and are simply a cog, who's organized at making some easily measured number go up. You're not being a human. And the same thing happens on social media. When we try to make friends who aren't friends and get likes from people who don't like us.

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We're just doing the bidding of an algorithm that doesn't care about us. So as an aging baby boomer, I'm saying, instead of getting

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angry at the world, we should take risk

45:00

possibility and say, How can I lead in a small way to change the lives of three people or 10 people or 50 people make enough of a profit that I get to do it again tomorrow. And then do it again tomorrow. Because that's what we all want all of us. But you don't get it by buying a yacht and then a second yacht for your helicopter. You get it by looking people in the eye, seeing their humanity and showing up as a human.

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It's funny, you mentioned Tom, because even when I talked to him, you could sense the frustration and almost like the it's a blend of like frustration, anger. And, you know, the hopeful, but also like a tiny bit of despair that things haven't changed much. In the many decades since he's been pioneering and talking about some even before Tom, I think people were talking about this stuff, too. But when you look back at everything, you just see that has there even been changed? I don't know. Like, if I were to look at an enormous it's it's hard to imagine how much change there's been an enormous amount of change. So moving in the right direction. Oh, yeah. I mean, just in terms of women,

46:17

people who were in traditionally overlooked social classes, people all have it's way overdue. It hasn't happened as much as it should. But the casual de personification has been diminished for sure. Workplace Safety. I mean, people there, I read something about a guy at a steel mill, and he fell into the VAT. Right. And, you know, there's nothing to be done, he's gone. But four minutes later, they're pouring steel, again, we don't know people who fall into the VAT anymore. So we built so many things better. And now we're on the verge of building the best job you ever had. And I am so privileged and so lucky, I've had the best job I ever had almost every day for 40 years now. And most people I know, haven't had one day of that. And it's not because I'm an entrepreneur, it's because I found this little tiny sinecure where I could be a human. And we can offer to way more people. Yeah, it's funny, I heard a similar story, I think it was with Shell. And this is one of the stories they have in the new book. And one of the people I think this was from an article in the 90s. And he was talking about how they were working on an oil rig. And they drilled this huge pipe into the ground. And the pipe was held in place by by this little, you know, handle and somebody tripped over the handle. And it started spinning the pipe around out of the ground due to so much pressure, it caught the person's leg. And it it killed him because it smacked his head on a post and he was spinning around and it smacked him there. And then his coat he Yeah, imagine that visual. And the co workers basically said we had 15 minutes to mourn our co worker, and then we had to get back to work on the willow break. And it was 15 minutes of like, wow, that sucks. Alright, get back to drilling. And that. And that's a terrifying experience to

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even hear about and to see. So you talked about the steel mill that reminded me of that.

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Are there companies that you admire today? Actually, one other thing that reminded me of what you said, when I had Marshall Goldsmith on the show, he he alluded to this too, and he said, one of the biggest mistakes that you can make, is to say I am happy when when you when you place your happiness onto external sources, like I'll be happier when I get more money when I get the bigger house. And kind of to your point is it's about your responsibility taking control. You know, you can be happy regardless if you have a Bentley and three yachts and stuff like that. And so I kind of like that message. But are there companies that you admire or leaders that you admire and look up to? Anybody doing right? Like if we were to look for that beacon of hope that lighthouse as an example of what things should be like? Who would you point to at least somebody who's moving in the right direction?

49:14

Well, so the curse of Seth Godin is if I name your company is going to start doing poorly. Okay. So I try not to do that part of it. But you know, I think about

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crafts person lead small entities, where someone says, This is what I make, and this is how it's made. And if you don't like it, here's a list of five of my competitors. Now, as soon as you stop pretending that your competitors are invisible, you realize you are serving the smallest viable audience not trying to make something for everyone. I bought something just yesterday from someone who does business exactly that way. Yeah, you're also when I look in chocolate too.

50:00

Yes and the chocolate thing and there's always

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been to bar stuff here. My friend Sean Eskenazi runs Eskenazi chocolate in Missouri. And he meets his farmers personally, he pays them five times the market rate, he puts their kids to private school. He has open book management. If there's resources left, he flies, kids from Missouri to Tanzania and other places to have their lives changed through that exchange. He only sells to companies that sell direct to the consumer who doesn't work with distributors. If we look at Sean building a profitable entity, right? It's not about the chocolate. That's their slogan. It's about the chocolate. Meaning at m&m Mars and Nestle, they decimated the world, the poorest people in the world were growing cookout that you can make three to \$5 a day growing cacao. And the giant chocolate company say how do we get our cocoa beans as cheap as possible? How do we make a Hershey bar as convenient as possible to obtain, it doesn't matter whether it's special, it matters whether it's profitable. And Shawn askinosie says I'm not going to employ everybody in the world. And I'm not going to sell my chocolate to everybody. But if you want something special, here it is, might not be for you. And if you don't like this, there's so many other people to choose from. But every person who is engaged with what he's doing, understands that there's a journey taking place. They might not want to get on that bus. But there's a journey taking place. Yeah,

but if we go all the way to the big companies and such and valide Microsoft, he's not perfect. Microsoft is imperfect. But compare him to Steve Ballmer. Oh, yeah, right, that Steve Ballmer missed five of the five breakthroughs of technology during the key 10 years of his tenure, all five of them, because he was busy bullying people to increase a certain number. And as a result, they didn't get search, and they didn't get the smartphone and go down the list. Well,

52:13

Microsoft had some laughs but they weren't like the layoffs, other companies in their space had. And they are taking a thoughtful, stepwise innovative approach. They're nurturing people at LinkedIn and everywhere else to try to say, what's even the point of what we're doing, because it's not to make the stock price go up \$1 tomorrow. And as someone who worked at Yahoo in 1999, where every one of my co workers, not everyone, many of my co workers sat there watching the stock price go up. I can tell you, the three years later, Yahoo didn't matter. 15 years after that Yahoo was gone. They could have articulated and built a different future for all of us. But instead they said, How do we turn the dial on this machine?

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I know we only have a couple of minutes left, I thought the last 1015 minutes or so we can focus on maybe some action items or practical steps for for leaders that are out there. Specifically where to start? Because it sounds like one of the things we pinpointed that is important. And I don't know if you would say this is the right starting point or not. But it's almost kind of like to define that rules of engagement to define what it is that you commit to your people and also define the expectations and what your people commit to to you. Would you say that's a fair place to begin as far as transforming, not even your whole thing, maybe your team and your leader now.

53:34

My conversation with Seth Godin continues in an episode of the leaders Toolkit, which you're not going to want to miss. And in this bonus episode, which is only available for subscribers, by the way at great leadership.substack.com. In the bonus episode, Seth is going to share steps that you can take to start transforming yourself, the importance of not viewing yourself as a victim, how leaders can improve engagement with their employees, and the importance of cracking the egg. Remember, my brand new book leading with vulnerability is available for pre order and I just want to read you one of the endorsements that we got this one is from the CEO of MasterCard, he says I applaud Jacob for pushing us all to understand that there isn't a one size fits all approach to vulnerability. The insights and experiences from these leaders have the potential to strike a nerve, no matter your title or tenure. Again, this is from the CEO of MasterCard, we got a lot of other fascinating endorsements. You can pre order your copy and get access to the bonuses by going to lead with vulnerability.com