



Rana Florida

CEO, The Creative Class Group & Author, Upgrade

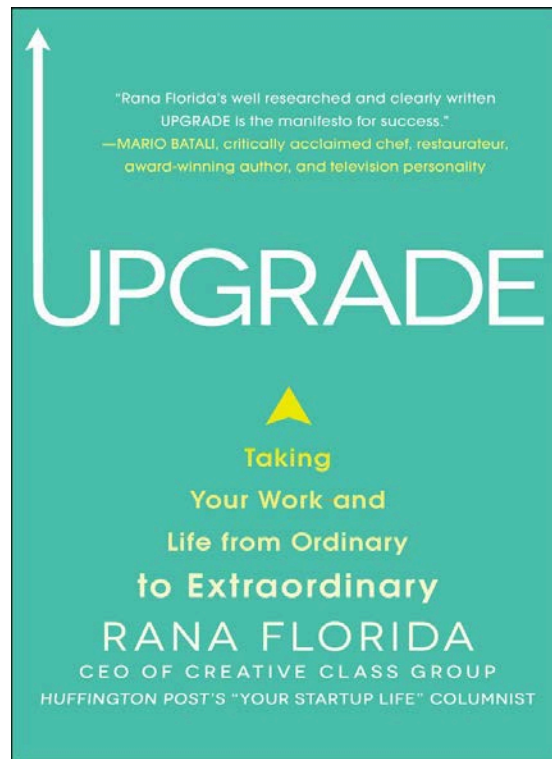
It's Time for Leaders to Lead

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[Business](#), [Happiness](#), [Careers](#), [Human Capital](#), [John Noseworthy](#), [Sir Ken Robinson](#), [Tony Hsieh](#), [Advice](#), [Career](#), [Creativity](#), [Gallup](#), [Ideo](#), [Innovation](#), [Leadership](#), [Mayo Clinic](#), [Mentorship](#), [Talent](#), [Tim Brown](#), [Upgrade](#), [Workforce](#), [Zappos](#), [Business News](#)

Gallup's just-released [2013 State of the American Workplace](#) report, which surveyed more than 150,000 full- and part-time workers last year, finds that an astounding 70 percent of employees are not engaged or inspired by their work. Clearly management bears a large part of the blame.

In my upcoming book [Upgrade](#) (McGraw-Hill, September, 2013), I write about business's leadership crisis. The traditional top-down approach, in which the boss sits at the top of the pyramid and orders the underlings to work harder, is no longer flying.



When I [asked Sir Ken Robinson](#), arguably one of the world's top experts in creativity and education, about how management can motivate a workforce, he said, "The role of a leader is to offer a compelling vision of the road ahead and to inspire people so that they'll be able to travel it successfully. Management is about organization. Leadership is about vision. Both are important. Organization without leadership breeds bureaucracy. Vision without management breeds disillusion."

The culture of an organization sets the tone of the workplace and the online shoe retailer, [Zappos](#) has made [headlines](#) about their culture of [delivering happiness](#). Co-founder, CEO and venture capitalist Tony Hsieh [says](#), "I like to give people a lot of freedom and then see what they are able to do. For my own life, I also value the freedom to think outside the box and do things differently."

When I [interviewed](#) the [Mayo Clinic's](#) president and CEO, John Noseworthy, MD and asked him to describe his leadership style, he said, "Leaders at Mayo Clinic embody Robert Greenleaf's model of 'servant leadership,' in which the desire to serve supersedes the desire to lead."

Tim Brown, the CEO of the famous consulting firm [IDEO](#), has a similar approach to leadership. He [says](#), "I am not sure I really think of leadership as a style. I try to be the right leader for the moment. Sometimes that means trying to inspire the organization with new ideas that might challenge the status quo. Sometimes that means jumping in and helping solve a problem with a client or IDEO team. Sometimes it means stepping back and leaving room for someone else to take the lead, but being there to support them."

Brown didn't understand this immediately. "It took me a while to learn that approaching every leadership moment the same way is not constructive," he admitted. "Earlier in my career I thought my job was to try to always have the best ideas and I would strive really hard to be as personally creative as I could. Now I realize that this can stifle other talented people, and that I can be far more effective helping them develop their own ideas and giving them the confidence, if they need it, to go and make their ideas happen."

Unfortunately, these gifted CEOs and thinkers are exceptions that prove a rule.

As Gallup CEO [Jim Clifton](#) put it, workers, "roam the halls spreading discontent" -- and worse still, they are costing the U.S. up to \$550 billion annually in lost productivity. Sure, pay raises and bonuses may help to retain some of these unhappy workers, but they can't replace motivation. Employees are looking to feel good about their work, to learn and grow on the job, personally and professionally; they want to feel that they are part of a vision.

It's not our workforce that needs training, but its bosses, too many of whom haven't the necessary skills to engage, mentor and inspire.

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