

DARE TO UN-LEAD

The Art of Relational Leadership in a Fragmented World

The Podcast



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Episode 5 – Lee Bryant

The Real Digital Transformation:
New Work Designer Lee Bryant



New organizational operating systems help overcome inefficient vertical hierarchies and augment human work. When digital technologies are used to rethink organizations entirely – instead of simply automating old business processes – our enterprises and their people win, digital acceleration consultant Lee Bryant says.

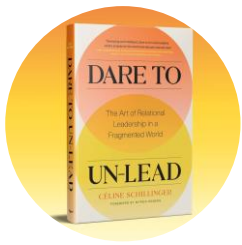
Podcast Transcript

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?

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 Dare to Un-lead podcast, episode five. We continue to explore chapter by chapter, the themes discussed in the book. Myron Rogers told us about change in living systems, Stowe Boyd about the failure of current leadership, Jeff Boudro about the dynamics in human systems, and Louis Kelly told us about the joys and sorrows of change agents and how to be a more impactful one.

Now let's turn our attention to creating collective liberty at work. That's chapter five. Autonomy, agency, responsibility, are strong enablers of good work. But how do we scale freedom while avoiding the temptation of excessive control and bureaucracy and achieving collective performance? Can we do liberty by design?



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Have we already made progress in this direction with the new ways of work: remote, hybrid... and the new tech solutions that have become familiar since Covid? And who else but Lee Bryant to ask about this?

Lee is passionate about using technology to put humans front and center of the way we do things in the 21st century. He co-founded the influential social business consultancy HeadShift 20 years ago to investigate new uses of social technology inside organizations. And more recently, PostShift, which works on the development of new organizational operating systems. We'll ask him exactly what that means.

An earlier bio of Lee mentioned: “the intersection between new social technologies and new thinking on organizational structure and culture”, and I think this says quite well where Lee resides. Metaphorically, of course, because in real life, Lee lives close to beautiful Lisbon, having left England a few years ago.

I have known Lee Bryant for about 10 years, and every time I hear him speak, I am touched by the depth of his knowledge and the clarity of his vision, anchored in strong values of human connections. Lee urges us to make room for human ingenuity, which is not self-evident in a world that instead tends to breed defiance of people and over-reliance on technology.

Lee, I'm so glad you could come. Welcome.

Lee: Thank you. Thank you. Great to be here.

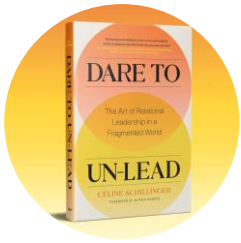
Celine: Awesome. Lee, I'll start with the first question I ask all my guests. What is your art? What is the professional practice that you would describe as unique to you or that you perform in a unique way, and what led you to it?

Lee: That's a great question. I think probably, I would say my art is about self-representation, and also helping people discover their agency. Because it's often hidden or not quite at the surface. So, we used to call this humanizing the enterprise but it's not really just about business, it's really about building better institutions for the 21st century.

Because I think if we look around us now, we can see that our institutions are not really fit for purpose in politics today, in democratic structures, in international organizations, and most certainly in business and other forms of smaller organizations. So, I think that's what my challenge is about. That's the wall I throw myself against over and over again for many years.

But actually, I never intended to get into business. I was always into politics and sort of international relations and so on. That's what I actually studied. But what happened to me was – you know, I came from a background in anti-racism. I ended up on a crazy journey from journalism to sort of politics and diplomacy, and I ended up working within the Bosnian government during the war in a very hard, challenging and fast-paced existential struggle.

My job was to help reframe international coverage and international politics because we had a situation where a handful of countries and media organizations had a great dominance over the way the conflict was understood, and in their pursuit of what they thought was neutrality, they were actually missing the key principles at stake here in terms of a multi-ethnic future, and equality, and so on.



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So I used to do sort of blogging, before blogging. I had an amazing network of sources, all over the country, all over the world from frontline sources all the way to secret diplomatic meetings. I had a few friendly prime ministers and ministers in different countries that would feed me things and I would produce a daily briefing as truthful as I could make it, but obviously supporting our point of view. And I would send it overnight on a computer fax modem all over the world. And it was quite impactful.

And then what happened was one day my former media professor came into the embassy where I was working, and he showed me an early web browser. This is sort of 1994, I think, and he just said, “that’s your future”. And he was right.

After that, the crazy career came to an end, there was a peace deal and so on. And so, I wanted to work with NGOs and human rights organizations in making them less like marketing agencies and more like real organizations focused on representing reality and not turning people into a cliched picture of a starving African child or something like that... We did a few interesting projects, and then I sort of by accident discovered that the world is full of these “battery chickens” living within cubicles in organizations; and if you could find a way to make their lives maybe just 10% less alienating... actually, that added up to, you know, a whole contribution to human potential.

So, that was my accidental journey into applying these ideas to business.

Celine: A cruel but very true analogy: the battery chicken! What does PostShift, the company you co-founded, do?

Lee: We run and we help create quite large, long-term digital transformation programs. We've done that with a number of quite substantial, mostly European organizations, but also Asian and Middle Eastern organizations as well.

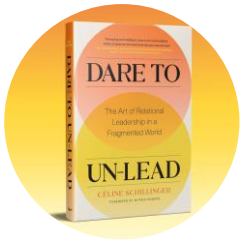
We also do a lot of learning, we teach senior executives and also emerging leaders essentially about what a digital organization is; how can you transition towards it, and also how do you run it. That's our day-to-day, bread and butter work. But behind the scenes, what we're doing is we're trying to apply, as you said, two decades or more of practical experience into this notion of an organizational operating system.

This is the sort of higher level work that we try to do, and we want to translate that into a better way of helping organizations transition. So, not change programs, not transformation programs, but possibly software, possibly systems, possibly architectures. That's our bigger mission.

Celine: Yes, that's exactly what I saw on the Post Shift website: it says that the next wave of digital transformation is about “creating natively digital and connected structures that operate like software”. And you add: “it is time to upgrade our organizational operating systems”. What do you mean by that exactly?

Lee: You know, I think Mark Anderson famously said, software is eating the world, and I believe that software will be *everywhere*, but it won't be *everything*.

We still need beauty. We still need, you know, physical objects. We still need food. We still need a meaningful human life. So, I'm not obsessed with automating everything or turning everything into



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bots, but I do believe that there are some really fundamental lessons we can take, from the evolution of software architecture and the way things work.

Kevin Kelly wrote this really interesting book; *What Technology Wants*. His thesis is that technology evolution is in fact really just a subset of human evolution. And so, in a sense, we're co-evolving with the tools and the technologies that we create. I think [Stowe Boyd](#) says, "we make our tools and our tools make us".

If you look at the architecture of software and how it's evolved, it's very close to a human sort of ecosystem or a natural ecosystem. You have lots and lots of agents and components, which are all fighting for survival, pursuing their own fitness function, but within a cooperative and a competitive ecosystem. And so, some things succeed and grow. Some things fail and die, but overall, the affordances of this software ecosystem are incredible. When I was young, I started coding in basic and assembly language and everything was hard. But today we've gone up so many levels of abstraction that I can sit down now and write prompts, and a 'magical' sort of AI bot will write the code for me.

That's an incredible evolutionary journey, but it's not one that we've seen in organizations. The basic structures of an organization are like an evolutionary rock pool. There's no competition, there's no change, there's no evolution, there's no intelligence really in the way that we coordinate work in organizations.

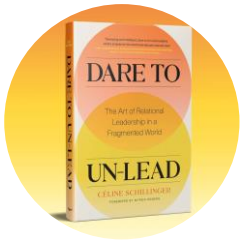
I think we can learn a lot of lessons from software architecture and we can create the right combination of human and machine. If we can afford to be rather brutal in critiquing the default organizational model today, I would say it's basically like an ineffective machine constructed from generic management meat. Right?

It's neither human nor machine. It's not human enough, but equally it's not machine-like enough. So, what I think we can do is we can use technology to solve a lot of the underlying boring coordination of work questions and problems, precisely so that we can be more freeform, experience more liberty, and connect with each other in much more meaningful and productive ways on top. That's really where we're headed with that idea.

Celine: And to be clear, this does not apply to IT companies alone, but to any kind of organization. Is that right?

Lee: Yes, absolutely. I mean, if you look at, for example, your phone, your TV, your automation system, even your car, we have this idea that there is a core underlying platform, which is conservatively, tightly managed. It runs security, privacy, compliance, risk management, rules of the road. You can't mess with it, right? So, I can't edit the iPhone operating system. But what it does is it exposes all of these magical sorts of services and capabilities, and then I can have a world of infinite variety on top by having a specific app that uses those services to do something very personal to me, something that I want to experience.

And so you've got this sort of tight and loose model, and I think that is a far better architecture for the way that modern organizations work today. Because, for example, the default system is a vertically divided architecture. Everything is top down. It's got no intelligence. The roots are up and down rather than across. And what we need is something that's laterally connected, something that's networked and horizontal. I think that's what the idea of platforms brings us.



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We can do all of the boring automation stuff, all of the work coordination stuff in that layer, so that we can have freeform, autonomous, agile teams, networks, squads, tribes, whatever sort of informal structures, work for a particular organization. They can use these services to actually create value for customers, to create wonderful experiences and to do all of this without needing the sociopolitical system of a management class who tells them what to do.

Celine: Is that a remedy to what you sometimes speak about and call “learned helplessness”? What is that?

Lee: Well, this is one of the many negative artifacts of hierarchy in organizations. The way I think of hierarchy is that it performs three basic functions.

It's a social status system. And that is just natural, right? That happens with all creatures and it will never go away. So, I don't have a problem with that, but it's also the way that we communicate in organizations, and it creates very negative communication cultures: top-down, incomplete information, managers talking to their underlings privately in an often aggressive way, often unkind way that you would never see if they were communicating around a dinner table. Or even within an open teams or Slack channel.

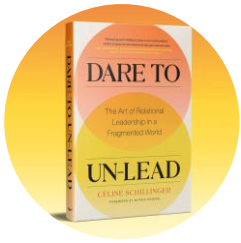
But the third and the worst possible use of hierarchy is as a means to coordinate work. It's just so hideously inefficient. It was designed around the telegraph and the telegram, not around AI teams, Slack and all the other tools that we have today. And one of its negative effects, I think, is that it does teach people not to tinker, not to experiment.

It teaches people that only the high priests of IT can tell you how to use your laptop or Outlook or some idiotic technology. I have a cat as you know, and I worship my cat as most cat owners do. I also have kids as well. And I love this word: [neoteny](#). The process of neoteny is essentially the idea that all creatures want to be a baby, if we let them. So, you know, although my cat's supposed to be a murdering sort of huntress, she really likes to curl up on my lap and behave like a baby. And inside an organization, if you treat people like children, people will always behave like children because why would they not?

It's comfortable, you don't need to worry. You don't need to work too hard. And so for me, this is a characteristic of hierarchy. It's an artifact of top-down management. So, it's not my sort of driving goal, but I think it's definitely a good side effect of actually giving people more liberty, but also requiring more obligations that you might put under the category of fraternity.

That balance between freedom and responsibility is, I think, very, very important. And I think many of the models that we work with, people sometimes misunderstand them as being “nice” models. You know, it's all about freedom, it's all about transparency, saying what you want to say... Well, yes, but it's also a much more competitive environment as well, because there's nowhere to hide.

In a bureaucracy you can just move papers around and have a career of 20 or 30 years barely turning up. But in a connected, modern, smart organization, you have responsibilities, you have accountability to each other, not just to this faceless machine. It's not just about liberty, it's also about obligations and mutual accountability as well.



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Celine: Do you think this autonomy at scale can be designed? That's a question I really would like to explore with you now. Would you say that for example, the Rendanheyi model developed by Haier, does that, and can this model be replicated? Are there any downsides to it? What's your view?

Lee: Well, I think the first thing, in fact, goes back to what I just said. The first thing about the Rendanheyi model is that you need to understand it's hyper-competitive. You know, it's not a comfortable place and it requires more of you, but equally it gives you more capacity for autonomy and for liberty. And the reality is that not everybody wants that in their work.

Some people just want to turn up, you know, perform the theater, take their money, and go home and live their life. And that's absolutely fine. We shouldn't all be focusing our identity on work unless that's something we're deeply passionate about. So I would say I do believe that we can design systems that enable autonomy at scale.

We can't design autonomy, obviously, but we can design systems that encourage and promote autonomy at quite a large scale. I do believe in that. The downside, as I say, is primarily that these are very open systems where there's nowhere to hide. And so, they're not for everybody. You know, some people will find them too competitive, to the extent of almost being quite brutal.

But the insight that I love from Zhang Ruimin and the Rendanheyi model is this idea that contracts, as trustable, reliable expressions of mutual commitment, shouldn't just exist between organizations, but they should also exist between people, between teams, between functions. It's a bit like the Morningstar case study in organizational design. People make mutual commitments to each other.

I think that's a very, very powerful idea. And I think the architecture that they've put in place, which is essentially a platform organization supporting a rich ecosystem of independent microenterprises who can work together, compete against each other, they can cluster, they can form other structures – that's a very, very smart, powerful architecture, which also reminds me of software.

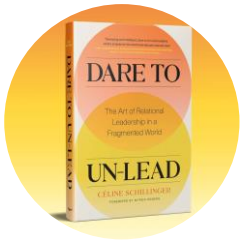
Celine: In the field of technology, there's a lot of buzzwords all around us. Web3, crypto, blockchain, AI, ChatGPT... What do you think is useful to watch and what do you think is nonsense or not relevant?

Lee: That's an easy one.

Crypto is trash, top to bottom. It has zero social purpose whatsoever, and if you are in it because you're trying to make a quick buck, good luck. I hope you're left holding the bag.

Blockchain is an extremely basic technology that, as a technologist I understand, has very limited applications. It's essentially a database, right? You need to be sort of less knowledgeable about tech to get really excited about the potential of distributed ledgers and the blockchain. There are a handful of use cases, possibly long-term property ownership documentation and a few others where this could improve things, but for the most part, it's massively overhyped and it has no purpose. It does, however, have a fundamental problem that annoys me, which is this idea of being a trustless system.

I want to use technology to create more social surface area for interpersonal human trust. I want trustful systems. I want us to scale our humanity, not design it out by assuming that trust is impossible.



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Yet here we'll have a trustless, algorithmic purely transactional relationship between people. So this is why I don't think that DAO's have a great future because I just think that trustless systems incentivize bad behavior, and that's what we've seen all the way through the crypto story. Because why would you not?

If code is law, do anything the code supports, who cares who's on the other end of that transaction? You do what the code allows. Whereas if I've sat down with somebody and had a glass of wine or broken bread with them. I'm very unlikely to want to exploit them in any way. In fact, quite the opposite. I'm a pussy cat and I will be nice to them and loyal to them, you know, for a very long time, unless they prove that they're not to be trusted. So that's the problem with that class of tech.

In terms of AI and machine learning, first of all, almost everything we call AI is just machine learning. It's not actually general purpose AI.

ChatGPT is exciting. I think it's a huge step forward, but what confuses me is why we are trying to replicate the worst aspects of humans in the bots themselves. Why do we want bullshitters? Why do we want people hallucinating and making up facts, and why do we want to give them these combative personalities that try and pretend that they have a soul? I would like to see our focus on augmenting human interaction because we can do anything. We are so powerful as humans when we need to achieve something.

And I've, I've seen this in some terrible situations of powerlessness. People can do anything if they are motivated to do it, and you give them the right conditions and you get out of their way. Right? So I would like to see AI just doing the machine stuff. And not pretending to be human because I just don't think that's useful or necessary.

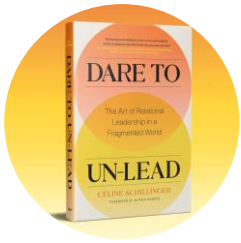
We have no shortage of humans who are very good at being human. So let's do the other stuff first. I probably sound like a grumpy old man now, thank you for new technologies -- but I love technology, yet I think a lot of it is over hyped.

Celine: Can you give just one or two examples of augmented humans in the corporate world? What is possible already?

Lee: If you look at, for example, modern finance functions, modern procurement functions, typically in a large organization, they're processing millions of documents using AI, pattern recognition, OCR and so on. And so that's taken away a whole class of sort of boring jobs that used to happen within a finance function or within a procurement department. At its simplest, that's doing something at scale quickly and reliably that humans used to do. That's one area.

But for me, where it gets more interesting is actually applying intelligence to the coordination of work and the coordination of communications. It's actually not hard to build a smart personal agent, like a knowledge agent or a search agent that knows what you're working on, that in the background analyzes your communications and your research, and can just go out there and find other people that you might want to talk to. That sort of wayfinding concierge function I think has a great deal of potential in organizations and something we've been working on for a while.

I think there are lots of areas where [we can improve]. It is this relationship between the platform and what sits above. I want the platform to be a stage on which humans can be their best human



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selfes and coordinate work without dull generic management meat, getting in the middle of their conversations and telling them what to do.

And so, that requires a lot of augmentation and a lot of augmentative technology, data analysis, coordination tools and so on. But the good news is all of that is super simple. It's not as advanced as ChatGPT though. I'm slightly frustrated that we're not using more of that rather than chasing the dream of "the all powerful oracle".

Celine: I'd love to ask you about the role of managers in this new digital native organization. In a recent article titled "Lateral Layers and Loops", you explain that "managers need to curate the fabric of their digital firm". What do you mean by that?

Lee: If you think back to the start of the pandemic and the sudden sort of enforced switch to remote working, it really raised the question, what is the fabric of our organizations? What is it that joins us together? If it's not the offices or the corridors of meeting rooms or sitting and pointing at pictures with a stick, wearing a suit and a tie, then what is it? Is it the process landscape? Is it the imaginary value chain that your consultants draw for you?

It made me realize that what it should be today is the web of interconnected, online relationships, communities, connections, and informal structures that you and I sort of take for granted in the way that we live our lives and the way that we work, but which is still not yet the core fabric of a modern organization.

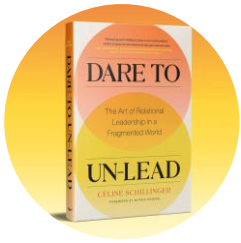
So, I teach leaders to think like architects. I also teach them to think like experienced designers, because that's job number one: to create the machine that makes the machines. As Elon Musk would say, you create the system that allows people to get on and do what they've got to do.

I would like to see everybody having some confidence and some fluency in putting together a digital workplace, putting together a set of tools for a particular team. I'd like them to pay much more attention to that than to the decor on the walls of the meeting room or where we go for our offsite in a dull hotel with dull food for a dull day of site learning.

These are the questions that I think are really important and I actually have a lot of hope. I do a lot of work with emerging leaders, and they get this, they understand that they can't take the old system for granted and just operate it. Their generation has to actually, in a way, remake that system. And that's an exciting opportunity to have, I think, in a management or a leadership career. So, it can happen, and I think people are great and they will make it happen.

But first of all, we need to overcome this sort of cartel. This is almost like a conspiracy of management mediocrity. We have a whole system from business schools to consulting firms, to recruitment agents who hire exactly the same dude, over and over again, and this dude is generic, right? I mean, he should be one of the lowest paid people in the organization because we have an infinite supply of them. Have you ever asked, well, oh my God, we've got a shortage of men with strong opinions? No, of course. As a woman you know that well, right?

So, we have to overcome this comfortable sort of blob that sits on top of the organization, it consumes way too much value. It works for itself. It's a complete myth that it works for shareholders, unless it's on a short term stock linked bonus, in which case absolutely will juice a share price for three years and then crash it as soon as it gets its payoff.



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That's a sociopolitical problem, which comes from feudalism originally. It then goes through the way that we created a two class system in business schools. It's taylorism, it's all of the rest of it, the belief. There are people who sit with a clipboard and there are stakhanovite workers who need to be more productive.

You know, it's nonsense. It's absolute nonsense today. That's the difficult part of this challenge, and that's the one that I probably shouldn't have mentioned if I wanted to win any business through people listening to your podcast. But you know, that's fine.

Celine: I love what you said. I agree 150% with it.

Maybe just a couple more questions before we close in. In *Dare to Un-Lead* I challenge our focus on org design, which seems to be, to me at least, too exclusive, as if org design alone could solve cultural problems. I am convinced it cannot. What do you think of that?

Lee: I get where you're coming from and I don't disagree, but I probably have a different balance in how I see these things. For me, we have to tackle structure, culture, practice, leadership, technology altogether, because that's the only way we're gonna do this.

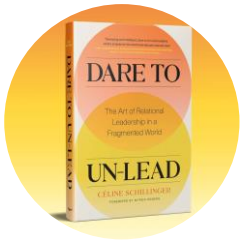
There are far too many cases where change agents accept the given reality above them and just try and carve out a space below where they can fight for the right to do work in a smart way. And that's great. That's courageous within the local area. You know, you've told some really interesting stories in your book, which I loved, about doing that. But in a way that's perhaps not seeing the bigger battle. And so, I'm often disappointed with real world examples of that where we would rather sit and create our own circles and talk to each other, like the working out loud movement for example, rather than challenge power.

And it's not about challenging power because we're political. It's because we literally have a better answer. We have a better solution for shareholders. We have a better solution for employers and stakeholders. So, it's not just a question of different points of view.

One of the things I sometimes wonder about is when we do HR-led culture interventions in organizations, it's a bit like we're blaming the lab rats for the maze. Right? Because the behavior of a lab rat is all about the maze. That's what shaped their behavior. There are so many studies about giving drugs to rats in a maze and everything else, their behavior inside a maze and outside a maze: two different worlds, two different responses altogether.

So, I don't want to blame people for the system. I want to change the system, but I want to do it in a productive, constructive way that makes money and improves work and creates better products and services. I think that's the big goal. And I think culture is often a product of the system that shapes it. And so by changing some of the system assumptions, some of the defaults for example, I think we can create different behavioral outcomes.

That all adds up to culture. I don't really buy into this idea that an organization is identity. The idea [suggested] by Meg Wheatley that you mentioned in the book, I don't really buy into that. I think there's a multitude of identities and multi-layers of identities and we don't need to sort of wave the flag along to, you know, the mission statement and stuff. I think that's an old idea.



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I do think that in the area of empowerment, in the idea of participation and everything else, there's a lot of motherhood and apple pie, right? There's a lot of nice liberal words. And it's like, yes, yes, let it wash over me! I love that stuff, but I want to see change. I want to see impact. And so, one of the paradoxes of liberals everywhere, which they're discovering in Europe today, is that sometimes you've got to fight for your liberal values and you need to be a bit more robust in challenging those who oppose them.

So yes, culture interventions. I love the whole concept of engagement leadership that you outlined very cogently in the book. I think that's an excellent blueprint for any modern leader in terms of how they behave. But I think we also do have to tackle the structure as well.

Celine: And, do you think that can happen given the constraint put on us – or that put on ourselves through all sorts of KPIs, short-term stock pricing, etc. Can we really change things significantly?

Lee: Right? The reality is, KPIs, short-term stock price targets and so on, they are part of this management cartel. They exist for managers to compete with each other for resources. They're not actually meaningful signifiers of organizational performance. You know, we all know that.

One of the things that sometimes frustrates me is that I might get brought in to teach leaders about building a collaborative enterprise or collaborating together. And then I say, well, show me your KPIs. And all of the KPIs are individual. That's just wrong, right? You're asking people to use discretionary effort and activity to do something which is against their own interests because you judge them only on individual performance. So that's a disconnect, right? That needs to change.

So, I think we have to think more deeply about how we track, monitor, and measure organizational progress and performance. We need to think about measuring the organization itself, not just its outputs, right? How healthy is it? How well structured and well performing? Is it fit for purpose? Is it doing the job we want it to do?

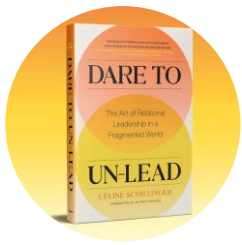
And we need to keep working on the organization, not just in it; but I think it's actually not a hard problem to solve.

Microsoft is a good example here. Satya Nadella has done an amazing job for Microsoft, he's a really brilliant leader. One of the very first things he did when he came into power was, he got rid of a competitive employee appraisal system that was in fact acting against their innovative potential. And he got people focused on working together. I think there's a similar story in your book actually about two teams for vaccine development. He solved that quite quickly and he's created a much, much more effective organization as a result.

So, I think that's a solvable problem. The problem is, again, the management sort of blob that relies on all of this. That's the hard problem to solve because it's a big historical, socio political problem. Probably the one I'm gonna fail to solve in my career.

Celine: Lee, that was an awesome conversation. My last question would be, what would you say to someone who hasn't read *Dare to Un-Lead* yet? Apart from "Read it"?

Lee: Well, yes, absolutely, read it. It's a surprisingly well-researched, very comprehensively documented outline of an entire sort of philosophical approach. How we lead, or how we get things



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done together, which I think is what leadership is about. And I think the framing of this within the liberty, equality, fraternity scaffold is very smart.

And it's actually a great way of, not just remembering what you're teaching in the book actually, but making sense of it. Because as you say, there is an interplay between these components, right? Between these points of view, and that's the bit that I found refreshing and novel in the book. I'm not a fan of business books. I try to avoid reading them whenever I can, but this was a very good read.

Your story, your voice, your experience is really what shines through in the book, and that's the most interesting and valuable bit, but you've also surrounded that with lots and lots of other references and stories and books and so on. It's very educational, I would say.

Celine: Thank you so much for having been my guest today. I enjoyed this conversation very, very much – it could have taken another couple of hours – so I'm looking forward to the next opportunity to meet. Thank you again, Lee. We'll have all links below the episode for people to find you, to read what you write, which is always thoughtful and clever. Thank you so much.

Lee: Thank you Celine, and congratulations on the book. It really was a wonderful read.

Celine: Oh, Merci.

Great insights. 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.

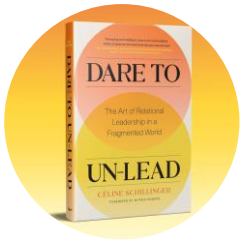
And now what else? Action! To explore further and apply these ideas to your own context, reach out to me celine@weneedsocial.com Let's un-lead together!

Podcast Resources

Do you feel your organization is impeded by legacy IT systems getting in the way of agility? This impression may not come from tech or software alone, but from the very way the company operates. In fact, many organizations still run on models inherited from Taylorism, which are now completely outdated. It is urgent to reinvent them.

We can create organizations that run on their workers' agency, rather than on their obedience. We can implement "natively digital organizational models" that leverage digital technology, networks, data and platforms to augment and support human ingenuity. Freeing up workers instead of robotizing them; expanding accountability instead of feeding helplessness; designing for agility instead of perpetuating bureaucracy: this is the real digital transformation.

Lee Bryant lives in Portugal, near beautiful Lisbon. He is passionate about using technology to put humans front and center of the way we do things in the 21st Century. He co-founded the influential



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social business consultancy Headshift in the UK 20 years ago to investigate new uses for social technology inside organizations, and more recently POST*SHIFT, which works on the development of new organizational operating systems.

I have known [Lee Bryant](#) for about 10 years and every time I hear him speak I am touched by the depth of his knowledge and the clarity of his vision, anchored in strong human values of connection. Lee urges us to make room for human intelligence, which is not self-evident in a world that instead tends to breed defiance of people and over-reliance on technology.

Curious to know more?

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

Lee Bryant and the question of org design can be found in *Dare To Un-Lead*:

- Lee Bryant p. 55
- Creating Collective Liberty at Work p. 89
- Liberty by Design? p. 95

Read "[Lateral layers and loops: Why managers need to curate the fabric of the digital firm in a post-lockdown world](#)" by Lee Bryant (subscription needed)

Read "[Repeating the mistake of abstracting social connections in system design](#)" by Lee Bryant

Read Post*Shift's newsletter: [Link*Log by Post*Shift](#)

Read Kevin Kelly [What Technology Wants](#) (2011)

Check out [Postshift](#)

Watch Lee's keynote on [Distributed Digital Leadership](#) at SocialNow 2019

Connect with Lee Bryant on [Twitter](#) and on [LinkedIn](#)

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

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