

A Forward Thinking Workplace

Presented by Bill Fox, Founder
Forward Thinking Workplaces

Welcome to A Forward Thinking Workplace



Dear Reader,

Welcome to our presentation on creating a Forward Thinking Workplace, as featured in the Cutter Business Technology Journal (now Amplify).

In an era of rapid change, traditional change management methods oftentimes fall short.

In this article, we explore new strategies for adaptability and innovation, focusing on authentic, collaborative cultures and quality conversations.

Discover the power of asking powerful new questions to foster organizational transformation enriched by diverse perspectives and collective wisdom. Join us in redefining workplace success for the future.

Best regards,

Bill Fox, Founder

A Forward Thinking Workplace

This presentation is based on the article, A Forward Thinking Workplace, published by the Cutter Business Technology Journal.

Please contact me at bill@billfox.co to request a PDF copy of the article.



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Introduction



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #1

HOW CAN WE RESPOND WITH GREATER IMPACT?

We live in a world of constant whitewater, where ever-increasing change, complexity, and disruption are the new normal. Many organizations struggle to adapt, using traditional ways of introducing and managing change, so what can we do to respond to this new reality with greater impact?



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #2

GO BEYOND MANAGING CHANGE

New times and challenges call for innovative forward thinking. Ultimately, we need to discover a better way forward by shifting the focus from managing change to living and working together in new ways. These new ways must allow us to sense changes early and adapt swiftly and intuitively.

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #3

OPEN MIND, LISTENING TO EVERY VOICE

It's time to recognize that managing change, following best practices, and working harder — and even smarter — are no longer enough and are failing us. These methods all keep us stuck living in the past. Stepping into the future requires us to interact with each other with an open mind, listening to every voice — ready to discover whatever is there for us to see and giving us the freedom to act upon what we discover.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #4

CHANGE STARTS WITH US

Change — real change — comes from the inside out.

— Stephen Covey



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We Are All Being Challenged in Today's World

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #5

HOW DO WE GET OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONES?

So many people and organizations today are struggling to adapt and create the conditions that get people out of their comfort zones. Many organizations are striving to be more innovative and engaged so they can fully respond to and benefit from the plethora of digital advances available today. Digital transformation heralds great promise and many benefits, but those will only happen if transformation truly occurs and lasts.





FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #6

SURPRISING INSIGHTS FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH LEADERS

At Forward-Thinking Workplaces, we have hosted an ongoing global exploration and 21st century conversation with over 70 leaders that encompass the business, psychological, and spiritual domains. Out of those conversations (and my own work), many surprising insights and new approaches have come forth.

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #7

TRUE NATURE OF THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

Most striking are the insights that point to the true nature of the challenges we face. These challenges are rarely mentioned or even addressed at most organizations, although they will undermine any transformation initiative.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #8

TRUE CHALLENGES

- Many people still can't say what they really, think, feel, and act on every day.
- People react largely and mostly based on their circumstances or own internal processes because we don't realize how the mind works; those who do understand are impacted by circumstances to a lesser degree.
- There is a lot of emphasis on finding and aligning purpose, but the issues of status, power, competition, and so on, are ignored and still remain.
- We're not aware that almost 99% of our life runs on autopilot, which keeps us stuck living and working in the past.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #9

WE CAN'T PRETEND THESE CHALLENGES DON'T EXIST

The need has never been greater to embrace transformation in innovative new ways to deal with the many very real and difficult challenges we face. Transformation has little chance of lasting success when we pretend these challenges don't exist.



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Why Do We Keep Implementing Change in the Same Ways?

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #10

WE KEEP REPEATING A FAMILIAR PATTERN

We only need to look back at the history of workplace transformation and employee engagement over the past 30 years to realize that something is very wrong. Everyone is talking about change and the need to transform, but we keep repeating a familiar pattern.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #11

WHY DO SO MANY IMPLEMENT CHANGE LIKE THIS?

Over my career, I have witnessed so many workplace change and transformation initiatives that didn't work out or last. I equate this to going to the edge of a 50-foot cliff and jumping when all you've witnessed are others ahead of you jumping away. As a result, you don't see what they did before they jumped, what the landing area looks like, or what happened when they landed.





FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #12

ABOUT 18 MONTHS

I tried, like most consultants and most business owners and entrepreneurs, with all the usual things — incremental improvements like business process reengineering, total quality management, higher-performance teaming, self-directed teaming, Lean systems, Agile systems, and Agile development.... Inevitably over about 18 months, all that goodness withered away and died.

— Tom Thomison, Co-founder HolacracyOne

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #13

WE ARE IN A DIFFICULT PLACE

Doing what everyone else is doing and what you've done before often doesn't solve the real problem, is resisted by many (often for good reasons), and rarely survives a change in company management or an unforeseen event.



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So Where Does This
Leave Us?

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #14

EVOLVING THE STATUS QUO IN TRADITIONAL WAYS NO LONGER WORKS

It's no longer enough to work "harder, or even smarter," says world-renowned transformational coach Michael Neill. When so many of us are doing just that, isn't it time to explore what else might be possible?



WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO EXPLORE AGAIN

Now imagine those explorers of earlier times and even recent times who have ventured out beyond the horizon in search of higher aspirations. They sailed off into uncharted waters with an open mind — ready to discover whatever was there for them to see. They didn't know what they would find, but they intuitively knew they'd experience and discover something new in their search for a better life.

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #16

EXPLORING IS HOW WE STEP INTO THE UNKNOWN

Now we too find ourselves in uncharted and turbulent waters with many unknowns. Exploring is a way for us to step into the unknown to discover the better answers and better questions, insights, and wisdom that we need to move forward in the face of today's challenges.



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Discover Forward- Thinking

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #17

THINKING AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, forward thinking is “the act of thinking about and planning for the future, not just the present.” Most organizations today were formed and still operate based on industrial age thinking. We rely largely on command and control and the separation of people and functions into parts or groups where each part is optimized. But in these times of rapid change and disruption, old-school thinking and ways of organizing ourselves are failing us. Today’s times call for adopting a more forward-thinking mindset and approach that considers the present as well as the future.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #18

EXPLORING HELPS US DISCOVER THE NEW

Exploring is a way for us to step into the unknown to discover the better answers and better questions, insights, and wisdom that we need to move forward in the face of today's challenges.

—Bill Fox



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #19

BE MORE LIKE A MARTIAL ARTS MASTER

We not only need to organize ourselves in new ways but also learn how to operate more like martial arts masters. Masters don't know what they will face next, but they have trained themselves to be present and prepared. They are confident that they can handle whatever comes their way. We find ourselves facing similar challenges and need to do the same.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #20

KEY TO THRIVING TODAY AND TOMORROW

Learning how to be more forward thinking is key to helping us discover how to live and work together in these new ways. Forward thinking creates a foundation for building a culture that can thrive today and tomorrow.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #21

MORE AUTHENTIC, AWARE, AND CO- CREATIVE

At Forward-Thinking Workplaces, we've identified 13 abilities that are vital in becoming more forward thinking. This list suggests new ways of thinking and being that help people to be more authentic, aware, collaborative, and co-creative. Together, they bring an expanded sense of self and new ways of connecting that enhance our ability to interact with each other. Using these abilities, we become more active participants in co-creating a workplace where our voice matters, everyone thrives and finds meaning, and change and innovation happen naturally.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #22

UNFOLDING OF OUR OWN LIFE AND GROWTH

These 13 components didn't arrive in a flash of insights or from a scientific study, but rather from my own evolutionary growth and work over the past 17 years. An intention to have an impact on how organizations transform set in motion a series of life-changing events and experiences that revealed how to be a more forward-thinking and conscious participant in the unfolding of my own life and work. My life became my vehicle for learning.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #23

CONNECT AND WORK WITH PEOPLE IN A NEW WAY

What's most significant about these changes and experiences is that they helped me connect and work with people in a new way. I found myself having more expansive conversations that helped propel changes and transformations that would occur naturally and almost effortlessly. Consequently, unexpected new insights, questions, and wisdom emerged in my work and conversations. Many leaders (and readers) of my work have noted that my interview collections have created a platform for new insights and wisdom. My conversations became a vehicle for discovering new and better solutions with others by creating a space for something new to emerge.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #24

MORE ACTIVE AND CO-CREATIVE PARTICIPANTS

By becoming more forward thinking and learning how to live and interact in new ways, people become more active and co-creative participants in the unfolding of their work and life.

— Bill Fox





FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #25

ENORMOUS POWER IN IMPACTING OUR CONSCIOUSNESS

In today's world that's full of turbulence and unknowns, the need for better answers and questions, insights, and wisdom is becoming ever more pressing. Creating a culture that helps people become more forward thinking and conscious is a necessary first step. It's where real transformation must begin. There is enormous power — power that is largely undervalued and underpracticed — in helping people learn how to impact their consciousness to create change.

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #26

REALLY NO JUICE FOR THE SQUEEZE IN DOING

There's really no juice for the squeeze in doing because doing is just a natural ripple out of a state of consciousness. Anytime someone takes a leap in their own personal understanding of their own mind, or has their own shift in consciousness, they just do differently without even realizing it and then things change.

— Mara Gleason, Co-founder, One Solution

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Uncover the Forward- Thinking Workplace

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #27

INTRODUCE MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES FROM INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION

An effective strategy for introducing forward-thinking ideas and approaches is to introduce multiple new perspectives from inside and outside the organization. Such an approach helps ignite new thinking and uncovers new solutions.

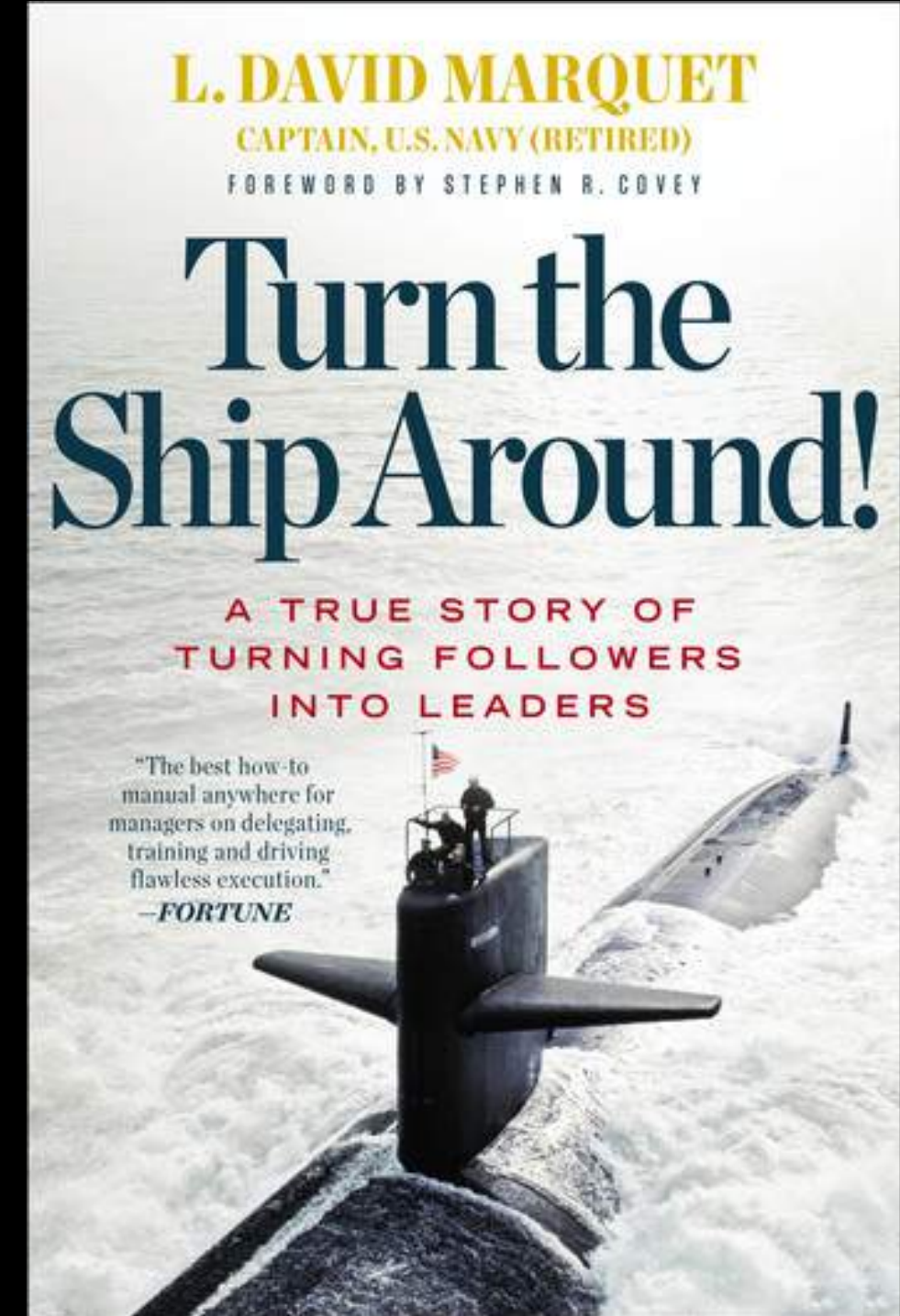


FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #28

BECOMING MORE AUTHENTIC, AWARE, COLLABORATIVE, AND CO-CREATIVE

As I've gotten older (and wiser) I've learned that most topics have multiple valid perspectives. A diversity of opinion allows me to see sides of an issue I'd missed, allows my organization to be more resilient when one approach isn't working, and allows a more nuanced implementation of initiatives.

— David Marquet, Author *Turn the Ship Around*



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #29

POWER OF DELIBERATE INTENTION

My interviews with more than 100 leaders, executives, and top practitioners over the past seven years have revealed some surprising insights. These insights and strategies came about through a deliberate intention to uncover what's behind the work of successful leaders and organizations.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #30

UNCOVERING NEW INSIGHTS, QUESTIONS AND WISDOM

Initially, this work occurred through the interview series 5 Minutes to Process Improvement Success that asked industry leaders and practitioners for their best improvement strategy. That series was then followed by the current series, Exploring Forward-Thinking Workplaces, which asks a series of six questions intended to explore how we can create workplaces where every voice matters, everyone thrives and finds meaning, and change and innovation happen naturally.

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #31

INTENTION TO UNCOVER DEEPER STRATEGY AND WISDOM

While interviews with industry executives and thought leaders are common and often reveal fascinating insights, what has been unique in this case is the approach. An intention is held for each interview to uncover the deeper strategy or wisdom behind a particular approach. We ask reflective questions that don't favor one approach or philosophy over another.

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #32

UNCOVERING INNATE KNOWING AND WISDOM

The result is an interview that captures innate knowing and wisdom. The interviews uncover perspectives that typically are not heard, solicited, or encouraged in a business setting. At Forward-Thinking Workplaces, we have found it useful to leverage these conversations, insights, and overall themes to trigger engaging conversations that uncover their own more workable solutions.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #33

UNCOVERING PERSPECTIVES TYPICALLY NOT HEARD

It's a beautiful opportunity for people to sense what's next. The very act of being asked elicits knowledge you didn't know you had. The very act of being listened to is very valuable to create a new context and let new insights emerge and let these nuggets come to the surface.

— Dennis Wittrock, partner encode.org



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Create the Forward- Thinking Workplace - Together

WE'VE LOST TOUCH WITH THE ENORMOUS POWER OF CONNECTED CONVERSATIONS

In our increasingly connected and fast-changing world, it has become more difficult to have quality conversations. As our digital technologies advance, we find ourselves more and more reliant on technology to communicate with each other. It's so easy and fast to connect with almost anyone by sending a message or email.

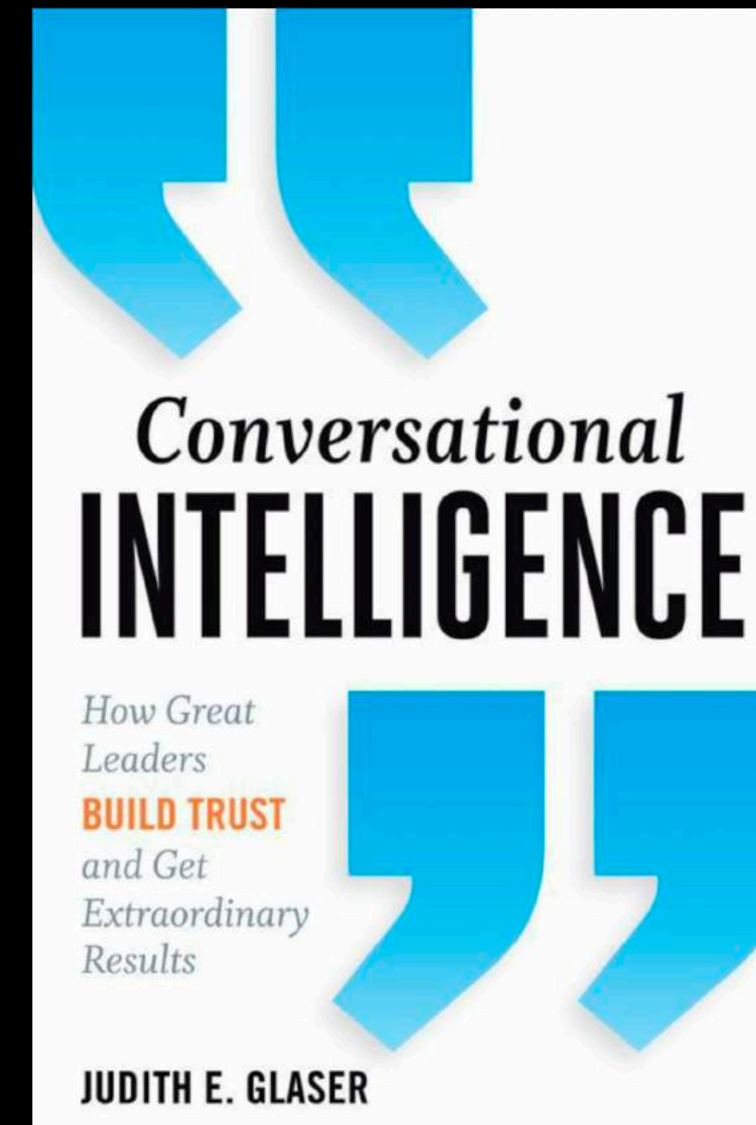
However, the downside from all these easy and fast ways to connect is that the quality of our conversations has suffered. Many of these new technologies are not allowing us to engage in deeper conversations that connect us human to human.

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #35

HELPING US UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF CONVERSATION

To get to the next level of greatness depends on the quality of our culture, which depends on the quality of our relationships, which depends on the quality of our conversations. Everything happens through conversations!

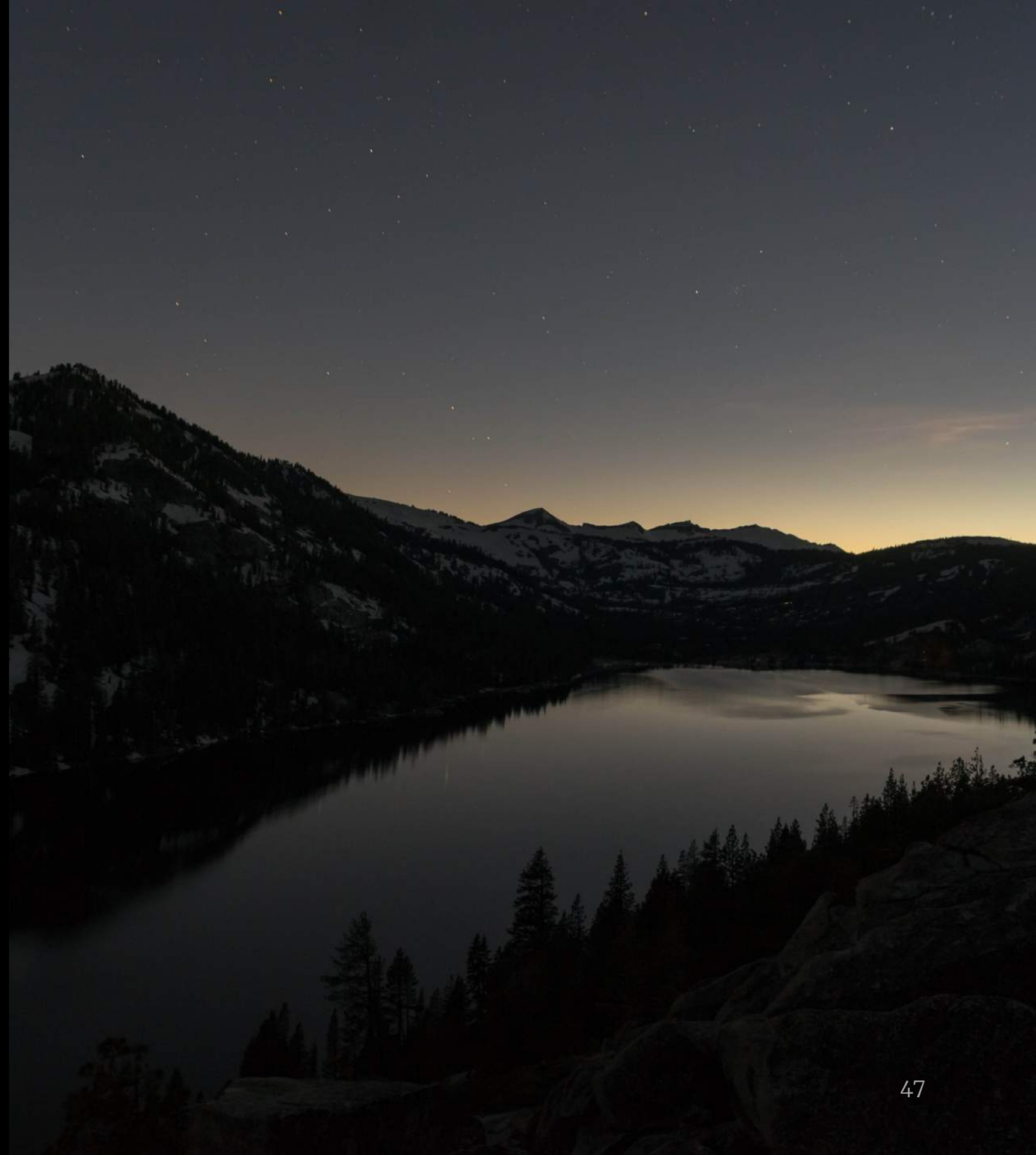
— Judith Glaser, CEO, Creating WE Institute



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #36

UNCOVERING PERSPECTIVES TYPICALLY NOT HEARD

My work has demonstrated again and again the power of connected conversation, where we're listening to each other from a state of not knowing. The person speaking feels free to express their innate knowing; listeners truly listen and open themselves up to learn something new. Everything starts and happens through a conversation. It opens the door for us to uncover innovative new solutions and to unlock our shared wisdom. Unfortunately, most of us are not having conversations in a way that unlocks this hidden potential.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #37

THE FORWARD THINKING WORKPLACES NARRATIVE IS A BLUEPRINT FOR ENGAGING PEOPLE IN HIGHER-QUALITY CONVERSATIONS

This conversation invites and allows whole beings to show up; like whole food, whole beings are more nutritious to the system they exist within.

— Anonymous

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We See the World We
Describe

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #38

WE SEE THE WORLD WE DESCRIBE

It is through language that we create the world because it's nothing until we describe it. And when we describe it, we create distinctions that govern our actions. To put it another way, we do not describe the world we see, but we see the world we describe.

— Joseph Jaworski, Founder, American Leadership Forum



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #39

OUR HEADS ARE FILLED WITH CONTENT

So many conversations in today's workplace focus on content, not context. We start with problems or decisions and the conversation quickly devolves into "my way or your way" instead of new possibilities and solutions that work for everyone. We're all so busy running around with our heads filled with content that we don't take time to engage in a deeper conversation. Our autopilot keeps us choosing the least-action pathways. We often take the easy and known path.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #40

THE FORWARD-THINKING APPROACH EQUIPS US ALL TO HAVE THE BIGGER CONVERSATION

We have all largely overlooked our opportunity and ability to collectively create something better. The forward-thinking approach equips us all to have the bigger conversation to solve our most vexing workplace challenges and create a workplace where every voice matters, everyone thrives and finds meaning, and change and innovation happen naturally.



WHAT DID YOU FIND MOST INTRIGUING?

Care to let me know what you found most intriguing in this presentation? I'd welcome your feedback.

Please email me at bill@billfox.co or connect with me on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/billfoxstrategy/>

THE FORWARD-THINKING APPROACH

The forward-thinking approach opens a doorway built from each person's deep desire to live a life that matters — knowing that much more is possible. This ever-changing world, we find ourselves in, requires each of us to enter into a quest to transform ourselves and learn new ways of living and working together that elevates everyone.

— Bill Fox, Founder

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