

Continuous Learning, using LinkedIn Learning and other on-line tools to maximize your down time value.

I am by nature, a continuous learner. My company recently provided us with [LinkedIn Learning account access](#), which is the former Lynda.com resource. I have found it to be a great resource for my appetite for learning new things, and a good way to get additional value out of my commute.

If you have not yet visited the LinkedIn Learning resource, I encourage you to do so and see what you might gain. The courses are generally short and focused, as well as pretty easy to follow. I am not affiliated with LinkedIn in any way (Other than that I have an account, like most business professionals), but I am a big fan of the platform and now this resource.

We have seen an explosion of on-line content and free learning resources, and for people like me, who want to continuously learn, but do not have the time or inclination to sit in a classroom, it is an amazing time to be alive! My job does not permit much time “in the weeds” of technology or process, as I am in meetings and driving decisions, etc.. for most of my day, but I use my personal time to pursue continuous learning on all the areas that intersect with my career. This helps me be a more effective leader, as I am able to understand context and value as my teams pitch ideas. An informed leader makes better decisions, and in today’s environment, there is no excuse left to not continuously learn.

I can’t buy time

I watched a video today. Not a new one, but a powerful excerpt from an interview Charlie Rose did with Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, two men I respect greatly. Bill was giving his perspective on what he has learned with respect to “filling his calendar” and the need to schedule time to think. Warren Buffett chimes in with his own calendar as an example, which is almost empty. These are arguably two of the most influential American businessmen of our time, and they share the opinion for the need to “think”. This is in direct juxtaposition to our sound bite, always busy society we are moving toward.

I can buy anything I want, basically, but I can’t buy time.

-Warren Buffett

What makes a good manager?

A [project at Google](#) spent time researching what defines a great manager at Google, and through that identified the top 10 traits to grow. As listed they are:

1. Is a good coach
2. Empowers team and does not micromanage
3. Creates an inclusive team environment, showing concern for success and well-being
4. Is productive and results-oriented
5. Is a good communicator-listens and shares information
6. Supports career development and discusses performance
7. Has a clear vision/strategy for the team
8. Has key technical skills to help advise the team
9. Collaborates effectively
10. Is a strong decision maker

The last two were new additions to the list, and I believe reflect the need to both reach out to your broader organization to expand your thinking, while simultaneously understanding when the time has come to step in and drive to a decision – the leadership courage to make a decision in the face of a constantly shifting landscape, and then stand by and manage through that decision.

as our company grew in size and complexity, demands on our managers and leaders increased as well. From the results of our employee survey we learned that Googlers wanted to see more effective cross-organization collaboration and stronger decision making practices from leaders

– GOOGLE ARTICLE

As the Google team identified, there is a need for decisive leadership in a time where we are bombarded with more and more data and “facts” or opinions on every decision to be taken – this coupled with FOMO (Fear of missing out) can lead to a situation where teams spend an unfortunate amount of time in the unproductive state of spinning. This leads to a negative impact on moral and reduces productivity. Contrary to that, a decisive leader, who empowers a good team and uses strong communication skills to get thoughts drawn out from the team and discussed, often has the facts actually required for the decision in the first day of deliberation! The ability to collaborate quickly and communicate the rational, get confirmation and drive to the decision is the real differentiator and the combination for real productivity!

TED: Draw Toast! (Creative Problem Solving)

Tom Wujec has a TED talk on creative problem solving using a technique he calls “drawing toast”. The idea is not new, but the packaging and approach is solid and builds on innovation thinking. I [posted a video](#) from another TED talk about empowering the team, and ensuring all voices are heard, and this ties in nicely with that thought. I am a fan of process mapping and achieving clarity, as a step toward optimization or evaluation of opportunity, and I will be adding these techniques to my tool box. You can watch the video below, and link to the website [Tom has created here](#).



Drawing the process



Establishing nodes and links - toast making as a foundation for process mapping teaches how to take complex problems and break them into discrete units.



The creative process builds from individuals, to component based to group synthesis, resulting in an optimum systems model



Watching the process progress, it is intriguing to watch the optimal number of process steps shift, as complexity is revealed and then sorted.



Taking these ideas and approaches and applying the thinking to the business at hand is the logical next step.

TED: Manage for collective creativity

While looking through TED for innovative thinking and approaches I can learn from, I came across this talk by Linda Hill. I encourage you to watch the full video if you have an interest in the topic and want to be challenged. The ideas come from a significant amount of time and effort spent tracking select global leaders, and cataloging what makes them effective in driving innovation.

While watching this video, I pulled some key thoughts from the talk and copied the transcribed notes here. The key thought I pulled from here that I feel sums up the notes below is as follows: The idea of leading innovative organizations is more about creating an environment for the organization, as opposed to “owning the vision”. In Agile terminology, there is an idea of servant leadership, meaning getting out of the way and supporting the success of the team. This concept is a powerful part of innovation leadership as well.

- Leading innovation is not about creating a vision and inspiring others to execute it. If we want to build organizations that can innovate time and again, **we must unlearn our conventional notions of leadership.**
- Leading innovation is not about creating a vision, and inspiring others to execute it.
- When many of us think about innovation, though, we think about an Einstein having an ‘Aha!’ moment. But we all know that’s a myth. **Innovation is not about solo genius**, it’s about **collective genius**. What we know is, at the heart of innovation is a paradox. You have to unleash the talents and passions of many people and you have to harness them into a work that is actually useful. **Innovation is a journey**. It’s a type of collaborative problem solving, usually among people who have different expertise and different points of view.
- **three capabilities: creative abrasion, creative agility and creative resolution.** Creative abrasion is about being able to create a marketplace of ideas through debate and discourse. In innovative organizations, they amplify differences, they don’t minimize them. Creative abrasion is not about brainstorming, where people suspend their judgment. No, they know how to have very heated but constructive arguments to create a portfolio of alternatives.
- **innovation rarely happens unless you have both diversity and conflict.**
- if we want to build organizations that can innovate time and again, we must recast our understanding of what leadership is about. **Leading innovation is about creating the space** where people are willing and able to do the hard work of innovative problem solving.

- What can we do to make sure that all the disruptors, **all the minority voices in this organization, speak up and are heard**? And, finally, let's bestow credit in a very generous way."
- Bill said, "I lead a volunteer organization. Talented people don't want to follow me anywhere. **They want to cocreate with me the future.** My job is to nurture the bottom-up and not let it degenerate into chaos." How did he see his role? "I'm a role model, I'm a human glue, I'm a connector, I'm an aggregator of viewpoints. I'm never a dictator of viewpoints." Advice about how you exercise the role? Hire people who argue with you. And, guess what? Sometimes it's best to be deliberately fuzzy and vague.
- They stopped giving answers, they stopped trying to provide solutions. Instead, what they did is they began to see the people at the bottom of the pyramid, the young sparks, the people who were closest to the customers, as the source of innovation. They began to transfer the organization's growth to that level. In Vineet's language, this was about inverting the pyramid so that you could **unleash the power of the many by loosening the stranglehold of the few**, and increase the quality and the speed of innovation that was happening every day.our role as leaders is to set the stage, not perform on it.

Books to read: Sticky Wisdom: How to Start a Creative Revolution at Work

 I got this book while working at Pfizer, and helping lead an innovation transformation in the consumer health division. We were looking to reboot our approach to product development and creativity in general, and as a part of that we invested in a great set of programs that I still benefit from now, long after those roles. This book is from the ?WhatIf! company, and has many little insights that can help unlock the creativity in you, and in your team.

The book asks a few key questions and offers accompanying insights to build on.

- What if you could spot what's killing creativity in your organization right now?
- What if you could stop yourself squashing ideas and start growing them instead?
- What if you could help everyone at work to be creative?

- What if you stopped talking about how important creativity is and started to take practical steps to make it happen.

But most of all.... What if there was a step-by-step guide that showed you exactly how to do it?

Instinctively we all know that creativity at work is important, but for many of us it feels either difficult or intimidating.

Sticky Wisdom delivers powerful insights that take creativity out of the hands of 'creative people' and puts it back where it belongs, with all of us. It breaks creativity out into six practical behaviours and shows how every one of us – not just the wacky geniuses – is packed with creative potential. We can start a creative revolution by adopting six behaviours:

1. Freshness
2. Greenhousing
3. Realness
4. Momentum
5. Signalling
6. Courage

These are the behaviours you can identify in highly creative and high-performing teams. These are the behaviours that you can start applying today to revolutionize your life.

Suddenly creativity isn't such a mystery. Sticky Wisdom makes it easy to talk about, easy to practise and easy to remember. Above all, it makes it easy to get on and do!

One of the points made in the book that makes great sense is the idea that creativity and innovation are not synonymous. Creativity only becomes innovation when the ideas are useful, or described another way, add value. The book is full of little stories and examples to make the point, as illustrated by an exercise with a food retailer team to have the team role play being a meal cooked in a wok. The book goes on to provide examples of the insights gained such as oil that changes color when ready, food that is pre-sliced and provided in numbered packages to sequence cooking properly, and more. These ideas came from the interactive role play and subsequent discussion. This type of activity generally takes me outside my comfort zone, as it does many, but that is the point.

In other posts, I reference the idea of stream jumping, which I got from this book and training. I also value the idea of Green Housing, which is broken into a series of steps outlined in the book consisting of:

- **S**uspend Judgement
- **U**nderstand
- **N**urture

- **React**
- **Assume**
- **INsist**

Another key concept from this book, though not unique to the book, is signalling. Part of the accompanying training is around the value of being intentional with signalling to a partner in conversation what your intentions are, or where you are trying to take the conversation. This has been a valuable tool in my kit now for years, as I have learned to be much more clear with my intentions in communication, setting up my audience or partners to better receive and understand my messaging.

Why I recommend this book:

This book is full of great insights, and is a quick read. It can be used to bookmark and drop in and out of, or used as a reference to work through as a team. You cannot read this short reference without gaining value, even if you have extensive experience with change and innovation. It will spark ideas you have forgotten and give you new ones to build on. I cannot go into the full content of the book in a short post, but I encourage you to spend the few dollars it costs to buy this book. It was printed some time ago, but the ideas are as relevant today as when printed the first time!

Books to read: The Innovator's Prescription: A Disruptive Solution for Health Care

This read is in line with the related book by the same author I also recommended titled "[The Innovator's Dilemma](#)". This book focuses on the healthcare industry, and besides Clayton Christensen, includes 2 additional authors, Jerome Grossman, MD, and Jason Hwang, MD. The Amazon summary offers a decent overview.



A groundbreaking prescription for health care reform—from a legendary leader in innovation . . .

Our healthcare system is in critical condition. Each year, fewer Americans can afford it, fewer businesses can provide it, and fewer government programs can promise it for future generations.

We need a cure, and we need it now.

Harvard Business School's Clayton M. Christensen—whose bestselling *The Innovator's Dilemma* revolutionized the business world—presents *The Innovator's Prescription*, a comprehensive analysis of the strategies that will improve health care and make it affordable.

Christensen applies the principles of disruptive innovation to the broken health care system with two pioneers in the field—Dr. Jerome Grossman and Dr. Jason Hwang. Together, they examine a range of symptoms and offer proven solutions.

YOU'LL DISCOVER HOW

- “Precision medicine” reduces costs and makes good on the promise of personalized care
- Disruptive business models improve quality, accessibility, and affordability by changing the way hospitals and doctors work
- Patient networks enable better treatment of chronic diseases
- Employers can change the roles they play in health care to compete effectively in the era of globalization
- Insurance and regulatory reforms stimulate disruption in health care

And the editorial reviews are a good reflection of my thoughts as well:

- “Clayton Christensen has done it again, writing yet another book full of valuable insights. The Innovator’s Prescription might just mark the beginning of a new era in health care.”Michael Bloomberg, Mayor, New York City
- “Clear, entertaining, and provocative, The Innovator’s Prescription should be read by anyone who cares about improving the health and health care of all.”Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, President and CEO, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- “Comprehensive in its vision, astute in its diagnosis, and clear in its guidance, The Innovator’s Prescription offers strong medicine for a health care system that is far from well.”Dr. Harvey V. Fineberg, President, Institute of Medicine
- “A wealth of insights—with new ideas and revelations in every chapter. Read it, and you will be armed with solid ideas for making health care better.”George Halvorson, Chairman and CEO, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc. and Kaiser Foundation Hospitals
- “The Innovator’s Prescription is a well researched, clearly organized road map to a sustainable health care system.”Michael O. Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services

- “The Innovator’s Prescription is an important and timely contribution to the national debate on health system reform. We would do well to consider it carefully.”Tom Daschle, former Senate Majority Leader and Distinguished Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress
- “Clayton Christensen has helped many businesses—including our own-find new growth opportunities through deeper insights into the future of health and the health care system. I can think of no one better equipped to lead this comprehensive global assessment.”Bill Weldon, Chairman and CEO, Johnson & Johnson

Why I recommend this book:

I am in the healthcare industry (pharmaceutical / biopharma industry) and I found this book to be a fantastic challenge for where we are, and where we were. I read this one shortly after its release in 2009, and on reflection now, it is as relevant as it was at that time. Clayton and his co-authors take the foundation of the innovator’s dilemma, and apply that thinking to the healthcare space. The topics addressed include not only the opportunities to achieve value through innovative and lateral thinking, but also an exploration of the supply chain, hospital business models, chronic disease treatment and a broad range of additional topics. This should be required reading for management and management candidates in the healthcare related industries.

Books to read: The Innovator’s Dilemma

I first read this book many years ago and it has served as a good reference over the years, standing the test of time as a foundational work. First published in 1997 by Clayton Christensen and reprinted multiple times since, it details the business innovation cycles and the traps that are too easy to fall into. The book has been superseded by new versions, but reading the original and early updates in contrast with how things have evolved as predicted is illuminating and sobering if you are in a large corporation. At the same time, those seeking to disrupt an existing industry will take heart and be encouraged by the principles outlined in this book. We have seen these ideas applied time and again with industry disruptions including Airbnb for the hotel industry, Uber, Lyft and others to the Taxi market, emerging financial market disruption with Bitcoin and more every day.



Editorial reviews from others:

- The Innovator’s Dilemma is becoming a handbook for CEOs remaking their businesses for the Net.- BusinessWeek
- The Innovator’s Dilemma captures the critical role of leadership in creating markets.- John Seely Brown,

chief scientist, Xerox Corp., and director, Xerox Parc

- This book ought to chill any executive who feels bulletproof – and inspire entrepreneurs aiming their guns.- Forbes
- I cannot recommend this book strongly enough – ignore it at your peril.- Martin Fakley, Information Access
- Absolutely brilliant. Clayton Christensen provides an insightful analysis of changing technology and its importance to a company's future success.- Michael R. Bloomberg, CEO & Founder, Bloomberg Financial Markets
- This book addresses a tough problem that most successful companies will face eventually. It's lucid, analytical – and scary.- Dr. Andrew S. Grove, chairman & CEO, Intel Corporation
- Clayton Christensen's groundbreaking book...brings fresh insight and understanding to the complex and critically important relationships between technological change and business success...His conclusions provide food for thought for the top management of every company.- Richard N. Foster, Director, McKinsey & Company

From the back cover

In this revolutionary bestseller, innovation expert Clayton M. Christensen says outstanding companies can do everything right and still lose their market leadership—or worse, disappear altogether. And not only does he prove what he says, but he tells others how to avoid a similar fate.

Focusing on “disruptive technology,” Christensen shows why most companies miss out on new waves of innovation. Whether in electronics or retailing, a successful company with established products will get pushed aside unless managers know when to abandon traditional business practices. Using the lessons of successes and failures from leading companies, *The Innovator's Dilemma* presents a set of rules for capitalizing on the phenomenon of disruptive innovation.

Find out:

- When it is right not to listen to customers.
- When to invest in developing lower-performance products that promise lower margins.
- When to pursue small markets at the expense of seemingly larger and more lucrative ones.
- Sharp, cogent, and provocative, *The Innovator's Dilemma* is one of the most talked-about books of our time—and one no savvy manager or entrepreneur should be without.

Why I recommend this book:

As previously mentioned, this book was foundational in developing my thinking around innovation and change. It stands the test of time remarkably well and still serves as a business reference for both large corporations and disruptors alike. The cautionary tales from Xerox, Kodak and others as well as the success of the disruptors provides lessons that resonate with any business today. We are seeing disruption on a scale that feels unprecedented, and it would serve leaders well to learn from the errors and successes of their predecessors.

Books to read: Factfulness

This book is a recommendation from Bill Gates. He shared his list of top reads and I take note of what leaders I respect are reading. This was an excellent recommendation and one of my top books this past year. You can [find it on Amazon here](#), and it is worth the read. As usual, I will include the published review, but I have to endorse this on as a top pick!

Hans Rosling wrote this book in collaboration with Anna Rosling Rönnlund and Ola Rosling. He summarized his thoughts on the book as follows:

“This book is my last battle in my life-long mission to fight devastating ignorance...Previously I armed myself with huge data sets, eye-opening software, an energetic learning style and a Swedish bayonet for sword-swallowing. It wasn’t enough. But I hope this book will be.” Hans Rosling, February 2017.

Please read the book – I consider myself to be open minded and an experienced global thinker, having done business across the world for many years, as well as having grown up internationally. I was surprised and encouraged by this book. The foundational premise is that the world is improving, and we are missing that point! What I love about this book is the data driven, pragmatic approach which appeals to my approach to life. Hans has a humorous and engaging writing style and a passion for people that comes through in the reading. You can see what others have said here:

INSTANT NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

“One of the most important books I’ve ever read—an indispensable guide to thinking clearly about the world.” - Bill Gates

“Hans Rosling tells the story of ‘the secret silent miracle of human progress’ as only he can. But Factfulness does much more than that. It also explains why progress is so often secret and silent and teaches readers how to see it clearly.” —Melinda Gates



“Factfulness by Hans Rosling, an outstanding international public health expert, is a hopeful book about the potential for human progress when we work off facts rather than our inherent biases.” - Former U.S. President Barack Obama

Factfulness: The stress-reducing habit of only carrying opinions for which you have strong supporting facts.

When asked simple questions about global trends—what percentage of the world’s population live

in poverty; why the world's population is increasing; how many girls finish school—we systematically get the answers wrong. So wrong that a chimpanzee choosing answers at random will consistently outguess teachers, journalists, Nobel laureates, and investment bankers.

In *Factfulness*, Professor of International Health and global TED phenomenon Hans Rosling, together with his two long-time collaborators, Anna and Ola, offers **a radical new explanation of why this happens**. They reveal **the ten instincts that distort our perspective**—from our tendency to divide the world into two camps (usually some version of us and them) to the way we consume media (where fear rules) to how we perceive progress (believing that most things are getting worse).

Our problem is that we don't know what we don't know, and even our guesses are informed by unconscious and predictable biases.

It turns out that the world, for all its imperfections, is in a much better state than we might think. That doesn't mean there aren't real concerns. But when we worry about everything all the time instead of embracing a worldview based on facts, we can lose our ability to focus on the things that threaten us most.

Inspiring and revelatory, filled with lively anecdotes and moving stories, ***Factfulness* is an urgent and essential book that will change the way you see the world and empower you to respond to the crises and opportunities of the future.**

Why I recommend this book:

We need to have a worldview based on facts. This book drives the reader that direction. I consider this one of my most influential reads of the year and likely the past decade as it challenges the reader on many levels to disregard preconceived notions and unconscious biases that drive our speech and actions. I do not believe you can read this book and genuinely seek to understand it, but not be changed in some way.

Books to read: Superintelligence

This book was a reference from Elon Musk – and after reading it, I can see why. The book was written by Nick Bostrom and is [available from Amazon here](#) if you are interested in buying it online or reading other reviews. The review on Amazon covers the highlights:

Superintelligence asks the questions: What happens when machines surpass humans in general intelligence? Will artificial agents save or destroy us? Nick Bostrom lays the foundation for understanding the future of humanity and intelligent life.



The human brain has some capabilities that the brains of other animals lack. It is to these distinctive capabilities that our species owes its dominant position. If machine brains surpassed human brains in general intelligence, then this new superintelligence could become extremely powerful – possibly beyond our control. As the fate of the gorillas now depends more on humans than on the species itself, so would the fate of humankind depend on the actions of the machine superintelligence.

But we have one advantage: we get to make the first move. Will it be possible to construct a seed Artificial Intelligence, to engineer initial conditions so as to make an intelligence explosion survivable? How could one achieve a controlled detonation?

This profoundly ambitious and original book breaks down a vast track of difficult intellectual terrain. After an utterly engrossing journey that takes us to the frontiers of thinking about the human condition and the future of intelligent life, we find in Nick Bostrom's work nothing less than a reconceptualization of the essential task of our time.

I took my time on this one, reading it mainly while traveling, on planes or when I would not be disturbed. The topic requires a significant level of focus for those of us who are not deep in this field, but the ideas are thought provoking. I have considered and debated the “rise of machines” to steal a phrase from Terminator, but this book makes the idea real! As Nick walks the reader through the development of the Superintelligence, and the various paths it can take, it starts to make the concepts much more clear and crystallized the need to be thoughtful in the application of these emerging technologies and ideas.

Why I recommend the book:

It is a thought provoking exploration of artificial intelligence and the need to be thoughtful and intentional in the exploration of this exploding field. Who will create the seed intelligence, and when doing so, will it be done in a way that drives human preservation and growth with intentionality?