Episode 9 – Jennifer Sertl

Shaping Great Corporate Cultures:
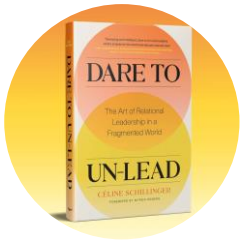Strategic Advisor Jennifer Sertl

Good leadership turns random collectives into high-performing teams, by enabling trust and collaboration. Strategist, author and advisor Jennifer Sertl shares thoughts on how to develop a culture of chosen togetherness and humane performance at work, for we desperately need workplaces in which people can thrive. Purposeful workplaces with a soul, which we can be passionate about.

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, where I interview inspiring guests about themes contained in the *Dare to Un-lead* book! Today is episode 9. After exploring at the beginning of the series, the context in which we live and work, we addressed liberty and its very practical implications for leadership in episodes 3 to 5.

How can we be freer at work collectively and what does it change? We then delved into equality in episode 6 to 8, how networks alleviate relationships of domination and submission by enhancing access to diversity and information, thereby increasing collective intelligence. And what comes next after liberty and equality?

You got it! –Fraternity. Understood as camaraderie, solidarity, an experience of friendship and support.

Can the workplace offer that, and should it even try? Remember in episode 2, Stowe Boyd was of the opinion that work should be purely transactional. But if we think that, yes, a sense of uplifting togetherness at work is something we can aspire to, if we believe that it *does* contribute to great teams and successful businesses, then what kind of leadership makes this possible? I am very curious about what my guest today thinks and does about this.

Jennifer Sertl is the founder of Agility 3R, a leadership development company. She teaches innovation at Rochester Institute of Technology in the state of New York. She is also the director of Marketing for Circle Optics, a company dedicated to transforming immersive experiences through 360 degree panoramic imaging capabilities.

Jennifer has been dedicated to decentralized leadership and the importance of self-awareness for over 30 years, having gotten her degree at University of Colorado in, guess what? Existential philosophy. My dream subject, if I ever have the chance to return to school!

In 2010, Jennifer Sertl and Koby Huberman published *Strategy Leadership and the Soul: Resilience, Responsiveness and Reflection for a Global Economy*. I was drawn to Jennifer's ideas thanks to her sharing on social networks picked up by people I followed. They held Jen in high esteem for the quality and depth of her reflection, and so did I.

We met in person for the first time in 2014 in Boston on a "catwalk"! It was actually our common friend Jon Husband, whom you heard in episode seven who took a funny picture of Jen and I in which we look like we are walking a runway, but it wasn't a fashion show. We were there to speak at a big financial industry conference in Boston.
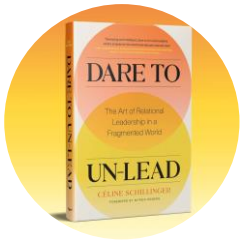
The second time we met in person was just a few months ago, over fine cocktails in Harlem. A great time and an inspiring conversation! So, when thinking about a guest for today's episode, Jen felt like evidence. I deeply appreciate her thinking that is both deeply humanistic and very much rooted in the reality of business and operations.

Jen, I'm so happy you could come. Welcome!

Jennifer: This is amazing. I do actually love that picture particularly because I think there were like 8% women, and luckily, we had leadership roles there. The idea of getting an opportunity to speak to you again is fantastic.

Celine: Thank you Jen! I'll start with the very first question I ask all my guests. What is your art, your unique professional practice or the work you do in a unique way?

Jennifer: So, I'm going to answer that in two ways. I think what I do best is really create coherence in a kind of microblog way. Twitter is a language that I understand. If I was in the Breakfast Club and

had to show my particular gift, it would be that I am a maven with context curation in the work world.

I'm particularly good at identifying essence within a corporate culture and creating behavioral brand strategies that honor the core identity of the business.

Celine: You published a book in 2010, *Strategy, Leadership and the Soul*. How does it remain relevant today?

Jennifer: Thank you so much for asking that. I want to acknowledge my co-author, Koby Huberman from Tel Aviv. We met at a conference in the south of France and kept up a relationship over Skype. This was in 2005. We audio taped six months of our meetings because we really wanted to be in the flow of the conversation. And the book really wrote itself, because as we look back at six months time of our dialogue, everything fit into strategy, leadership, or the soul as a bucket. If I had to re-release it, I would've called it strategy, leadership and passion, because the business world, even today, is really not ready for the concept of soul at work.

However, when we wrote it, we really wrote about coherence and questions to create coherence. So I'm so thankful that to me, it is a living book. It is a living invitation, if you will.

Celine: What difference do you make between passion and the soul? And what is the soul of an organization?

Jennifer: The soul of an organization is the internal intangible, yet extremely present and powerful set of inner beliefs that make an organization unique. You know, even though people have the same skills, they will thrive in very different environments and finding a culture that you align with is actually very much an affinity-based strategy.

And I do think it's kind of tricky because I know that the word soul is too religious for businesses. So if we could say it's an identity, but that it's a sacred identity, that would be the way I would describe the soul.

Passion is just a safer word of wanting to be in an environment that actually makes you feel more alive by participating.
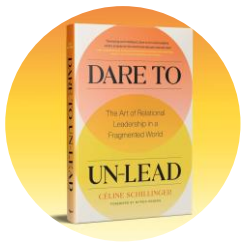
So, the more precise word for the work that we did is 'soul', but I'm still thinking that I wish more people would get access to it.

Celine: Don't you think that the soul has been a little bit purpose-washed over the years?

Jennifer: Yes. I love the point that you make, and you make it several times in *Dare to Un-Lead*, that very good intentionalized concepts get used for 'flash in the pan' rather than really understanding how deeply rooted they are in an ideology, for sure.

Celine: And what can we do about it, in your opinion?

Jennifer: You know – and I try so hard to keep Chat GPT out of the conversation that I'm having – people like having an answer, but the answer does nothing for you.

In the journey to discover, and in particular when teams discover together, there's the synapses that connect. And I love the word collegiality. You know, when you think of fraternity, the idea of "I care about these people that I'm working to accomplish something with".

An answer to a question doesn't do that. The seeking an answer to the question does exactly that.

Celine: That's fascinating. I just saw a tweet before our conversation where somebody explained how wonderful it is to have pre-filled marketing plans. For example, you just ask the machine "I want to do this marketing plan for my new app" and then the machine tells you everything you need to think about. But then, as you say, this removes all the quest and the collective questioning exercise done as a team.

Jennifer: I love that. And, also just think about the fact that you can have grandma's recipe, but you still can't cook it as good as grandma did. Right? And it's because there's the unconscious habit of doing something that you do extremely well, or with such great care, you don't even know intuitively what you do differently with it.

So, if anybody is using that technology, I think it's wonderful. Just please reread it. And insert authenticity, and make it customized to your particular culture, your particular audience. There is a place for nuance and nuance only comes from depth and depth only comes from time and experience.

Celine: I was about to ask you what changed since 2010, since the time you published your book, and how it impacts leaders or leadership. And I guess one of the changes has been this AI, the development of this technology. Anything else?

Jennifer: Yes, absolutely. Wittgenstein said "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world". In 2010 I did not have the word decentralized. I worked on holochain, which was a cryptocurrency, back in 2011, 2012, and I learned about distributed systems. That whole idea of decentralization was used in technology first, and then through our work and our colleagues', we just began to adapt; and wirearchy, the idea of this decentralized leadership.

What I'm thankful for is that our vocabulary has gotten better and so has our acceptance of remote work. It is no longer country versus country, or city versus city. Today, ideas are countries. And there's the idea that we can collaborate on a global scale in very intimate groups based on affinity. So, that level of capability, paired with the language.

The third thing that's happening now is the desire. People are having more personal agency and getting a sense of capability and the level of modeling has been decentralized. So, there's much more education available for people that want to take deeper dives, wherever they want to take those deeper dives.

Those are three dynamic things that have changed and they've changed for the better.

Celine: You're in the country of optimists, right?

Jennifer: I am a realist. I mean, I do remember oftentimes we do more scenario planning on the upside of opportunity, and I am a little bit of a buzzkill because I feel much safer being as brave as possible saying "what is the worst possible thing that can happen?"
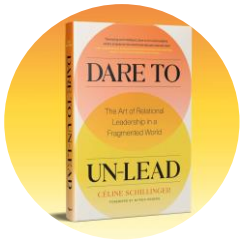
I don't think we spend enough time talking about the worst possible thing that could happen. And I think we're headed to a place where the worst possible thing could happen.

Celine: I was struck by this quote of yours, which circulated the web quite extensively, where you said "You are not a node"–like a node in the network. "You are not a node; you are a frequency". What do you mean by that?

Jennifer: Thank you so much. I do not have any business talking about quantum physics, but it ends up that we now know so much more about quantum and it ends up that it's true that we are frequencies.

Early in my career, I was lucky enough to read *Power vs. Force: The Hidden Determinants of Human Behavior* (1985) by David Hawkings. What this book was about was the fact that language has polarization and certain words create different energetic experiences in the brain.

Through this research, I got exposed to the idea that words have frequency in 1995, and since then have continued to realize that our physiology, our energy field, our word choices, our outlook… all have this ability. Listening to some of the guests in your program, talking about what you focus on, expands, and the power of our awareness.

We are so dynamic! We're not slabs of meat with a function. We are living, breathing, adapting, surviving, and complex and alive. Vibrancy and resonance are important terms about how we relate to one another.

Does that help? What is your experience of hearing this, and how can I make sure that your audience really understands what I'm trying to say?

Celine: What I loved in this quote, in addition to what you just explained, was the sense that we are not just connectors, even though that's very important, but not as a "mechanical" connector. There is something more, and probably that something has to do with the soul, or at least the art or some form of non-verbal connection between people, artistic even. Frequency makes me think of sound, music, art… And I really love this idea that we're not just, yes, nodes in a network. We're not just interchangeable connectors. There is something really strong that can happen between individuals or Ideas or those countries you describe where we enter in resonance with each other. I think it's pretty powerful.

Jennifer: I really appreciated hearing what you said about that because the issue is more about agency, and that it's mutable. That we have the power to change and create. The idea of a node is too fixed in terms of function. And so, it does make sense that this is the work.

Just to give you a sense of my family, I have three children. My son is now 16, but when he was four years old, he said "mommy, does your heart remote control people?" A four year old had a sense of the on and off capability of presence. The idea of presence in a four year old was just super fascinating. And, I don't know how much therapy he'll need [laughter] but we have these profound conversations about it, and I'm just like, yes! He gets it, he gets the power of presence in the capability of relating to something working or not working or however he meant that.

Celine: That's amazing. I mentioned in the book, pretty often Esko Kilpi, who said that work is about human beings being more intensely present for each other.
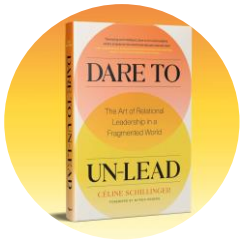
I love that. Do you agree? And if yes, what do you do to be more intensely present for each other?

Jennifer: Well, I love that you asked that because I have to say in reading *Dare to Un-Lead*, I was like, oh, I like that person too! Oh, I've read his work too! Or I've read her work too, or I know her personally! It literally was so exciting.

So, my synapses went a little bit crazy when you were talking about him and his work. And of course, I think you know this, I have to give credit to David Whyte, the great corporate poet who I met in 2000. The statement that I heard that's related to this is he said "you don't have conversations to get work done. The conversation is the work".

And so, when Kilpi said "human beings being more intensely present for each other", it meant that presence creates.

If we're problem solving together, our collective presence, our collective purpose, our collective intelligence, and our collective fraternity as you were saying, will create a possibility, something not possible before. But you have to be in the conversation in order to have the insight for the breakthrough.

Celine: And I sense that Covid and the experience of remote work has, in a way, forced us to be *even more* intensely present for each other. The bodily resonance was not there anymore, so we had to pay even more attention, that's why people get so tired after spending the whole day in remote meetings I guess. It requires additional effort to be present for the other, don't you think?

Jennifer: Yes, I think that we're not even aware of all the different things that happen in relationship. And when you have a component of it taken away, you learn how you have to compensate. One of the reasons why I believe people got tired is that the neatest thing about having real meetings is that you usually had to walk back or drive to a place, and I think a lot of people forgot the habit of creating space between.

And, I always say that exposure doesn't mean integration. Just because I was at a meeting doesn't mean I heard the insight I need to take action on, or the feedback that will help me be better. I just was there, right? So, having presence would be, I'm there and I got what would be valuable, but then I also need to process it and integrate it, and I just don't think we have a culture that values processing time. I think that's really an important part of being able to learn and adapt, grow and create.

Celine: We have all these back to back meetings and focus on ticking boxes, getting things done. How do you save time or how do you make time to reflect and ponder?

Jennifer: It's one of the neat things about me now being part-time, I'm actually on a team, as a team member with a role to play. And after being a sole proprietor for 20 years, it's a really good discipline for me to have greater appreciation for constraints. I really want to say it's easy for me as a sole proprietor to create a schedule by which I have balance. But it is harder within a corporate culture to create those habits.

So, what I would invite is that, if they don't have a culture that creates that kind of space, I invite people to make a client name. Mine was Joan. I wouldn't do for myself what I would do for other people, right? But when I got this [fictitious] third person, I started to create the space that I needed
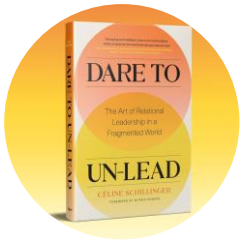
for Joan, and so Joan would have space in the calendar, which was really my way of actually processing between.

You may say, look, that doesn't have integrity, does it? Well, it has absolute integrity, because that third body is me. That is the person that is to do good work with insight from the meeting or the task that was had. It will actually have time to create value and you will get the return on that event.

Celine: That's a fantastic idea. I think I'm going to apply that right away.

Jennifer: Right :) The other hack that I do use, and I actually ask all of my clients to do, is to keep a private journal of what you would do if you could lead.

I want to acknowledge that agency is a function of the culture, and that people do have more agency than they think they have, but they also have less than people think they have. The first 90 days a person comes on a team is the most valuable time. But what ends up happening is that the value they want to create is limited by the threshold of the culture they're in.

And so if they have a journal, they can write "here's what I'm observing, here's what I might do". Then participate. But keeping my voice and my intentionality and my observation is valuable. It might not be affirmed in the culture that it's valuable, but if you create the practice that it's valuable, you can hold those insights and continue to see. Even while you're participating. Does that make sense?

Celine: It does. Very much. That's amazing. And, talking about fraternity, this sense of togetherness, do you think it is achievable at work? Can we, this experience of uplifting solidarity, can we find that in the workplace?

Jennifer: This is where you're going to be happy that I'm turning on being an optimist. I'm going to say yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Being in a culture where you feel respected and you respect others is, I think, a fundamental human need.

And a couple of things that I am noticing now. Organized religion has a lot of complexity, but it's a challenge for us that many are not in communities anymore. In fact, where we are at work, even if we're in Zoom, might actually be the most time that we spend in community.

Leaders today, I really want you to understand that you have four generations at work together, in common purpose. Yes, you have objectives and shareholders to please. You also have a community and that community needs care.

There's so much written on what these teams need, but the answer is yes, absolutely [fraternity is achievable at work]. It's fundamental. Humans need to feel a sense of belonging. Because so many people are in work environments, and it is almost the only place where they're in community other than family, it's vital that this becomes a strategic imperative for every culture.

Celine: Should we think of work as family?

Jennifer: It's complicated. My invitation would be: people have different experiences with family. So when you use that family language, you're going to get their experience with their family.
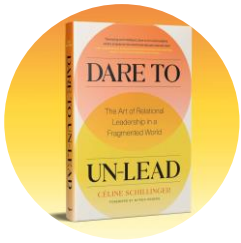
That to me is the challenge. I like the metaphor of a garden. A garden needs good soil. I care less about the seeds. I care most about the soil. A lot of times people try and hire a really beautiful plant. They hire a really wonderful, talented person to save the company. You all know this, right? And the challenge is that the talent doesn't take root.

So, if I could invite that collegiality and mutuality and respect and belonging… They are fundamental and required. And I experience the garden metaphor as one that helps if people don't have a good association with family.

Celine: We also often hear about high-performing teams. What in your opinion, makes a high performing team?

Jennifer: I'm really excited to talk about this simply because I'm in Rochester, New York and there's a gentleman that a lot of people may not know that I would love you to know about. His name is Dr. Deci [University of Rochester's Helen F. and Fred H. Gowen Professor in the Social Sciences]. Dr. Edward Deci [with Richard Ryan] coined the self-determination theory. The reason I'm bringing it up in this context is that Google actually studied high performing teams, and Daniel Pink wrote a book; *Drive* about what motivates us and high performing teams. And all of that, both Google's research and Daniel Pink's *Drive* came from Dr. Deci's work.

What is really required at a fundamental level are three components of self-determination.

Autonomy. People need to feel in control of their own behavior and goals. This sense of being able to take direction will result in real change. Having people take ownership and own whatever challenge or invitation, opportunity that comes.

Competence. People need to gain mastery, to learn different skills. And when people feel that they have the skills that are needed, or they're able to identify the anticipatory skills, it gauges in them a sense of, I can adapt, I can learn, I can grow. I belong.
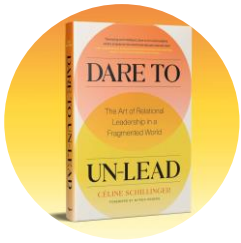
Then the third is connection or **relatedness**. People need to experience a sense of belonging, and an attachment to other people. There's another great book that says "the smartest person in the room is the room". We need each other. And I do think that our culture really is… you know, when I work on startup teams, it's all about the founder. But the founder goes nowhere without a team.

So, autonomy, competence, connectedness, I think are really important. And then, psychological safety, right? And so, teams that have the ability to have fierce conversations. I don't know if you've been exposed to Susan Scott's work and that, we need the ability to problem solve together and we need the ability to disagree together.

Another wonderful work that I use with that is De Bono's work on the six thinking hats. We need more practice putting on different thinking types of hats, thinking in multiple different ways. When we practice thinking in different modalities, we end up respecting different thinkers on our team.

Celine: That's a huge topic and a complex one when, especially in hierarchical and maybe old-fashioned organizations, dissent is a shortcut to being punished economically, or from a career progression perspective and so on; where dissent is not seen as constructive, but as rebellion.

Jennifer: That is exactly why I'm so glad you brought that up, because this is why I kept a journal. I have lost jobs because of not being aware of truth thresholds where I think I'm doing good work, and I think I'm doing accurate work, and it ends up that I actually tripped up on a landmine. And lost my job, right?

And so, since that time I said, okay, cool. I need to learn more about what the truth threshold is in this culture. But then I needed my journal so that I did not in any way diminish my ability to see and value truth.

Your competitive advantage is the accuracy in which you scan the environment and how you make decisions. And so, if I'm in an environment that's actually compromising my ability to see accurately and articulate accurately, then I'm going to make decisions that are going to make sense for a world that's no longer. I need a way to be psychologically safe. I've got a mortgage, I've got kids in college, and I actually need to value my sense-making aperture.

Celine: That's amazing. It makes me feel that, in a way, this journal is what I did through my blog, by writing. In that case it was not private, it was public. But I was careful in not mentioning my employer by name or, you know, disguising a little bit situations so that I did not share any secrets. But in a way that has helped me, I think a lot, in keeping this sense of direction, making sense of what happened independently of the pressure for conformity that I was experiencing in the job.

Jennifer: Yes, a hundred percent. Yes.

Celine: In your opinion, what builds trust, among people? We've touched a little bit on that already, having truthful conversations, being able to experience a variety of points of views without appearing threatening to others. Anything else? For example, in your experience as marketing director right now, what is it you are contributing to, in order to build trust in the team?

Jennifer: I think another thing is the ability to fail. And the ability to learn and the ability to share, here's what I did wrong, here's what I'll do differently.

I always look at three things: the organization, the surrounding team, and then actions that I actually took. And so, the only other thing that I would add is we have to be able to fail together and process together and be able to share what we need to do better. And it takes a level of, self-awareness and huge trust to be able to acknowledge where we really need to grow
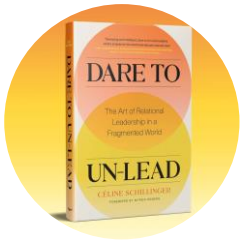
Celine: Instead of pushing failures under the carpet, you mean?

Jennifer: Yes, or just, you know, a lot of times there are "heroes" and "victims". And I think, no, the issue is that every choice that's made is a dynamic set of multiple choices that have been made. And so, you have to look at the structure.

You know, when we were preparing for today, I think there was Steve Denning who had a conversation that does relate to this.

Celine: That was the sentence by Edwards Deming, the father of modern quality.

Jennifer: Oh, yes. Edwards Deming. There we go.

Celine: But Steve Denning also says super interesting things! :)

Deming said, "a bad system will beat a good person every time"

Jennifer: Oh yes, absolutely. I was just calling that up because every situation is systemic, and we have to be able to look at the system in a complex way in order to learn from the system.

A great example was working in a culture that had hired a third shift manager and that the company was resentful that someone from the existing team wasn't hired. And of course, that person failed, right? And then we looked at [what happened]. Many people were saying "well, we got the wrong job description"; "our interviewing process is wrong", and all. And I'm like, no, it's not. How did you design for this person to fail? That is the question that we needed to ask.

If this person was designed to succeed, what would it look like? People want to blame a person for a systemic problem. The systemic problem was the resentment that people were not hired from within.

Celine: That's deep. What would you say to today's leaders, anyone listening to us? What should today's leaders do less of, or more of, or differently?

Jennifer: Going back to our early conversation: please create space for people to learn and integrate the times that are needed as we are learning. It is a crazy time for re-skilling. And so, if you're doing your performa based on absolute productivity, you're designing for failure. You need to design in about 20% capacity for learning and processing information.

The second is, Stop looking outside for modeling. All of us have had experiences. We've all had bosses we love; we've been on teams that we've loved. Go back to your own experience and think about what mattered to you. We can't give away what we don't have, and so if, if you are not in your own experience, it won't be able to translate and you won't be able to create it.
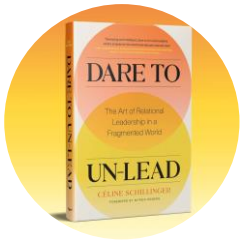
And so, I just would actually ask leaders to trust themselves more, create more time for reading for everybody in the culture. Read stuff on emotional intelligence, read on emerging technologies, and read on systems thinking. And whether you do podcasts or–you know that's what's so neat about you doing this podcast too, is that it's a living conversation, Dare to Un-Lead is a living conversation. The fact that we actually do have living conversations to bring the insights into practice, I think is fabulous.

But I think it's almost like, don't even read my book, guys. Just lean into your own experience. Create more space for yourself so you can be a better observer and be more present and create what you like of your best boss, and create less of what you hated with your worst boss.

Celine: Are these lessons you've applied to yourself and do you consider yourself to be a better leader now than 20 years ago, for example?

Jennifer: Oh my gosh, absolutely. I think it's just possibly a matter of maturity.

I think it would be helpful [to say] that when I started my career, I was a manager of a call center. I had no idea of going into organization development. I was just doing my job. The CEO at the time said, oh, we're going to do a corporate initiative. Jennifer, why don't you lead it? And I was like,

what? And so, even without ChatGPT in 1997, I read Peter Senge's *The Learning Organization*, John Kotter's *Leading Change* and *Frederick F. Reichheld*'s *The Loyalty Effect*. And I designed a thousand employee strategy having read those books.

My point about that was just the fact that it was accidental that I came into that role. And then I hired people that had the leadership models and then I wrote *Strategy, Leadership and the Soul* that does have a leadership model.

And now, I actually don't use those models. I ask each culture to create a model that's coherent within their culture. I help them create that. And then, we work on what would make living this value alive. So, the way I'm a different leader is that I'm just really building from what's already there inside of cultures, rather than looking to impose from the outside.

And I'm so much more comfortable in my own skin, in my own style, and I'm much more comfortable being rejected and not liked. I've come to know that that's change making and it's not personal.

That's the way I've changed.

Celine: I love that. Everything you said is wonderful!

Jennifer, we're coming to the end of our discussion unfortunately. It goes too fast as always. I'd love to ask you one last question. What would you say to someone who hasn't read *Dare to Un-Lead* yet, apart from read it?

Jennifer: Well, I would tell anyone that has it: "reread it, reread it, reread it". And if you haven't read it, I think anyone being tasked with a corporate community initiative, DEI, strategies on how to create inclusion... I really believe that this book is a bibliography of the history of management theory. And it's an extraction of the insights to help design cohesive communication and strengthen team clarity.
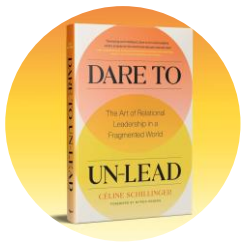
And in, you know, like, I'm also a learner and I invite people as well to listen to the podcast because I've also been listening to the podcast. And it's really, you know, if you go back to the concept of your vibration versus a node – your frequency, not a node – I hear people's voices and the timber of their voices, in particular Myron Rogers. And I feel like, oh, I want to know him while before I thought, oh, he's a smart guy. But then I got this sense of, oh my gosh, anyone doing a DEI strategy needs to listen to that particular podcast!

So, I just think it's a conversation to be had. My hashtag on Twitter #ReadToLead should now be #ReadToUnLead [laughter]

Celine: Thank you so much, Jennifer. It's been such a gift to have you on this podcast. I enjoyed our conversation immensely. Thank you, thank you, thank you. All links, resources, where to find you… are listed at the bottom of this podcast, and I can only encourage people to follow you, get in touch with you, read what you write because it's always deep and clever.

Thank you so much, Jennifer.

Jennifer: It's been a pleasure. Bye bye.

Celine: 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

All too often, corporate culture is what stands between our aspirations for change and the reality of work. But it is a little too easy to stop there. To say that "we can't do anything because of the culture" is to give up all too quickly. After all, culture is us: how we behave, how we interact, the nature of the conversations we have together at work. Each of us plays a role in maintaining or changing the cultural system in place.
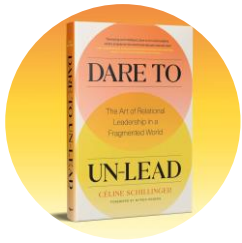
However, it's not as easy to change a corporate culture as it is to change the direction of a car. A management initiative, a reorganization, a renewal of the leadership team, the introduction of a new IT tool... will never bring about cultural change on their own. Myron Roger, who you can hear in episode 1, gives us valuable advice on how to increase our chances of creating a more exciting and supportive culture.

On this topic, I also wanted to interview Jennifer Sertl. Jennifer is the founder of Agility 3R, a leadership development company. She teaches innovation at Rochester Institute of Technology in NY, USA, and she is the director of Marketing for Circle Optics. Jennifer Sertl has been dedicated to decentralized leadership and the importance of self-awareness for over 30 years. In 2010, she published with Koby Huberman *Strategy Leadership and the Soul*. I appreciate Jennifer's thinking on culture and leadership, which I find both deeply humanistic and very much rooted in the reality of business and operations. In this conversation, you will hear about agency, presence, trust, collegiality, self-determination and much more. Enjoy!

Curious to know more?

Read Dare To Un-Lead: The Art of Relational Leadership in a Fragmented World.

- *Jennifer Sertl* can be found in Dare to Un-Lead on p. 234

- **Corporate Culture** is addressed throughout the book, and in particular: A culture of companionate love (pp. 267–68); Culture of compliance (p. 61); Culture and empowerment (p. 95); Monitoring culture (p. 184); Culture of silence (pp. 50–54); Culture and social networking tools (p. 179)

- **Purpose** is explored on pp. 232–40. You can read also about the expansion of purpose to include stakeholders (pp. 170–71), Finding an activist purpose (pp. 235–36); Problems with

corporate purpose statements (pp. 232–34); Shared purpose (pp. 111–13 and 237–40); Purpose and urgency and opportunity to act now (pp. 236–37)

- **Trust** is addressed in particular on pp. 11–12, 27–28, 203–6, 246, 253

- On **presence for each other**: see pp. 201–3

Read Jennifer Sertl's article "The usefulness of being human or intuition is our killer app" in [Troublemakers: Trends & advice from nexxworks & friends about surviving and thriving in turbulent times](#) (Nexxworks, Dec. 2022)

Watch [Strategy, Leadership and the Soul](#) on YouTube

Read *Strategy, Leadership and the Soul: Resilience, Responsiveness and Reflection for a Global Economy* - find it on [Amazon](#)

Connect with Jennifer on the [Agility3R](#) website, on Twitter [@jennifersertl](#), by [email](#) and on [Medium](#)

Listen to the [360 Pulse](#) Podcast and the [ThinkBuildLaunch](#) Podcast both hosted by Jennifer Sertl.

I was interviewed by Jennifer about *Dare to Un-Lead* in March 2023 and you can listen to this conversation here ([Apple podcast](#)) here ([Podcaster](#)) and here ([YouTube](#))

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

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