



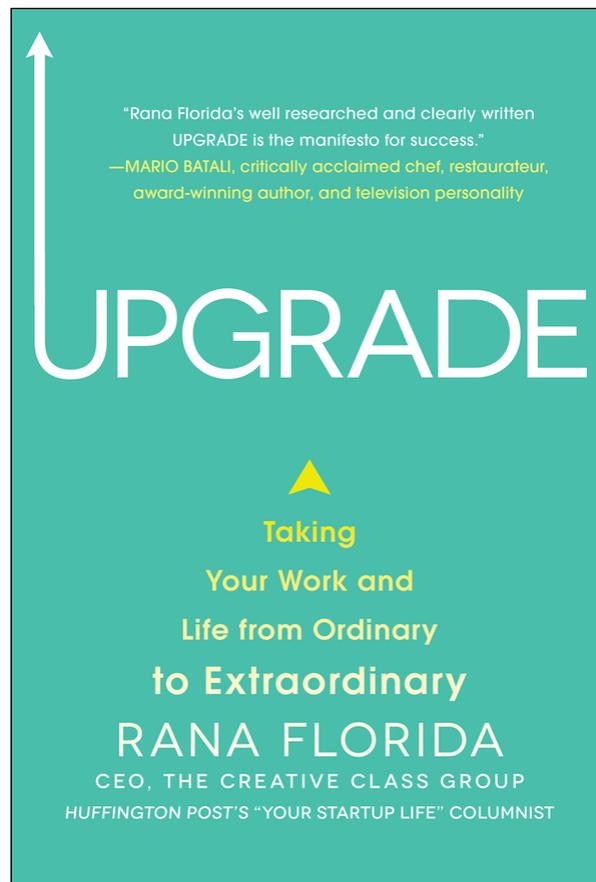
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Lead by Serving

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Adapted from [Upgrade: Taking Your Work and Life From Ordinary to Extraordinary](#)
by [Rana Florida](#)



The world is filled with incompetent leaders. Bosses who wag their fingers at you and give you marching orders are unfortunate relics of the past; the top-down leadership model in business no longer works. "In fact, most leaders -- whether in politics or business -- fail," according to a recent [Harvard Business Review](#) article. "Good leadership has always been the exception, not the

norm." Think about leadership as the all-important task of inspiring, mentoring and setting a vision.

"The role of a leader," the creativity expert [Sir Ken Robinson](#) told me, "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."

What makes patients from around the world travel to Rochester, Minnesota, to be cared for by the Mayo Clinic? You could cite its high standards or its position atop the annual *US News & World Report's* "Best Hospitals" list for more than two decades. But ultimately why is that? It's the clinic's outside-the-box methods and practices. Part of the reason the Mayo Clinic's patients are so satisfied is that doctors like working there. The Mayo Clinic has been featured on *Fortune's* "America's 100 Best Companies to Work For" list for eight years straight.

Not too long ago, I interviewed the Mayo's president and [CEO, John Noseworthy, MD](#). When I asked him to describe his leadership style, he said, "Leaders at Mayo Clinic embody Robert Greenleaf's model of 'servant leadership.'"

"My style," he continued, "is to surround myself with really smart people and then listen to them, while encouraging the team to think and act boldly. Timely consensus must be followed by disciplined, successful execution of the plan."

But most leaders wrongly assume they have all the answers. [Tim Brown](#), CEO of the successful design and innovation firm, [IDEO](#) is not one of them, "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; finding one's leadership style is a process. "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."

Successful organizations treat their employees -- all of their employees -- as individuals who are interested in learning and contributing. As Zappos CEO [Tony Hsieh](#) advises, "Make sure that the company commits to values that match the employees' personal values, and make sure that the company has a vision that has a higher purpose beyond just profits or beating the competition."

People want to learn and grow; feel inspired and be mentored. When we spend a majority of our lives at work striving to make an impact, monetary rewards are nice; but the experience of learning something new from a truly visionary leader can have an even bigger impact.

Leaders who inspire, mentor, and teach -- rather than dictate and order -- will have more productive, more engaged and more loyal teams.

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