

DARE TO UN-LEAD

The Art of Relational Leadership in a Fragmented World

The Podcast



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Episode 12 – Lavanya Madhuri Sethu & Luis Maldonado

The Voice of the Shopfloor:
Professionals Lavanya Madhuri Sethu & Luis Maldonado



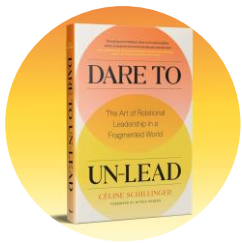
How to engage frontline workers?

When the shop floor is seen as a partner in transformation, amazing results ensue. This bonus episode builds on the experience of Luis Maldonado, who works on the shopfloor in a US vaccine manufacturing facility, and Lavanya Madhuri Sethu, whose Quality Assurance work in India involves interacting with the shopfloor. So much to learn from these two change leaders!

Podcast Transcript

This transcript has been slightly edited for clarity purposes

Celine: It is tempting to think that more leadership or some kind of improved leadership will help us and our organizations work better. But what if leadership was part of the problem instead of the solution? What if our understanding of it only maintained principles of the past, which no longer serve as well?



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That's what I explore in my book, [Dare to Un-Lead](#), and today in this podcast. Join me and my guest, a person quoted in the book or in tune with its values, to learn from them what it takes to un-lead and succeed together.

Welcome to the bonus episode of The Dare to Un-Lead podcast!

A bonus episode? Why?

With this podcast series, I intended to give life to each chapter of the book – there are 11 – through conversations with people who have inspired it or are in line with what it calls for. So, we've had brilliant guests join and share their thoughts, ideas and experiences. I loved interviewing [Myron Rogers](#), [Stowe Boyd](#), [Jeff Boudro](#), [Lois Kelly](#), [Lee Bryant](#), [Susan Scrupski](#), [Jon Husband & Harold Jarcho](#) together, [Sharon O'Dea](#), [Jennifer Sertl](#), [Helen Bevan](#) and [Peter Block](#). You may have noticed that my guests are quite diverse: men and women, from at least 3 countries (+1 with me), from various fields of work.

And yet, looking back at this beautiful series of 11 episodes, I realized there was a serious miss. I had myself fallen into the trap I so often warn business leaders about: I had cultivated a form of "entre-soi", or social grouping. All my guests are intellectuals, people rather privileged in terms of education and access to means and channels of expression. People who already have a voice – quite a loud and powerful one, even!

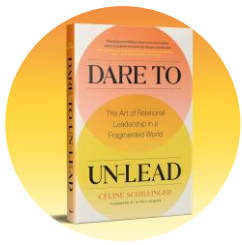
But I didn't include the voice of the front-line workers, the factory floor. Think people who do not work in head offices, but on the production line, or in local branches, in hospitals, or on the road, people who are directly and permanently in contact with customers or patients or production, whose work cannot be performed remotely. In the United States alone, there were close to [32 million frontline workers](#) in 2020; about half, 16 million, in the healthcare industry. [82% of all workers](#) in the U.S. are in frontline roles; and nearly 90% of all companies rely on frontline workers.

So, any modern organization, concerned with collective efficiency, innovation and engagement, owes it to its front-line employees to really engage them; to listen to them, of course, but also to actively involve them in shaping and driving change. This is what I advocate for in *Dare to Un-Lead*, based on several real-life, successful experiences in the pharmaceutical and other sectors.

For this bonus episode, I turned to two of my former colleagues, who have contributed to one of these experiences from the front line : [Mrs Lavanya Madhuri Sethu](#), based out of Hyderabad in India, and [Mr Luis Maldonado](#), who works in the US.

So, Lavanya, and Luis. Let's listen carefully to their stories and perspectives. They provide very precious insights to evolve and improve corporate leadership.

Let's go! First, meet Lavanya:



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Lavanya: I'm Lavanya from Hyderabad, India. On a personal front, I'm the wife of a person who proudly served the Indian Air Force for 20 years; and a mother of a beautiful daughter who is pursuing her masters in communication now. On the professional front, I have done my masters in biotechnology and I have 16 years of experience in quality assurance in different roles.

Celine: So, if you hear the acronym "QA" further down in this episode, know that it stands for Quality Assurance. The acronym GMP stands for good manufacturing practices, CAPA for Corrective and Preventive Actions and SOPs for Standard Operating Procedures. If you're not sure, just check the show notes.

Now, meet Luis:

Luis: I'm Luis Maldonado. I've been in the pharma industry now for about almost 15 years. And prior to that, I was 15 years in the trucking industry in New York. Now, I'm in Swiftwater, Pennsylvania.

Celine: Luis was, and still is, directly involved on the shop floor. He worked in an entity called Cart Transfer, which participates in the manufacturing process of egg-based flu vaccines.

Luis: What I was doing was actually taking the carts out of incubation time into a refrigerator, to meet quality requirements.

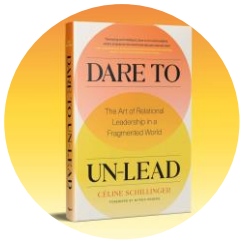
Celine: Both Lavanya and Luis have a long experience working *with* the shop floor, or even *on* the shop floor. I ask them to explain what work used to look like there, before we change it together.

Lavanya: It was a regular type of work for any Quality Assurance person. Just fix Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), follow SOPs, ensure compliance, all those things. We had a regular interaction with the shop floor, until certain job levels. For example, someone in charge of a department came to us. Because I was into quality systems management, I was not going to the shop floor regularly.

We handled change controls, deviations, gap assessments, Corrective & Preventive Actions, all those things. They came to us to discuss the quality systems. So, we were having visibility until the middle management or supervisor level, but not at the operator level. So I was not aware whether they truly understood the systems or whether they were just executing our instructions.

I was not fully aware. We were only in contact with middle management and it was – I wouldn't say it was difficult, but it took some effort; we had to convince them in certain cases, to pull them into quality. But they were aware of the compliance processes and all those things. It was okay. On a scale, I wouldn't rate at the highest or the lowest level. It was okay handling them. Motivation and engagement were a little bit at the lower side.

Luis: When working the shop floor, I felt like I was working for the company but not being part of the company. And that's a feeling that a lot of people on the shop floor have. They feel left out. They feel that everything happens during the day shift and not on the off shifts. So what do you do? You are a piece of machinery and you're part of that machine. Because you feel so disconnected. You're



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not interacting with leadership. Your managers are there to help you, but it's not the same thing as being one department, one group working together.

Celine: Lavanya, Luis and their coworkers were at the service of a system, which like in many other organizations, values expertise, alignment and execution above everything else.

Lavanya: The regular quality approach is like, discuss with the shop floor — actually, not the shop floor, but middle management – things related to some observation we get from an audit, or some kind of deviation we had, and the related Corrective & Preventive Action (CAPA).

Our focus is on compliance; so, what the regulatory guidelines are, what is the need over here. We fix CAPAs, we ask them to prepare procedures (or if it is quality, we prepare procedures), then it goes into a document, and then we conduct training courses.

This is a very traditional kind of mindset. We say, “See, you are working for a Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) company, so you have to abide by the rules. It is unnecessary to discuss. Follow the SOPs. This is the classical way.

Celine: This classical approach trusts that knowledge and instructions cascaded down through managers and internal communications deliver reliability, quality, productivity, and all things necessary to good business. And for a long time it has.

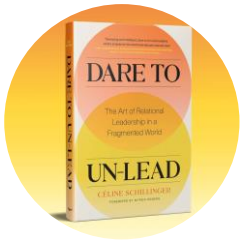
This approach, resting on fundamentals invented many decades ago as mass production began, has served us well – until it didn't. We have changed as individuals, as workers, as citizens, as much as society, consumers, technologies, and business have changed too. We can't apply the recipes of the past and expect great outcomes today.

Many organizations apply quick fixes and so-called “change management”, which do not change anything to their identity nor to the social dynamics among their members.

But sometimes a paradigm shift happens. Along with Lavanya and Luis and others, I have been a contributor to one of these shifts. In this case, it started in quality, but it can really start anywhere else as well.

Both Lavanya and Luis have been part of a global cross-function and cross level volunteer team invited to drive a much needed change in the organization's work culture. After a call for volunteers issued across the entire company, they were picked by a jury of senior managers and volunteers among dozens of anonymized applications.

Luis: I saw the application and I saw that I could actually help out in this need that the company had. Why do I say that? Because I wanted to be the voice of the shop floor. I called them the forgotten group. You're there every single day doing everything, every day, doing the same thing over and over and over.



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And you know what happens? There's a lot of people that have a lot of great ideas, but they're afraid to bring it up because maybe the manager might not be interested or maybe they will get rejected. That's what I saw, that we could actually make changes to improve the process.

Celine: The intention of this kind of approach is to create the conditions for a peer-to-peer movement to grow that transforms interactions that mobilizes individuals in a community of peers who care for one another. From there, collaboration and good work and continuous improvements emerge naturally. For more details about how it works, check out the book.

Luis: The Big Opportunity approach is from the bottom up. You get volunteers, people that are interested in making change, and together you make things happen.

Lavanya: This is the concept basically: people owning the process.

It is not: "I'm coming to do my nine-to-five job. I'm working on this. I have to charge this [viral vaccine cell culture] media, I have to wash this vessel. I have to do this. I have to complete this process to close the change control". No. *People owning the process.*

It is not a robotic process. You are a human being. You have to work with heart as well, not just the mind. Connecting both, so that we move ahead. Learning more things in collaboration.

Luis: I'll give an example. These standard operating procedures were written a long time ago, and as time goes, things should change, but they never get changed. If it is working fine, why change it?

We look at this very differently. We do the process. We can make a change to make it better, save time, engage people that were not engaged, and most important, ensure quality. How can we make it better? And all that saved the company so much money.

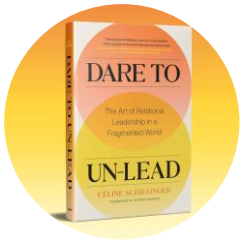
We started doing it. They said, wow! And now, till today, it's still going on like that.

We had one department that was making a lot of mistakes for many reasons. Why? The equipment, the timing, the tidiness... and that created problems throughout, which delayed the process. So we got together. And we decided, how can we make these changes and avoid those issues? And then we got that group working together, and say, why don't we try this? Why don't we do that? Why don't we do this?

The important thing is if your manager or leadership allows you to do things like that, the company will do a lot better. That's what we did, and we proved it out: no mistakes for two and a half years straight. No mistakes at all.

And when people start seeing these things, they're like "Wow, let me do what they're doing!"

Celine: Why was it not possible before?



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Luis: Because everything was top down. You just go there, you do your work, and that is it. You don't like it? Bye-bye.

Celine: Wasn't there any quality circle or things like that?

Luis: Yes. But if something is working, nobody wants to make a change. If it fails, "Ah! This is because we made this change, that's why it didn't work". [Note: that's how you develop a change-averse culture]

But when we started making those [new types of] changes, and they saw the difference, [they said] "Wow, we should have done this years ago!"

Celine: That's real continuous improvement, fueled by the engagement and collaboration of people wherever they are in the organization. And for everyone involved, this new way of approaching work issues is an eye opener.

Lavanya: We are not robots. We are human beings. We have emotions inside. We have so many things which impact our working style. That kind of engagement, of motivation, should continuously be there inside a human being. And further, there should be some force to engage the workforce towards having that mindset.

So, I then understood that, yes, this is something which [should be done]. There can be some people with bright ideas or who want to tell something, but maybe they don't have a forum where they can share [ideas] or highlight things [they have noticed]; some people may be lacking motivation or appreciation for the work they're doing.

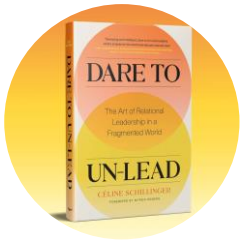
So, after I came back [from our initial gathering] and we started this movement, I understood that there are many people who are talented. [Talent] is not attached to their title or job level. The amount of ideas they were having was amazing. Maybe they were not able to communicate in the right language to the higher ups, but there was amazing talent, which I understood.

I realized that yes, there is a spark within everybody which can make a difference. This was a great experience for me. Throughout my career, I can name this initiative as where I learned many things from others and I connected with so many people.

Celine: Connection. Yes. Connecting the system to more of itself.

As my friend and mentor Myron Rogers explained, it is a critical success factor in organizational change. The deliberate, intentional action of connecting more colleagues to each other in a variety of ways across functional lines, but also hierarchical levels, locations, and more is one of the unique features of this approach.

Why does it matter? Because relationships are not just what makes work more enjoyable today. Relationships *are* the work.



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Luis: It was a disconnect that we had on the shop floor. As we started doing things together, we're now talking about it, making changes, and it actually becomes like a positive infection for other departments. Now, it's like a virus: "they're doing it, it's working, let's try something new!" And let me tell you, the interaction with other departments, other sites was amazing because we are doing the work, but what happens if you don't communicate? How do you know you're not going to get something from that department or even that site that could help your site?

And that's what we did. Expose the shop floor to become a voice of the company.

Lavanya: This quality culture initiative was such a different kind of approach. Here, it is not binding a person to an area. We don't say, just do your work. We say, okay, you are working in this area, but you can think of improving this area as well as something else which you have observed. If you don't have a connection with another team, let us connect you with them.

This way, people were getting connected with different departments. We saw people with a different kind of role for example, a finance person or a HR person who were never thinking about Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) – because they have their own set of activities, and GMP knowledge is not needed for them. But they were also coming into the movement saying "Yes, we are in! We also want to participate!"

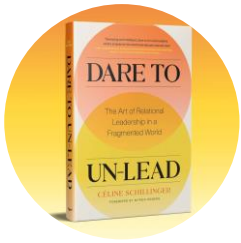
So, this way, we were actually digging deep down into the area. We got to talk with even a contract person who worked in a washing area, who was also curious to participate, to tell [what he had noticed]: "we have this kind of issue here. I'm used to working in this way, but I think this is the way we can make a difference. By this way we can save some material, or we can save some time. Or, we can improve compliance; or we are doing processes which are redundant and duplicate: I'm recording [a test result] here, I'm recording it here, and I'm recording there again, but I don't think we have to record it three times; or this is electronically recorded, but we are still recording it on paper somewhere".

They were coming up with ideas, and this was completely different. In this way, we were actually aligning with regulated requirements. At the same time, we were actually focusing on what was needed. It makes a big difference.

Even the top management was very happy, seeing their teams getting engaged, motivated, coming up not only with problems but with solutions as well. It was not like [as usual when] they're coming and complaining, "I don't have this, I don't have that". There were problems, but they were coming up with some solutions and saying "We already spoke with this team, and we have this solution".

In short, if I want to summarize, there was a lot of ownership. When you compare the classical way and this, there was a lot of ownership here at the shop floor, which is the main thing needed in any area, whether it's a GMP industry or some other industry. Ownership is the main thing.

They should not think "I'm just coming for my salary", but they have to *own* that work. That's the only way we can change things.



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Celine: We changed things by getting people to want to act together for a common cause, over time. Contrast this with traditional corporate efforts to get people on board during the onboarding process only to ignore them afterward; an experience many employees can relate to.

Lavanya: When [new employees] go onto the shop floor after they complete all their SOPs training, they go inside to work. But the fire, which has been ignited during the onboarding, will slowly diminish because they don't see any purpose of what they read and what they are doing there. So somehow, they miss that linkage, that connection. They don't see some...

I'm not saying it is like this at every company, I don't know if there are some platforms in other companies, but for me, here is how I see things. If there is no forum or area where these people can connect with other stakeholders or share their ideas, or if [they don't dare to] share something like, "this is a process where we can improve", [if they feel that because they're] new, they should not talk; if they feel "I should first of all, learn [about how things get done] here; and I have to unlearn all my previous things; I have to get adapted to this area" — that kind of mindset. This should not be there.

We should not stick to policy alone; people should have some kind of forum to discuss where such policy is working. Such movements can actually keep this fire within employees continuously and reignite the purpose of their work. They can encourage them, motivate them.

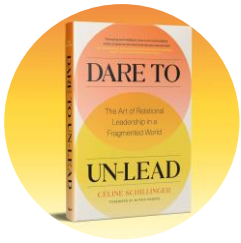
This isn't just for the industry, it even works in the family, if some kind of motivation, appreciation is lacking. Because as I said, we are human beings. We need that kind of appreciation every time. So that appreciation should be there as a fuel for people. These movements can ignite, can empower.

However, if it is not integrated into the culture and commitment from the top, there is no use for it. Things return to zero. The legacy repeats.

So, these kinds of movements are actually a triggering factor to ignite this fire. At the same time, I'm not saying that this movement should continue [as such]; it should embed into the culture from the top to bottom.

Celine: All right. It seems clear now that this community engagement approach to business and corporate culture opportunities is not your typical change management thing. But does it work across cultures? Can we engage people together while holding on to their cultural differences? That's a really important question for global organizations, but also given the workforce is increasing diversity it matters for *any* team really.

Lavanya: We have different cultures across countries – and not only countries. If you take India, it's a very diverse land. We have different religions, different languages, different backgrounds, it changes a lot. But we should not think anything is impossible. Everything is possible. Because it's a mindset. It's a mindset of doing the right thing in the right way and owning it, whether it is quality, pharmacovigilance, whatever it is.



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Celine: Luis explains that it is because we all care. It's a heart thing. It's human. The 'caring' brings out the best from people wherever they are, and it brings them together. Unlike conventional methods that push for alignment and conformity to a dominant cultural model, this community engagement approach makes the diversity of cultures and perspectives a real driver for progress.

But what kind of progress? What does it bring exactly? Let's hear again from Lavanya and Luis.

Lavanya: There were many people on the shop floor who never saw the face of the Site Head, because they were [just] going inside [the factory] to work; then they were going home. But they never had a chance [to meet the senior management]. Fine, there were some lean management things where the leaders were going inside [the factory] to see, but the shop floor employees were scared. Like, "I see my Site Head from afar", okay, "Sir has come", I'll go back. But there was never a chance for shop floor employees to go to them directly and say what they think.

Instead, we said: we'll go to the senior leadership. We'll discuss what is happening, what we want to do, and then we will ask them whether they can come and hear from the volunteers.

So we went to senior leaders, we told them what we were thinking and what was the purpose of this, and then we invited them. They said yes, we will come, we will listen to what you want to say; what your ideas are, and how different they are from the current things. So, they came. And when they saw people presenting action plans, they were amazed.

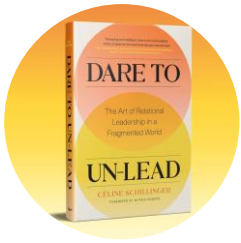
They felt like, wow! We never saw such cross functional work, people coming as one team and presenting some other area, not even related to them. When they come up with something and identify a potential issue, a potential resistance from an area, [they also come up with] a solution. They were coming up with everything.

Senior management was very happy after the meeting was done – they were so happy. They said, wow! Wow, this is great! We always wanted people to work like one department, and this is how it is working! We really appreciate the way you are working.

And they said to me, "Lavanya, can you conduct more workshops for the shop floor where we can engage them, empower them, ask them whether there are any issues in their areas so that they can give improvement ideas? Can you conduct some workshops?" – which was a first for me, Celine! It was like, wow, within just a few days, it was from the top, from the bottom, from the middle. Everybody was so excited! And then within the next few months, everybody was in.

This was the initial story, which I will never forget. I still see those pictures sometimes and I really feel happy seeing those memories.

Luis: We have an individual called Chuck. He's been with the company for many, many years and his voice was never heard. That was one of the things that made him feel very, very down. Every year doing the same thing over and over. He came up with some ideas that he said could save the



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company time and money; but because they actually felt like they don't want to experiment, they didn't do anything.

But once he started to talk [with volunteers] of his ideas and [thanks to their support] it started to work, then he became so popular. He used to go to the cafeteria and have lunch; now it took him 15 minutes longer because everybody wanted to say, wow, that's great! How did you do it? And everything else. What's interesting is how a person that was so disengaged, negative, became engaged and positive. Again, it comes out to 'Together you make it better'.

Celine: Chuck's story is indeed exemplary. Because no one cared he kept an improvement idea for himself for nine years. Nine years! When, thanks to our movement, he finally felt heard and encouraged, Chuck, the disgruntled shop floor trainer, implemented the improvement he'd been thinking of. It made a small but noticeable difference, which we celebrated. And so Chuck became popular, recognized and proud. Now, guess what? Just a few months later, Chuck came up with another improvement idea that resulted, this time, in big savings for the company.

Such collective voluntary movement brings great value to organizations. But as we see, the beauty is that they also bring a lot to the individuals involved.

Luis: At first, I didn't know what I was getting into. I knew that I could help out. In what capacity, I had no idea. To bring so many individuals to volunteer, it makes things very different.

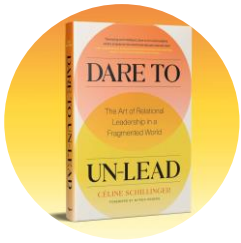
When you volunteer, you *want* to do something, you don't *have to* do something; you want to do it. That brought to me a skill that I didn't know I had, which is the ability to bring together so many people to go and pursue the same goal, the thing that we all want to do.

It brought me happiness. Seeing people engaged, seeing people come up with different ideas and help them say, you know what, that's a good idea. Let's bring it to a different department. Let's move it on. Let's make it happen. And they feel appreciated when something like that happens. But not only that, it helps the department.

So that comes back to where you feel like you're part of the company, you don't just work for the company. And this brought so much joy. Yes, to see everything get together, and really feel like, you know what? We are doing something positive! We're doing something to help the world! We're doing something to just get better.

Lavanya: It was like a self-realization. I never knew that I had that kind of energy, of power, where I can pull people, I can connect them, I can learn so many things.

Before that, in my area, I thought I knew all the processes, I knew all the procedures. So I came, I went, I did my work. Whatever was given to me, I delivered. That was the kind of mindset I had before. But I learned, no, no, no. This is not the way to work. We have to explore many other areas.



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We have to reinvent the wheel. So many people don't reinvent the wheel. This is what they say generally, but in fact, you have to reinvent the wheel. You have to find out different ways of working because GMPs are not the same forever. They're getting updated. Regulatory requirements are not the same. They're getting updated. Things change with time.

Similarly, we have to change ourselves, so we have to rethink the way we work, and if we are doing the same work, how we can make it fun as well. I know this is a regulated environment, I'm not talking about making everything fun, but for a person to work well, they have to enjoy [what they do]. So, we have to create an environment where people are happy to be compliant. They should feel happy, they should not feel stressed [and focus only on] "I have to do this, I have to do that".

When they understand the purpose of their work, they will never feel stressed. If you give them proper time, if you give a proper planning, you don't push them, you don't stress them, they're happy. They're happy to do what is written. I have learned that it is possible. It is possible to deliver more, without stress.

We can learn from so many people, not only from a person who is above me, but from a person who is on the shop floor also. I learned so many things from them. Even from the shop floor.

Celine: It also brought Luis an award, the Inspiring Workplaces Unsung Hero Award! So well deserved.

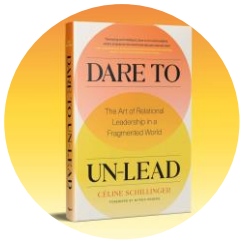
Luis: That was an amazing award. Why do I say that?

Because when I went and gave a speech on how we operate, how it feels to be part of the shop floor, how it feels when you wake up in the morning and you have to go there repeatedly, go over and over the same thing – I talked in front of all the HR individuals that were there. That was amazing. A little scary, but it worked out [laughter]. You have people working at the top and not actually experiencing what individuals pass through. [Through my speech], they opened their eyes and said, wow, that's how it is! That's how you really feel!

That brought so much energy to the room. People actually listened in silence, they heard every word that I said and when I finished it was an amazing experience because they kept talking about this speech that actually was about my own experience.

Celine: What is happening here is deep people engagement. I see well-intentioned organizations doing their best to meet the mundane expectations of their employees. That's nice, but it's not people engagement. Keeping your employees in a consumerist mindset will not solve any business problem, and you can never fully satisfy all their desires, which are infinite.

On the other hand, engaging people, letting them shape the future together, creating the conditions for them to feel like actors rather than spectators – or worse, victims – is what really engages people.



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Maybe not a hundred percent of them...

Luis: ...Some people think it's just a job. But when you have people that want to make it better, and face a stop; you have a wall there, and they hear “sorry, you can't do that”. So now, what are you there for? You know you can make it better. That's why a lot of companies lose a lot of good people. They do not listen to the employees.

Celine: But when they do listen, it's a huge advantage to attracting and retaining talent. Isn't it Lavanya?

Lavanya: I'm a very spiritual kind of person. I like to spend my free time going to temples, understanding the Indian way of living, the Vedas and all those things. And I spend most of my time listening to the discourses of great gurus. One of the gurus said, “If you stamp on a snake and think ‘the snake will not bite me because I have my feet on it and the risk is mitigated’, you are wrong. Someday you will lift up your feet. The snake will bite you”.

Similarly in organizations, if we hide the issues, we apply some quick fixes, we have some procedures, and we think, okay, we are fine today – no, the traditional kind of firefighting / quick fixes will not save the industries. We have to identify; we have to give time. We have to take the right action and mitigate [risks properly]. Otherwise, we are in great danger.

The traditional kind of boss says “you have to listen silently, and implement”. But you see, generations have changed. Look at the current generations, the millennials: they're not going to hear what you're saying unless you share the logic behind. If you don't, they're not going to buy what you say. Because they are already from a very good background. They have access to comfort, luxury goods. Money is not the main thing for nowadays generation. Earlier generations used to work for money. But money is not the main thing now. People should sense the purpose where they're working. They should sense that kind of culture there.

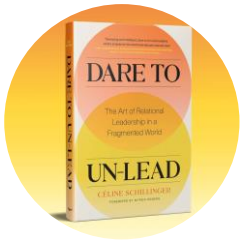
Otherwise, we are not going to retain talent.

Celine: I asked Luis and Lavanya what they would like leaders to know from this or to understand better. Hey, that's free advice, directly from the shop floor!

Luis: When you give people freedom, when you give people time, things could work very differently.

Working on the shop floor, like I said before, it's hard to work there. Because you are a piece of that machine and when you get a little bit of time to do different things, then at that point people will see a difference of how much better it could be.

Lavanya: There are different kinds of leadership, we all know, we went through many training courses – there are many kinds of leaders, and the right leadership depends on the situation. Some make you become aggressive, or empathetic; you leverage emotional intelligence, and all those things.



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Leadership is basically to lead by example.

For any business, it's the delivery that matters – there is no doubt that, for a business to sustain, there should be delivery. But for delivery to sustain, it is not always the traditional thing [that works best]. Many companies today deploy different kinds of HR policies, employee benefits or whatever kind of culture. Anything is quality culture for me. Leaders [contribute to it] not only by showing up to regulatory authorities. If they say, “this is my policy, this is the quality policy, this is my company policy”, [they must embody it]. You show it, you live it, you lead it. So, if I say something, if I demonstrate that I'm doing it, then the ones below will also follow me. Right? If I say Celine, you should be here by seven o'clock and I come at 10 o'clock, how do you feel?

It is as simple as that. We have to live what we say, simple.

Luis: Participate, be with [the people]. Go see how they are doing. Say, “listen, you guys, you're doing a great job”. Encourage, engage. Once you have the top and the bottom engaging [together], wow, that's very powerful.

Lavanya: I learned that change is inevitable. I learned that movements are needed, but to sustain them, to sustain quality culture, commitment is needed from the top.

Celine: A word of conclusion, Luis?

Luis: Engage your employees and they will take your company to another level, especially on the shop floor. That's for sure!

Celine: May you be heard, dear Lavanya and Luis.

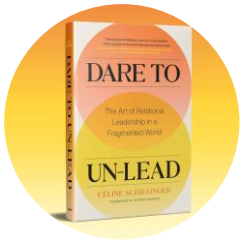
To everyone listening to us, I hope you've enjoyed this Dare to Un-Lead podcast series and this bonus episode.

I hope they inspired new thoughts and open new possibilities, and if they did, please let me know! and share with your friends.

Get in touch if you feel I can help you and your business. In a fragmented world, we need to learn and master the art of relational leadership. I am here for you and with you as you dare to un-lead.

Celine: Thank you all for listening. You'll find more info in *Dare to Un-Lead*, the book. And all links in the podcast episode description.

And now what else? Action! To explore further and apply these ideas to your own context, reach out to me celine@weneedsocial.com Let's un-lead together!



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Podcast Resources

I hope you've enjoyed this episode... I loved it. Not only did it bring me back to the exciting times when Lavanya, Luis, myself and others were involved in a spectacular culture change movement together, but I have found so much to learn from what these two have to say.

In the United States alone, there were close to [32 million frontline workers](#) in 2020; about half, 16 million, in the healthcare industry. [82% of all workers](#) in the U.S. are in frontline roles; and nearly 90% of all companies rely on frontline workers. But when it comes to change, leadership and engagement, it is rare to hear directly from the frontline.

And when frontline, shop floor workers get listened to, it is too often very early in a project (at which point they never hear back, and have no idea of how their ideas were used); or far too late (when the project, fully designed, is in its "implementation" phase). They may be invited to submit ideas to the top, but how does that change anything? How are those ideas selected and implemented? The small quality circles that involve workers on the shop floor can't by themselves increase people's level of personal agency, motivation, and impact on larger-scale change.

The movement that Lavanya, Luis, myself and many others have been involved in was very different in nature and in outcome. Volunteer networks, of which Lavanya and Luis were members, led change with the participation of many, by connecting people across levels and functions and locations, by enabling people to implement their good ideas - big and small, by encouraging and celebrating progress. It was a real partnership with senior management, in action.

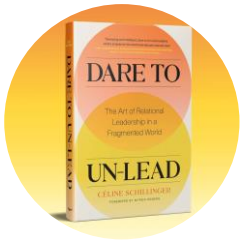
In my experience, any modern organization concerned with collective effectiveness, innovation and engagement benefits enormously from truly engaging its frontline people, actively involving them in shaping and driving change.

Thank you so much, dear Lavanya and Luis for sharing your story and your leadership insights!

Curious to know more?

Read [Dare To Un-Lead: The Art of Relational Leadership in a Fragmented World](#).

- **Luis Maldonado** can be found in Dare to Un-Lead on p. 241-242
- **Shop Floor** is addressed throughout the book, and in particular on pp. 61, 63, 110, 159
- **Frontline work** is addressed throughout the book, and in particular on pp. 74, 125, 133, 181, 240-241
- **The improvement movement** Luis, Lavanya, myself and others have been involved in at Sanofi is described in pp. 73-75 and 112-113 and 176



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- **Another movement involving frontline employees** in another industry is described in pp. 45, 176, 237-238

Read My article and interview of my former colleague Bill Murray, one of the best shop floor managers I've ever met: "[Leadership on the shop floor](#)" (Sept. 2017)

Connect with [Luis Maldonado](#) and [Lavanya Madhuri Sethu](#) on LinkedIn

Luis Maldonado's favorites:

Film: [The Godfather](#) - with Al Pacino. Who *hasn't* seen this movie yet? :)

Series: [The Blacklist](#)

Book: [Rich Dad / Poor Dad](#) by Robert Kiyosaki

Singer: [Sade Adu](#)

Recipe: [Steak Au Poivre](#)

Lavanya Madhuri Sethu's favorites:

Film: The Pursuit of Happiness (2006) With Will Smith ([see trailer](#)) "it illustrates the importance of teamwork and supportive relationships in helping us to overcome adversity and achieve our goals and also showcases power of strong leadership"

Book: [Autobiography of a Yogi](#), an autobiography of [Paramahansa Yogananda](#) (5 January 1893 – 7 March 1952) published in 1946.

Singer: [Shri Late S.P. Bala Subramanyam](#) (1946-2020), one of the greatest Indian singers of all time. Listen to his essential songs on this [Spotify playlist](#)!

Recipe: Anything vegetarian. Here are [68 vegetarian Indian recipes](#) collected by the BBC. Yummy!

Curious to use these ideas in your work? Get in touch!

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