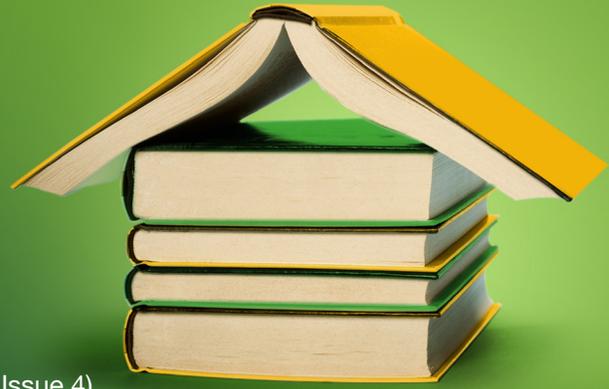


Keller Center Research Report

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Why Do Houses Sell Above Listing Price?

Geoffrey K. Turnbull, PhD, Velma Zahirovic-Herbert, PhD, and Bennie D. Waller, PhD

Marketing Your Agents: Effort vs. Talent

Fine F. Leung, PhD, Sara Kim, PhD, and Caleb H. Tse, PhD

Creating Customer Engagement on Social Media

Fernando de Oliveira Santini, PhD, Wagner Junior Ladeira, PhD, Diego Costa Pinto, PhD, Márcia Maurer Herter, PhD, Claudio Hoffmann Sampaio, PhD, and Barry J. Babin, PhD

How Work-Family Balance Impacts Workplace Success

Merideth J. Thompson, PhD, Dawn S. Carlson, PhD, and K. Michele Kacmar, PhD

Adaptive Selling: Finding the Perfect Fit

Richard G. McFarland, PhD

INSIDER: Nine Lies about Work

Corrie A. H. Penraat, MBA

INSIDER: The Adaptation Advantage

Kristen Koehler, MBA Candidate

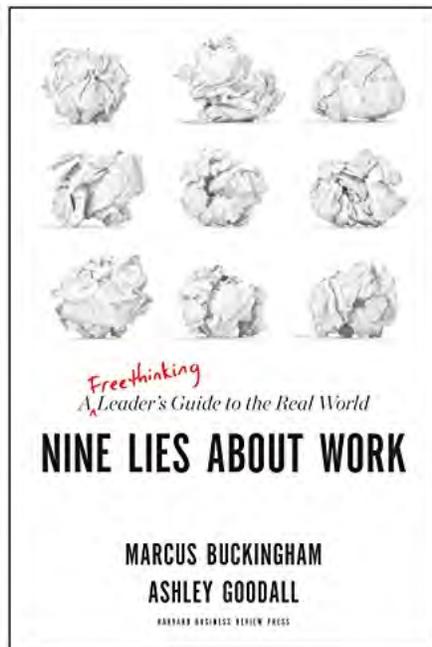


Baylor University

HANKAMER SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

INSIDER: Nine Lies about Work

Corrie A. H. Penraat, MBA



In their book, *Nine Lies about Work*, Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall uncover nine lies that we encounter every day at work as companies seek control, simplicity, and uniformity within their workforce. Each lie plays into organization leaders' need to persuade themselves and stakeholders that they are making progress towards their objectives. Buckingham and Goodall reject such dogma and instead seek evidence to discover the less popular truth about work.

This book was written for freethinking leaders who are willing to embrace the quiriness of each individual and engage in the less tidy version of the real world.

THINK POINT #1: People Don't Care What Company They Work For

The strength and unity of your team, not your company culture, is what matters most. Often, we are told people care what company they work for, but Buckingham and Goodall say research proves differently. When the rubber hits the road, only a small percent of company culture translates into your job description. Culture is often far from actual day-to-day responsibilities, projects, interactions and what your day really looks like, and “ground level stuff” is what people really care about. What is the truth about the workplace environment at your real estate firm? Do managers play favorites? How do real estate agents team up with clients? Is conflict resolution satisfactory? Are promotions fair and equitable?

Teams help employees see where to focus and what to do. Teams and colleagues can become family and ground us in our day-to-day work. Culture seeks uniformity—teams seek to elicit each member's unique contributions and achieve what no one person could do alone. As a real estate firm, take your focus off your firm's culture and instead learn how to build great teams internally with employees and externally with clients. Often, clients choose their realtors not based on the firm's company culture but based on their interactions with the team.

THINK POINT #2: The Best Plan Doesn't Always Win

Focus less on planning and more on giving people dependable, real-time intelligence. The real world moves too fast for plans. By the time you are ready to execute your carefully constructed plan, it will be irrelevant. An intelligence system comprised of real-time data, dispersed broadly

and rapidly and presented in detail so that team members can see and respond to patterns in deciding for themselves what to do surpasses formal planning every time.

As a real estate firm, distribute as much information as you can internally to employees and externally to clients. Planning systems confine information to those who “need to know,” while intelligence systems liberate. If you think the data will help your team or clients gain a better understanding of their work or goals in real time, share it! The flow of real-time data should be as frequent as possible. Solicit feedback to assess what data teams and clients find useful. Watch what information they gravitate towards and steadily increase the “volume, depth, and speed of this sort of data.” Instead of laying out a plan for prospective property buyers or sellers, give them access to real-time data driven analytics.

THINK POINT #3: The Best People Aren’t Well Rounded

The authors explain that the best people aren’t well rounded, they are “spiky,” and that being unique is a strength, not a weakness. Each person is profoundly unique, and no amount of corporate training will remove that. Each member of your team thinks differently, is motivated differently, and responds to relational communication differently. Companies, for the sake of control and simplicity, create models and then manage the model. These models promise a systematic way to understand the entirety of a real estate firm’s people and to find ways to work around each person’s uniqueness, all while improving upon weakness. Excellent performance, however, is not the absence of weakness but rather the presence of a few signature strengths. The authors note, “no two humans, doing the same job really well in the same field, achieve excellence in the same way.”

Get into the outcomes business—efficiency, predictability, sustainability—and do this creatively to engage the talent at your company. Define the outcome you want, then look at each person’s strength to figure out how, together as a team, you can reach those outcomes most efficiently. Buckingham and Goodall advise readers to avoid forcing a person into a particular role and, instead, fit the role to the person. To effectively fit a role to a person, you must utilize team technology. Integrate people’s wonderfully imperfect capabilities to achieve a given objective. Diversity is not an impediment, but instead, an essential ingredient in creating a high-performing team.

THINK POINT #4: People Can’t Reliably Rate Other People

People can only reliably rate their own experiences, because experience is all we have. It’s not possible to accurately put a number to each person’s abilities—how do you keep the definition of “persuading” skills stable while judging each unique person against that definition? Reviews are a mechanism of a business to manage people—keeping the best people challenged and weeding out low performers. None of these models of performance reviews will ensure the facts surface, because all of them are based on the belief that people can reliably rate other people.

It's important to find an accurate way for your clients to rate your efforts as a real estate agent. The data, once it is collected, represents you as a real estate agent, and it defines how you are seen at work, paid, promoted, and trained. Instead of asking your clients about others, ask them about themselves. By focusing on an individual's own experience, an objective measure of engagement emerges. Once you have designed questions like this, you could simply ask clients what their experience was with each real estate agent. Here's what some questions might look like: Do you go to this agent when you need extraordinary results? Do you choose to work this agent as often as you can? Would you promote this person if you could? Do you think this person has a performance problem that needs to be addressed immediately? Stop understanding performance as a broad abstraction and instead find elements of it you can measure consistently and act on practically.

Conclusion

As businesses seek to categorize their employees and standardize job roles, they are losing out on some of the most creative and quirky aspects of their workforce. As a leader within your organization, challenge yourself to think outside of the box and seek evidence rather than relying on ingrained "truth." You might be surprised by the results you uncover.

Recommended Reading

Buckingham, Marcus and Ashley Goodall (2019), *Nine Lies about Work: A Freethinking Leader's Guide to the Real World*, Harvard Business Review Press: Boston, Massachusetts.

About the Author

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Corrie Penraat earned her MBA in Data Analytics from Baylor University and a Bachelor of Science in International Business from Grove City College. Corrie currently serves on The Walt Disney Company's Facility Asset Management Room Team.



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