

Discover *Redefining Work*

Book Club transcript

How to transform your organization and make hybrid work for everyone, with author Lynda Gratton

Jeff Schwartz:

First off, welcome everyone, and hello.

Lynda Gratton:

Thank you.

Jeff Schwartz:

I am Jeff Schwartz. I'm the Vice President of Insights and Impact at Gloat, based in New York. But last week, and this week, here in Tel Aviv. We want to thank you for joining us. This discussion today is part of something we started a couple months ago. We call it the Gloat book club. We're a little bit nerdy, a little bit techy at Gloat, and we're very proud of that. And so if you have any questions, obviously, as we go, please put them into the chat. We will keep track of them. I'm going to ask about a half a dozen questions to Lynda. She and I will have a conversation, and then we'll open it up to hear your comments as well. I wanted to mention that this is the second of our Gloat book clubs. Lynda, you will not be surprised that the first book session we did was with our good friends, John Boudreau and Ravin Jesuthasan.

Lynda Gratton:

Oh, yes. I have the book just here. I have it here.



Jeff Schwartz:

Okay. Hold it. All. Their book, Work Without Jobs.

Lynda Gratton:

Love it. I've got it, actually on my, yeah, there it is.

Jeff Schwartz:

Okay.

Lynda Gratton:

A world without jobs.

Jeff Schwartz:

Oh, you're going to pull it up for us. So we had a wonderful discussion with them a few weeks ago. There we go. There's John and Ravin's book.

Lynda Gratton:

There it is. Right on my desk.

Jeff Schwartz:

And we had a wonderful discussion-



Lynda Gratton:

There you go.

Jeff Schwartz:

A great discussion with them led by our own Brian Hershey, and these sessions are obviously live and we will have questions, but we are also recording the session and we'll make it available to our colleagues and customers around the world. Which is great because even though this is a pretty good time for those of us in the Middle East and in Europe and in the US, it's not a great time for our colleagues in Asia Pacific. Somebody's here from Hong Kong. I don't really know what time it is in Hong Kong. It must be-

Lynda Gratton:

Singapore is really tough at the moment, as well.

Jeff Schwartz:

It must be about 1:00 in the morning because it's 12 hours difference than New York, I think.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

So whomever is here from Hong Kong, you are a Lynda Gratton fan or a big Gloat fan, or hopefully both. All right. And so all this information will be on our website. It also has resources and stories from our customers, Novartis, Schneider Electric, Nationwide, Unilever, many others. And so if you haven't been to our website, go to our website. Some great stuff there.

I'm going to briefly introduce Lynda Gratton. Lynda, you probably have heard people say that, for those of us who are students and professionals in the future of work and the evolution of talent and HR, you don't need an introduction. Lynda is a professor of management practice at London Business School. She runs a consulting consortium, HSM. She has been working with the World Economic Forum for many years. She was just in Davos last week, the week before? 10 days ago.

Lynda Gratton:

Week before, yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

Week before, 10 days ago. She's written, how many books have you written?

Lynda Gratton:

Ten.

Jeff Schwartz:

Ten of them. And I have only, but I'm proud of this, I've read the last five. And I was just discussing with Lynda. I'm not in my home office in New York, but I was going to have them all behind me.

Lynda Gratton:

Oh, well I have some of them behind me. Here they are.



Jeff Schwartz:

See, I see The Shift-

Lynda Gratton:

It's different languages.

Jeff Schwartz:

Oh, fantastic.

Lynda Gratton:

In fact, the Danish one of this just came out today. So I should have brought that one up.

Jeff Schwartz:

No, that's very cool. And these books will be, as many of them have been, translated into many languages. But just to give a sense of the breadth of Lynda's experience and her contribution to our field, I'll put it that way, her last five books are really a tour of the evolution of what we all now refer to as the future of work. Her book, *The Shift: The Future of Work is Already Here* in 2011, *The Key*. She's going to pull them out. I wish I had them. I love that book, by the way.

Lynda Gratton:

I love this book.



Jeff Schwartz:

Great story.

Lynda Gratton:

I love this book. Yeah. One of my favorites.

Jeff Schwartz:

People to love the book, somebody to write it and those of us to read it. So I think together, we're a great combination.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

The book, The Key in 2014, on how corporate [inaudible 00"00:08:29] solving the world's toughest problems. A seminal book, your book on The 100 Year Life with Andrew Scott in 2016, which I think really helped us reshape our-

Lynda Gratton:

Oh, here it is. I've got it.

Jeff Schwartz:

Oh, I love it.



Lynda Gratton:

I love it. That's hardback.

Jeff Schwartz:

And-

Lynda Gratton:

Hard to come by these days.

Jeff Schwartz:

And then The New Long Life, which is, I call it the companion book to-

Lynda Gratton:

It is a companion book. I like it, actually. It came out Yeah. I like it a lot. This has just come out in Japan and has done very well in Japan.

Jeff Schwartz:

Well, the first one did amazingly well in Japan.

Lynda Gratton:

It did.



Jeff Schwartz:

Yeah. Okay. I mean-

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. Yeah. And then we've got this little guy here.

Jeff Schwartz:

I know. And I have mine here, and I was showing it to Lynda before. The book that we're going to be talking about today, *Redesigning Work: How to Transform Your Organization and Make Hybrid Work for Everyone*. And I was saying, as we kick off the conversation, I was only half-joking with Lynda that I have read this book three times. I was very fortunate that she sent me a review copy even before it was published. She sent it to a fair number of people to provide some feedback. And I read it and loved it. And when it came out, I couldn't wait for it to come out in the US, so I ordered it from Amazon UK. They delivered it to me a few months ago when it came out. And then of course it was just, I think last month, right, in May? It was published by MIT Press. Phenomenal.

And I think it's a book that needs to be read twice. And the reason, and this is hopefully what we'll get into today, once just to get a sense of the breadth and the originality and the utility of the ideas. And the second time to put all these post-its in it, to ask questions about what are you going to do with this book, in your organization, and in your life? So it's a great book.

Lynda was joking, maybe you can buy two copies, read one, and then read it again and put the post-its in it. But we're very excited, Lynda, to have you here.

Lynda Gratton:

Thank you.

Jeff Schwartz:

I've given a little bit of your bio. Please feel free to add to that. But let me start with a question. Something that you and I have talked about, something I've heard you talk about in a number of discussions. When COVID started, and I think of it starting in March of 2020, at least in the-

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah, March 2020. Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

In the UK-

Lynda Gratton:

March the 14th for me.

Jeff Schwartz:

So you remember the date? We all remember.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

So I'll ask you about this. So one of the things you've talked about is that when the COVID pandemic started, you began a journal. And there it is, volume one.



Lynda Gratton:

Volume 14.

Jeff Schwartz:

Oh, sorry. Which volume are you on? That's volume 14. Oh my goodness. So then I was going to ask you, how many do you have?

Lynda Gratton:

Fourteen.

Jeff Schwartz:

And you've been keeping these journals to keep track of the changes underway.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

Just to get started. Why did you start keeping these journals? Did you ever think you were going to keep them for 27 months? And just help us understand your thinking about, what about these moments, because it's more than one that was significant, to help us provide some context for today's discussion.



Lynda Gratton:

Well, first of all, Jeff, thank you so much for inviting me. And it's great to see people from all over the world. Jeff, I'm a great fan of yours. As you know, I can't wait for the new book on ecosystems. Sadly ... I've read it. It's fabulous, everyone. But I think it's not going to be out till next year. Publishing, it's a weird industry.

Well, yeah. 14th of March. As you mentioned, Jeff, I chair one of the councils for the World Economic Forum. And so we had met, actually that day, and I'd just come back from Singapore, and everything was beginning to lock down. From about the 14th of March, the UK started to lock down. And I just felt that something important was happening. And so at that very first meeting with the World Economic Forum, I started taking notes, and I've done that ever since. And it's been enormously helpful to get a sense of where we've been.

So for example, in the following year, a couple of the members of the World Economic Forum said to me, "You know, Lynda, we always said it was going to go on for at least a year." And I said, "No, you didn't. Because I've actually got it written down. And you said it would be a month if not two months, September at the latest." And I said, "You were right about September, but you were wrong about the year." So what I learned is that nobody had predicted how long it was going to last. Honestly, they didn't, because I was a member of the World Economic Forum, I'm in a whole set of networks, as you are as, as well, Jeff.

And so nobody predicted how long it was going to be, and nobody really predicted what was going to happen next. So for example, do you remember at the very beginning we were saying, "What sort of a recession is it going to be?" And nobody would've predicted there would be a war for talent right now. This is unpredictable. So I was really glad that I kept it. And the way I'm thinking of it now, Jeff, is ... Well, the metaphor I used in the book was freeze, unfreeze, refreeze. And you'll know that, those of you who have studied change management will know that metaphor as a way of thinking about change. But actually the metaphor I'm using now is, this is now series two episode three. And I think there are still a lot more episodes to come, and possibly another series.

So I do see this as just the most astonishing thing that's happened to work, certainly in my lifetime. I'd been writing, and most of my books had basically ended up by saying, "We've got

to change the way that we work." And as you know, I study three major trends. I look at demography, The 100 Year Life was about that. I look at technology trends, and I look at social trends. You know, how we live as families, how our marriages work, how we interact with each other. Those are the three things I'm interested in. And I had realized that the way that we worked wasn't working for lots of people. And so for me, what's happened since the pandemic has had a profound impact on us. And let me just say the ones that I see, I think that we got a chance to really think about why we worked like we did.

I think we learned new skills, a huge digital transformation, which ... And I feel in a way, I don't know if you would agree with me, Jeff, that the technology platforms like Microsoft and Zoom are really the unsung heroes of all of this. Because without them, coming in at such a low cost with such reliability, we would never have been able to have worked in the way we have. The world would have just fallen apart, really. And then I think we also asked about, why are we living like this? And the possible selves piece that we talked about, particularly in the new long life, really came up there. The idea that you could be something different, it's possible to be something different.

And although we spoke, Andrew Scott and I talked about this in our book, New Long Life, the truth was that was written before the pandemic. So we talked about it from a theoretical construct, but I think what happened in the pandemic is suddenly, that was real. You were at home, you didn't see anybody for months. You did ask yourself, "Why am I living like this? Could I find another way of living?" And so I see where we are now as a culmination of new skills, new habits, not going into the office every day, not commuting every day, spending more time with your friends and family. So new networks. We saw completely, very interesting research on what was happening with networks.

And the reason I guess I carried on writing it, Jeff, is it's such an all-encompassing story, really. And even though I worked so hard, as you know, to get that book out because ... I have it here. See, this is a show and tell today, Jeff. Here it is. One of my team did this.

Jeff Schwartz:

Of course. Yes.

Lynda Gratton:

It's the front cover of Harvard Business Review in May of 2021. There it is.

Jeff Schwartz:

That's a big deal, a big deal.

Lynda Gratton:

Doing hybrid, right? And at that stage, Penguin came in touch with me and said, "We love that article. Could you write a book?" And I said, "Well, if I'm going to write a book, it's got to be out by April of 2022, because if it's any later than that, then it's going to be too late." And so we worked really hard. They published it faster than they'd ever published a book, which as you know, it's still ridiculously slow, but nevertheless, it was fast for publishers. I wrote it faster than I've ever written a book. And you know, I'm really proud of it, to be honest. And as you know, Jeff, I'm not somebody who's a particularly proud person, but I am proud of it because I feel that it's really important now that we move away from simply knee-jerk reactions. You know, like Elon Musk, everybody's got to be back in the office, which is just his thing really, isn't it? It's his thing. To actually saying, "Well, how should we work, and why should we work as we do? And is this a chance to reinvent work?"

So I think I laid down some basic questions, really, about how might you want to work? And my guess is that this is a book that people will, as you say, I'm hoping that people will still want to read it in a year's time. I think that people will still come back to it and say, "Oh, that's interesting. Let me think a bit more about that." I put all of my ideas into it, by the way. I don't feel as if I've got anything more to say, but then as my husband said, "Well, Lynda, you always say that when you've finished a book."

Jeff Schwartz:

Yeah. And we look forward to say, Lynda. That's fantastic. And I would encourage people, if you haven't been keeping a journal, I think there's some real value for us as leaders to keeping notes on where we were and what we're doing. And I had a very similar experience. I remember the ... I want to get the year right. The spring of 2020.

Lynda Gratton:

Yes, 2020.

Jeff Schwartz:

Talking with executives around the world about getting them back into the office in the summer of 2020. I mean, I-

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. That's what we all thought. We all thought we'd be back by the summer of 2020. And I know that because I've got it here. It is in one of these books here. Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

And yet obviously, that did not happen. So just two concepts I'm going to ask you just to spend a few minutes on, which is unfair because you've written an amazing book on it, but you spoke briefly about freeze, unfreeze, refreeze. I think that's an incredibly useful and valuable framework to thinking about what's happened. I think one of the things that I love about the book, and this is why I encourage people to read it twice, is there are some amazing frameworks in here that again, if you're a management consultant by training, which I am, and although now I work for Gloat and I'm also teaching at Columbia, I just want to cut them all out and hang them on the wall of my office and look at them. But one is, talk a little bit about freeze, unfreeze, refreeze, and where we are. And then there are obviously four major

steps in the book. And just sort of give us a high level of what they are and how people are putting them into action. And we can talk a little about some of the underlying issues.

Lynda Gratton:

Well, of course, those of you who are scholars of change management know that this is Kurt Lewin who came up with this idea. And the reason that I used it ... I mean, I do love metaphors and I know this is a book club, so I'm being a bit more bookish than I would normally be if I was doing a seminar because, you know, reading books is a marvelous thing and it's wonderful to talk to a book club. And I'm hoping there's going to be some great questions about the book, but really, the reason I pulled that out, the Kurt Lewin, was I'd been trained in change management a hundred years ago. As indeed, Jeff, were you. You probably were trained 20 years ago.

So that's really how we were trained, weren't we, in change management? The idea that things freeze and unfreeze. And I just felt that I saw it more clearly than I've ever done before. And what Kurt Lewin was arguing is that, in most organizational life, at any point in time, things are frozen. And he didn't mean that in a negative way or a cold way. What he meant was that things are stable. And this is a good thing, that you want stability, you want to be in a job where you know what's going to happen the next day. None of us want a massive amount of variety. But then, he said, you get these moments of unfreeze. And in general, it happens at the level of an industry or the level of an organization where the organization has an M and A, or the industry changes because there's a new entrance.

And at that stage, things unfreeze. People are asking, "Why are we doing things like this?" Was there a better way of doing it? Maybe cost comes into consideration. And then over time, it starts to refreeze, but in a different, and this is the point that Lewin made, it's in a different sort of configuration as it was. So if the crystals come back again, they're in a different formation. And I think that's sort of where we are at the moment. I don't think that we have refrozen yet. And what I'm seeing in my journal is a lot of variety between CEOs. And I noticed that I'd spoke at the Wall Street Journal CEO event two weeks before Davos. So I got two doses of CEOs together, talking to each other. And there's a lot of diversity amongst them,

more so I think than normal. And what you're getting often is a projection of themselves, how they feel about the world.

And I think that's quite useful first stage, but I don't think it's an end-stage. I think people can say, "This is how I would like the world to be," and people can listen to them, but whether or not we're prepared to actually do anything about that is another question. And I would say that quite a number of them aren't asking the right question. So they ask the question, they think the question they're answering is "Should I be in the office or should I be at home?" That's the binary question that everyone feels that they need to answer, but that's not the question in my view. The question is, how do we help people be more productive and creative and engaged, knowing all that we've done, we've learned about during these two years? That, for me, is the question. And I think we'll get back to that question, by the way. And some companies are already asking that question. Microsoft, for example, is asking that question, but a number of others aren't.

Jeff Schwartz:

And we will get back to that question. I think, And you summarized it in the Harvard Business Review article that you wrote last year, which is, how do we do this right? Which is not, what is right, but how do we manage it and how do we approach it? So, I'll leave us with one thought on freeze, unfreeze, refreeze, which hopefully it's obvious, but I don't think the opportunity is, or has been, to refreeze in the same place we were when we unfroze a couple of years ago. And that's a very interesting part of this discussion, which is, was this a detour? Are we trying to get back on the road that we were on before? Let's come back to Elon Musk and others. Or is this really a departure point?

And I think it's the departure point that really, in many ways, sets up part of what's so exciting about your book because you're talking to us as business leaders and talent leaders and HR leaders. And effectively, you're saying, "Design the future. Don't manage it." Which I ... Bravo. I could not agree more that the future belongs to the creators, not just the managers. And so you put in the heart of the book, the framework of the book, is a design thinking framework, which for those of us that know design thinking, it was-

Lynda Gratton:

You've got it.

Jeff Schwartz:

And obvious, but not everybody in business or in HR and talent is used to thinking in terms of design thinking. So again, unfair question, because you've written a whole book on it, but the four steps of design thinking that you outlined, just give us a summary of that.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah, sure.

Jeff Schwartz:

And what was sort of interesting about that approach, when you thought about it through a business HR workforce lens?

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. Yeah. Well, thank you again. Great question, Jeff. It's always such a pleasure to talk with you. I miss our Boston chats. Well, first of all, just to stand back for a moment, I've been thinking about systems for years, as you know. And a lot of my books have ... I mean, like every person who writes books or writes music, you ... I just heard Wagner last night, Siegfried. And it does go back to some of the same ... Not that I would put myself in the same category as Wagner, by the way. But you do find yourself going back to some of the same emblems.

And for me, the idea that the organization is a system is something that I wrote in my very first book, called Living Strategy. And I've been playing around with that idea ever since, and I've been teaching it. I used to teach systems thinking. I don't anymore, but I did at one stage. In

my consulting, I used to do systems mapping. I don't anymore, but I did at one stage. And so when I was thinking about what was happening here, it was that that I went back to, the dynamic systems, the idea that organizations are complex systems, the idea that we couldn't just make a binary decision here. And that's where I went back to design thinking. And for those of you who know design thinking, you'll see, as you see that model.

And just by the way, in my website, www.lyndagratton.com, you can download something that has everything in it. So all of those models are downloadable because I realized, as you've said, Jeff, that they're useful pieces to look at. There it is. Thanks, Jeff.

So here's the four steps. So it starts by saying, understand what's going on around here and understand the job. And I start with a job, interesting. Not the people, the job. That, what is this job about? What is it that this person is doing? What's the team doing? Then understand the person, particularly in terms of where they are in their own life, really. And this came out very much recently, that young people, for example, want to get back into the office because they're dying to meet other people. This is how they're ... All that intrinsic knowledge. Think about networks. So I had a little go at networks. You can tell I'm a teacher, actually, because these are all the things I teach and have been teaching for years. And network theory comes in.

So first of all, understand what's going on. Then, reimagine, be as imaginative and as creative as possible. And one of the things I'm doing, Jeff, and I know that you are as well, is really to keep an eye on what all these experiments are. And I have, as you know, a column at MIT Sloan, which is just ... And by the way, you'll see all of this in my website, because my website is updated all the time with everything I write. But you'll see there that I've explored, for example, the Canadian investment company that said, "Everyone can work anywhere they want for three months a year." Or companies in Europe who are now saying, "Let's go for the four-day week." Or companies that are saying, "Let's think much more creatively." The Wall Street Journal council I was at, the founder of Airbnb was there and he said, "We can work anywhere we want now. We don't need to be back in the office." So all of these, I would label as experiments. We don't know yet whether they're going to stick, but they're interesting.

And then, the third stage is an evaluation stage. And I would evaluate it really against two big questions. One, is it going to help you to be the business you want to be in terms of your

purpose and values and customers. And secondly, and importantly, is it fair? Is it going to be something where, after a year or six months, half of your employee group, are going to say, "Look, this is not fair. I can't do any of this stuff"?

And then the final point, the fourth point, is about how do you enact it? How do you actually get it done? And here I call out three groups. Leaders, obviously, in terms of their role modeling and narrative. Managers, and you remember Jeff, I wrote that nice piece with Diana Gherson in Harvard Business Review earlier this year, on managers, specifically on the role of managers in all of this. And then also, something about employees, which my own consulting practice, HSM, is very focused on how do you bring employees along? What's the mechanism of doing that?

So, yeah. I'm sorry, I'm trying to look at the chat at the same time, which is always hard. Nobody can multitask. So those are the four steps that I suggest people go through. And actually, my own consulting practice, of course, we have engaged companies going through those four steps. But most companies are, as always, doing bits of it and then coming back and thinking, "Well, maybe I should look at this again." So it is an iterative process.

Jeff Schwartz:

It's an iterative process. And I think part of the value, and there are many sources of value in thinking like a designer versus thinking like a manager, is that it opens us up to the possibilities. It opens us up to what these experiments are. And one of my worries, and I don't worry about too many things, is that we're going to refreeze and we're going to move, we're going to go back to a period where we're not experimenting enough.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

And I think this is a period, I don't know if it's a Cambrian explosion, but it's pretty maybe pretty, pretty close to it. So let's build on this. I mean, we've talked about your journals. We've talked about freeze, unfreeze, refreeze. We've talked about the four steps of design thinking. I want to bring in a couple of other ideas here to the discussion. One is the connection between redesigning work and the work that you and Andrew have done on *The 100 Year Life* and *The New Long Life*.

I was mentioning earlier when Lynda and I were warming up that she and, obviously, Andrew Scott wrote the book, *The 100 Year Life*, one of the great books of the last decade. And it's gotten us talking about the 50- or 60-year career. There's a wonderful new podcast from the Stanford Longevity Center. Maybe we'll put it into the resources. And they are starting to talk about the 25-job career. What does it mean to have 25 jobs in your life? Help us connect the redesigning work, the COVID transition, if you will, with the multistage life that you and Andrew have been talking about. Because I think there are some connections. You talked about the demographic trend when we were getting started a few minutes ago.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. And I did draw some of those connections out in *Redesigning Work*. I mean, I didn't want to obviously go into too much detail because we'd done it earlier, but nevertheless, I made the connection. And here's the connection, that those three major trends that we look at, which are demography ... And the question that Andrew Scott ... Andrew, of course, as you know, Jeff, is an economist. And I do think that combination of the economics and the psychology was really ... *The 100 Year Life* has been a very successful book. And I say that as an author with lots of books that haven't been very successful. This was a successful book. And I think part of it was that combination of creativity, really, with an economist, with their view about assets, and a psychologist.

But one of the things we realized is, and this was his economic background, if you live to a hundred, unless you save a lot, which we don't do, then you're going to be working into your seventies. And if you work into your seventies, then you really can't continue the three-stage life. The three-stage life, of course, being full-time education, full-time work, full-time

retirement. That just doesn't work. And then if you layer on top of that, oh, by the way, the technology's changing and jobs are changing all the time. And then layer on top of that, oh, and by the way, families are changing as well, then it just seems completely ridiculous. And so we then talked about the multi-stage life, which is where people A, have more stages. I think 24 is, I wouldn't see that as a possibility, but I can see there's going to be more job change. Doing different types of things, and then more transition.

So if you are trying to live a multi-stage life, then what is it you need? And I would say there's a couple of things you need. And I haven't really spoken about this yet, Jeff. So it would be interesting to hear what you feel about that. One is, you need a sense of personal agency. You need to feel that you are somebody who can make a decision and make choices about your life. And that's different from one of my earlier books called *The Democratic Enterprise*, which nobody, even my mum read. Well, mum said she read it, but I don't think she did. But what I did in *The Democratic Enterprise* was I actually looked at the move from a relationship which is primarily parent-child to one which is adult-adult. And for me, personal agency is another part of that adult-to-adult thing.

And then the second thing is, you need a framework of choice. You need to be able to say, I can move out of an organization. I can move back into it. I can work part-time, I can work. So you need a framework of choice so that you can exercise autonomy. That's the two things that you need. And the reason I'm so excited about *Redesigning Work* is that they, A, gives people a chance of personal agency because they learn how to make decisions about themselves and face up to the consequences of that. And B, it gives people more of a choice framework within which they can then explore what they want to be. So that's how the connection's made. And my guess is, as I continue to write, I'm going to build stronger links between that connection. For example, with the concept of personal agency, which is something I haven't spoken about for some years, but I need probably to get back into.

Jeff Schwartz:

Well, and this link, the personal agency link, and I think there was a comment here again about agency and its role in career pathing intervention. I know one of the things that you've

talked about, I think that also is a connection here, is, and I love this idea, the concept of possible selves.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

And the notions of agency and choice and purpose, the notion of non-linear careers and lives, your work. My good friend, Cathy Benko's work, from a dozen years ago on career lattices and Mass Career Customization. In the Stanford Longevity Center, they talked about the squiggle career. That's Stanford, one of our great institutions, has told us that careers are a squiggle. So I love that concept from great technical ... And yet, the notion that the way that, as we talk about it at Gloat, we talk about the anything workforce, democratizing opportunity, both for the work you're doing now and in the future. But how do we take this concept, and I'm not going to apologize, these are big questions. But how do we integrate the concept of possible selves and agency as employees, as workers, and as business leaders? Where does it fit in? Where do you plug it into management and executives?

Lynda Gratton:

Well, I think it's one of the driving engines, really, because if you think about personal agency, so the notion of being a personal agent is that you have some determination over the life that you are about to lead. And to do that, it's helpful to be able to see other possibilities, other possible lives so that you're not always ... In ancient societies, everybody, every generation led the same life as the generation before. You didn't have to read a book that says how to deal with being a teenager. Or in my case, I'm in my late sixties, how to live healthily into your seventies. You didn't have to do that because you just did what everybody else wanted to do. But I think once we start saying to people, "You have personal agency," and then we start saying, "Oh, and by the way, your life is longer in a world that's changing indescribably." And

my goodness, isn't that just the case. Then what you begin to talk about is the idea that you could be a different thing.

And this came out very much in *The 100 Year Life* because one of the things we learned when we researched *The 100 Year Life*, particularly the medicine around *The 100 Year Life*, or the medical data, is that actually, aging itself is malleable. You can change the way that you age. And one of the questions that people sometimes ask me is what did I learn from writing *The 100 Year Life*? Well, one of the things I learned was, if you want to change the way you age, you have to do quite a lot of exercise, and not eat too much. Unfortunately, I've started eating again.

Jeff Schwartz:

I know, the first part is one thing. The second part is-

Lynda Gratton:

The eating one is so difficult. I know. Well, there's a lot of eating going on in our house at the moment.

Jeff Schwartz:

Well you're celebrating the queen and 70 years, and it's-

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah, we've got a lot to celebrate. We're eating a great deal. But the idea that the way you age, you can change it. And I think that that has big implications on how you look at your whole life. I could become a different sort of person. I could change my networks. I could change the job that I do. I could change the person I'm married to. I could change myself. So the idea that somehow, you have a choice, you have a chance of doing something different with your life, I think that's both a very exciting possibility, but also, to be honest, quite a frightening thing.

Because now you can't blame lots of other people for how you are. You have to take some responsibility and accountability for yourself. Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

And I think there's at least two sides or three sides, as you've mentioned. There's the role of leaders, the role of managers, and the role of employees and workers. And when we introduce agency and choice and possible selves, there's responsibility on both sides.

Lynda Gratton:

Yes.

Jeff Schwartz:

And what's very interesting to us is, everybody who's in this book club, everybody who will hear this podcast, is hopefully asking the question, what does this mean for me as an individual, and my tribe, my family, my friends? We're all asked. I mean, I'm sure everybody in this book club, everybody on the who's going to hear the podcast, are asked, since you're a future of work leader or an HR leader, a business leader, we're constantly being asked to advise people, our friends and family, on what to do. But as business leaders, we need to create a new set of ways of working, as you've been talking about, around a different degree of agency. I mean, careers are not automatic anymore, careers are [inaudible 00:41:56] ladders anymore. And a lot of the stuff that we have around in the HR and the talent world was built for a much more predictable, static world.

Let me move on to another question, and then I'm going to open it up. Even though we thought we would have time for more conversation, but we're filling up the time very quickly. And I want to go back to hybrid, which of course, the subtitle of your book is Making Hybrid Work for Everyone. This was the HBR article that we talked about a few minutes ago. I love that you have the big poster.

Lynda Gratton:

Yes.

Jeff Schwartz:

Of the cover. And let me summarize it this way. And I'm sure many people listening to this podcast and participating will have a similar view. Employees and workers, and our families, we really adapted pretty well to the flexibility that we had to jump into. And there's a little bit of a tension, and we were talking about this earlier, between what employees and workers seem to want, which is more flexibility, and what some senior leaders want.

Jeff Schwartz:

I mean, again, we don't have to talk about Elon Musk, but just interesting while we're having this discussion, literally over the weekend, Elon Musk has said, and most people around the world have seen it, "Everyone's got to come back. And if you don't come back, we will just assume that you're quitting."

Lynda Gratton:

Right. Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

So to go back to what you mentioned earlier, that's freeze unfreeze, refreeze, but let's refreeze where we started 27 months ago, right?

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.



Jeff Schwartz:

What's happening here? Where is the tension? What are the misconceptions here, and where do you think we're going to end up? And as business and HR leaders or talent leaders, help us navigate through what is a very whirling and swirling time for us.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. Well, I think it is a whirling and swirling time. You should definitely copyright that. It's almost as good as squiggly. And I work a lot with HR folk, and of course, I teach my HR program at London Business School for HR executives. And my advice would be right now to ... And those four steps of the model are really helpful, really, to ask yourself, "What's going on here?" You know, to ask yourself, "Are there experiments that we should be doing that we're not, and are there experiments we can learn from that are happening elsewhere that we could learn more from?" And then ask yourself, "Is this going to help the customer, for example?"

One of the companies I wrote about in the book is Sage, which is a software company. And the CEO said, "I'm pretty agnostic about what we do about the design of work, except it's got to increase customer satisfaction. So if we design a way of working that decreases customer satisfaction, then it's out as far as I'm concerned." So really understanding what are the principles against which you're going to test this, and then ask yourself, "What are your leaders doing?" But one thing I would say, and we haven't really spoken about variety, Jeff, but it might just be worth reminding everyone that we are seeing, just as ... And in the book, when I was writing the book, I was going to go on a bit more about snowflakes and variety, and I brought it all out because it just looked too flaky. But the idea is that as you re-crystallize, there's going to be a lot of variety.

And so, at the very beginning, someone said to me, "Well, is it fine that Goldman is saying everybody's back in the office?" And I said, "That's absolutely fine". You know that if you're joining Goldman, then that's the deal. And I think within HR, we have to be very explicit about what the deal is and not pretend that it's something else. If it's a deal where everybody has to be in the office five or six days a week, working very long hours, that's the deal. Now, you may find that there's not many people who want that deal, but Goldman feel that there are plenty who do, but they have to pay a lot for it.

So I think the more that we can be explicit about what the deal is, and the more that we can provide variety between companies so an individual can choose the company that fits their deal. And I think that's going to be a very exciting part of what it is to be an HR person in the future, is to try and get that signature right. Try and build for your own company, or indeed for yourself, the thing that separates you from other companies, that really describes what it is you do, describes the purpose of your organization, gives people a clear sight of how it is you want them to work.

Jeff Schwartz:

Well, in so many of the models, I'm looking ... I want people to buy your book if they haven't seen it, so you need to see page 47.

Lynda Gratton:

Oh, yeah. That's a nice one.

Jeff Schwartz:

And you know the chart I'm talking about, because obviously you know it, you wrote it. But one of the things that ... And I'm going to now pivot to, we'll see, we have some questions from the audience. And then I'll ask a final question in a second. Many of the frameworks and much of the discussion that we've had today, starting with how you're thinking about applying design thinking, really grounds us in looking at all these questions, whether it's hybrid, or whether it's automation and technology, or whether it's societal questions, from both a business leader perspective and from an individual worker perspective.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jeff Schwartz:

And with a degree of agency, if you will, with a degree of emphasis that both of them are dynamic. And both of them are, in many ways, interacting with each other. And that's in a sense what we're trying to understand, which is what are the pressures on business leaders and what are the pressures on us, an individual? And no one is going to kowtow to anybody anymore. There's a very high price to be paid if you ask people to do something that they don't want to do, given the way that the world is structured now. And that's a new set of challenges for us because we're, you know, as John Hagel and JSB, John Seely Brown, talked about, a century of scalable efficiency and process efficiency, we're in a very different place.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

A couple, if I summarize what some of the questions are that I've seen so far.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. Some great observations and comments, by the way. Thank you so much. Wynn, particularly.

Jeff Schwartz:

Yes. I know.

Lynda Gratton:

The sort of guy that if I was teaching-



Jeff Schwartz:

There's always one or two or three people who become the sort of docents and the curators of the conversation.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

Really fantastic.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

Really fantastic. But there's a couple of big questions and themes also that I'm getting from my colleagues who are pinging me on Slack in the background.

Lynda Gratton:

Oh yeah, we have a Slack channel running.

Jeff Schwartz:

Yeah. Multi-channel. You can't multitask, but we try.



Lynda Gratton:

We're so on it, aren't we, Jeff?

Jeff Schwartz:

We try. Well, I don't know if we're on it, but we're trying. We're reading [inaudible 00:49:22].

Lynda Gratton:

We're on it.

Jeff Schwartz:

There's a couple of questions. I'm going to summarize three, all right?

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

The way the economist does sometimes, or when you're in a discussion. There are questions about, what does this mean from the perspective of culture?

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.



Jeff Schwartz:

Right? Again, I'm not going to apologize. And I don't think our participants will. How has culture changed and what have we learned about it? There's a question about, what does this mean for us as managers? And maybe you can talk a little bit about the article that you and Diane wrote. And then there's a third question about, what does this mean for us as humans interacting in a world where technology is really at the fore of so much how we work? Just being one example, how we're interacting on Zoom. But the way that many of us, I've certainly described it ... I mean, every worker should expect to be working next to, or with, a smart machine or a robot, or some AI.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

And we're all using expressions, Lynda, about humanizing work. So help us think a little bit about, what is this combination of humans and technology?

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. Well, I think-

Jeff Schwartz:

Culture, managers, and human and technology. That's all I have. That's all we have for you.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah. Well, these are fantastically interesting questions. I'm going to ... In the time we've got, let me just have a quick talk about the technology one. I think, and it'd be interesting to hear



what others feel about this, I think there are so many unanswered questions. At the very beginning, if I look at my journals, one of the things that we said is that Zoom and Microsoft platforms, they're good, but you know, they're not really creative. We need to get people around the water. You know, water cooler conversations.

And two things happened after that. One is that psychologists who had been actually monitoring what was going on in the office before the pandemic showed their data, that said, well, actually, when people go into the offices in the past, they didn't spend all their time talking to each other because open plan offices were so noisy. They put noise-canceling headphones on and just did emails. So let's just forget. Let's not romanticize about what the office was. It was always a pretty dreadful place. But the second thing is that we actually learned that you could do quite a lot on Zoom. So for example, believe it or not, Diana Gherson and I, who wrote this honestly lovely, lovely HBR article, have never met each other. No. We're meeting in France. I have a house in France and we're meeting there next week, actually.

Jeff Schwartz:

So, she lives in Boston. You live in London. You've worked virtually, and you're going to meet in France.

Lynda Gratton:

Well, she lives in California. She lives in California. And we did it during lockdown. And when I was in New York last week or the week before, she was in California, so we've never actually met. And we produced something that Harvard Business Review tell us is one of the most downloaded articles of this year. So you can create value without actually meeting people face to face.

The other thing that's sort of fascinating is virtual reality. So quite a lot of the big companies, you know, Deloitte, PWC, Accenture, used VR as a way of bringing people into the organization in the induction phase. And we're watching that at the moment, there's a whole bunch of studies going on. But what I would say is we honestly don't know about how humans feel in a

virtual reality thing. We just don't know. And so there's masses to learn. So I will certainly be keeping my journal going.

But in a way what, what we've done with the pandemic is it has accelerated, hasn't it? And the CEO of Microsoft, very early in the pandemic, said, "I think that it's accelerated technological advances by a couple of years." And I think it probably has done that, because we're all now feeling entirely comfortable doing this, doing what we're doing now, which we wouldn't have done a couple of years back. We've taught hybrid at London Business School now for two years. We've got Zoomers and Roomers, and we do all of that. So we've made massive technological developments. So I think that technology's going to be really fascinating.

On your point about the HR and how we navigate, I was listening to quite a lot of CEOs during Davos, and some of them were closed meetings so I can't say who it was, but one of the most senior CEOs in the world running one of the largest companies said that she ... She said, so that's already reduced quite a lot.

Jeff Schwartz:

Narrows it down. Narrows it down.

Lynda Gratton:

She said that what she wants more than anything at the moment is her leaders to know what's going on around the world. And I love that. I love that. She said, "Look, if you're in times of real change, as we are now, it's crucial that leaders know what's happening in the world around them." And I felt very good about that, obviously, because that's what I've been trying to do, both in my classes at London Business School and indeed in my books, is actually to show people, look, this is what's happening in your world. You perhaps didn't know this, but this is what's happening.

Because when I wrote my very first book, which is called Living Strategy, it was an inside out book. It was a bit about how you build human resource strategy on the basis of a business strategy, making exactly the connections you spoke about earlier, Jeff. But then, within 10

years, I realized that this was far too inward looking and that actually, an HR strategy had to be incredibly sensitive and responsive to what was happening outside, and that's why I wrote *The Shift*.

The Shift was really saying, "Here are the 32 trends that are shaping our world. And if you want to be a great HR person, you need to know what those are, and you need to be imagining how they're going to develop." And I think that's just as pertinent now as it would've been some time ago.

Jeff Schwartz:

There's a question here someone is asking, Lynda, and I'll ask you to comment on it briefly, and I'll ask you a final question. Are there other books that you would recommend for us? Obviously, we will send a list out to ... We'll summarize the books that you've written. But there are others. I'll just add one or two. One, of course, is Adam Grant's recent book, *Think Again*.

Lynda Gratton:

Yeah.

Jeff Schwartz:

The importance of learning and unlearning.

Lynda Gratton:

Yes.



Jeff Schwartz:

Which I think is critical. And the other are Gillian Tett's books.

Lynda Gratton:

Oh. Oh, that's interesting.

Jeff Schwartz:

On the role of anthropology.

Lynda Gratton:

Yes. Yes.

Jeff Schwartz:

The Silo Effect and her recent book, Anthro-Vision.

Lynda Gratton:

Yes.

Jeff Schwartz:

As well. Which are all about something that you've been highlighting for us-



Lynda Gratton:

You know, I haven't read that book. Thank you for reminding me about it. I'm just about to start reading again.

Jeff Schwartz:

Oh, it's a great summer read and she's a wonderful writer. I mean, she's a senior editor at the Financial Times, so she's obviously a wonderful writer. But I think what they have in common is something that we've been talking about in the last hour. Which is as you've been highlighting, being open, creating, hearing different perspectives. You've talked about your work with Andrew Scott, a psychologist and a management specialist and an economist working together. So much, this is the sort of thing that John and Ravin talked about. And so much of what we're doing today is taking a multidisciplinary view of the world and sort of breaking out of our silos, as Jillian talks about. But here's my final question.

Lynda Gratton:

So, just in terms of books, by the way, I would absolutely agree with Jeff that ... I'm just looking at all my books behind me. And I tend to follow authors, and I tend to follow people in different disciplines. Because that's really where I get my biggest ideas, because I'm reading somebody who writes about ethics, or somebody who writes about fairness, or somebody who writes about design or about democracy or about all these other, masters of craft. And there's just so many things to read, actually. And I tend to really enjoy, I enjoy reading. That's why it's great to be in a book club. By the way, Jeff, we haven't mentioned that I also did the audio of the book with my own fab voice.

Jeff Schwartz:

You did, you mentioned that earlier. So for people who want somebody, so you can buy the book, you can listen to the book-



Lynda Gratton:

Listen to it, with me reading it.

Jeff Schwartz:

And you can hear Lynda Gratton read it. We will make this recording available, both to people who've been on today's session and also to others, as we already have for the discussion we had with John and with Ravin. But one last question. A phrase that's really been resonating with me in the last few months, and this really comes back to your freeze, unfreeze, before we refreeze, is to change the game, we need to make game-changing moves. My question for you to help us sort of pull together today's discussion, for someone who's written five books in the last 10 or 11 years of the future of work, who's just written this wonderful book, *Redesigning Work*. I mean it, I mean, the post-its in here.

Lynda Gratton:

Oh, thank you, Jeff.

Jeff Schwartz:

What are the game-changing moves that you would ask us to think about as we're thinking about the next six months, the second half of 2022, and as we go into 2023?

Lynda Gratton:

Well, I think one of the things I could have done more of in the book was to be more imaginative. And actually, I've been working with somebody who's not in our field at all recently. And they've just said, "If you had a blank piece of paper ..." In fact, he's a designer. A famous designer, in fact. He said, "If you had a blank sheet of paper and you had to design what work was, what would that look like?" You know, so no preconceptions of what work is. So for example, he's a designer who's been working with Google on how Google sets up. He's

a designer of offices. So he said, "Well, why not think about work as a series of events, so that you don't do it on a daily basis, you do it on an event basis?" It's a bit like people who run programs do.

But so my invitation would be to actually start from a blank sheet of paper and ask yourself, if you thought about the things that you need to do and your colleagues and teams need to do, how could you do that together? What would work look like? And think, and then ask different people what they think work should be. I'm talking to architects at the moment. What do you think work should look like? And they have some really interesting ideas about that.

