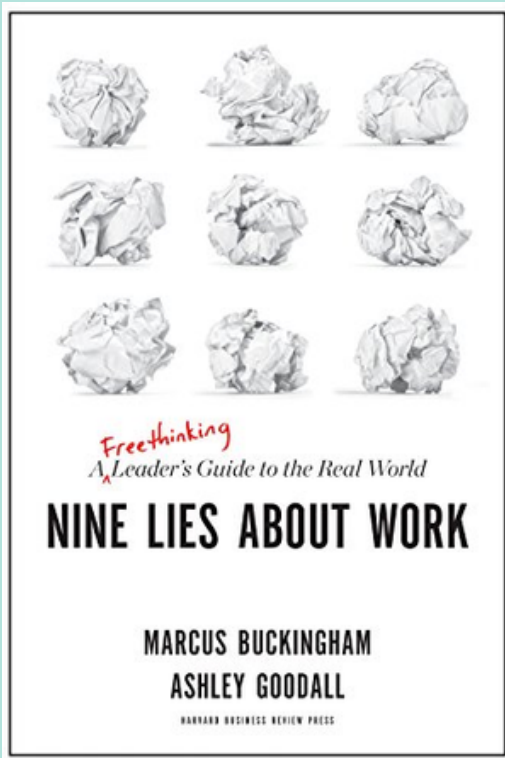


# NINE LIES ABOUT WORK

A Freethinking Leader's  
Guide to the Real World

Marcus Buckingham  
Ashley Goodall



You crave feedback. Your organization's culture is the key to its success. Strategic planning is essential. Your competencies should be measured and your weaknesses shored up. Leadership is a thing.

These may sound like basic truths of our work lives today. But actually, they're lies. As Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall show in this inspiring book, there are some big lies that we encounter every time we show up for work. With engaging stories and incisive analysis, the authors reveal the essential truths that such freethinking leaders will recognize immediately.

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# LIE #1

People care which company they work for



*Lie #1*

People care which team they're on because that's where work actually happens

Chapter one discussed the importance of teams in the workplace. Buckingham and Goodall conducted research to uncover what the 'best teams' in successful companies were doing to achieve success and their findings were always the members in the team and how they functioned together as a unit. Buckingham and Goodall found that employees want to feel like they belong, that their output is acknowledged and that their professional growth is a priority. They do not receive these things from the company itself or the work culture but their team.

Chapter one also discussed cultural plumage and how little it affects how you and your team perform work. Buckingham and Goodall define cultural plumage as perks you may receive when employed at a company, such as a specific dress code or free health and wellness voucher. They explained how people do not care what company they work for but they do care what company they join and these plumages are used to attract employees. Although these cultural plumages may be a factor in an employee's onboarding, it will have little to no effect on their longevity. An employee's longevity with a company is based on the team leader they have and the team they work with.

# LIE #2



## The best plan wins



*Truth #2*

The best intelligence wins because the world moves too fast for plans

Chapter two discussed the importance of building an intelligence system within your team instead of making plans. Buckingham and Goodall explained that the world changes quickly and frequently and even the best laid plans can be obsolete by execution time. They proposed focusing on building an intelligence system where information or data is shared with and between all team members and done frequently. The team can then make sense of the information together and build trust and independence among team members.

In this chapter, Buckingham and Goodall also highlighted the importance of a check-in with your team members. They insisted it was the responsibility of a team leader to do weekly check-ins with all their team members. Monthly or quarterly meetings only ever remain surface level and vague as goals set in September are no longer relevant in December. Making weekly check-ins allows discussions about priorities, obstacles and solutions to be done in real time. Buckingham and Goodall also explained that if you are unable to complete weekly team check-ins due to member number, you are leading too many people for your capacity.

# LIE #3

## The best companies cascade goals



*Truth #3*

The best companies cascade meaning because people want to know what they all share

Chapter three focused on the importance of cascading meaning throughout a company instead of goals. Buckingham and Goodall explained how there was no research to confirm that forcing cascading goals on your employees would see an increase in the completion of these goals. It is actually the opposite. Employees are less likely to complete goals thrust upon them from their boss' boss. Cascading goals come top down from the leader of a company. The problem with this is that these high up leaders are not in tune with what is needing to be done because they are not working in the middle of it. Also, as previously discussed, things change quickly and frequently in business and most of the time, goals become obsolete before they can be completed.

Cascading meaning gives employees an understanding of the purpose of a company. It can be done by expressing values, rituals and stories. Buckingham and Goodall explained that the owner of Chick-fil-A keeps all Chick-fil-A's closed on Sundays because he was a devout Catholic. By doing this, he was imbedding his values into his company for everyone to see. Cascading meaning showcases what your company has to offer and how it differs from others. This allows employees the opportunity to decide how they can contribute and set goals accordingly.

By not cascading goals, employees are able to set their own, attainable goals. It has also been proven that goals are more likely to be attained when they are personally set.

# LIE #4



The best people are well-rounded



*truth #4*

The best people are spiky, because uniqueness is a feature not a bug



**Chapter four discussed the futility of evaluating competencies and the importance of uniqueness. Most companies use some sort of competency evaluation to hire possible candidates for a job and also to assess them for feedback. Buckingham and Goodall suggested that this is causeless because it is impossible to measure a competency. They also stated that there is no research to prove that you can increase your work performance if you are able to acquire a competency that you lack. Buckingham and Goodall explained that the focus should be on strengths and successes instead of competencies and instead of trying to attain a competency you will probably never master, you should be trying to increase impact where you already have ability. We will see growth when we hone in on our strengths.**

**Instead of wanting to hire a well-rounded person, Buckingham and Goodall proposed hiring someone unique or spiky. They suggested that there is no 'perfect person' containing all the characteristics and competencies that you think are necessary for a job. There are instead, numerous people with unique strengths that can bring different assets to a team. Rather than have an employee try to learn a new competency, Buckingham and Goodall offered to hire someone with that competency as a strength. In doing so, you are actually boosting morale on your team because everyone is focusing on their strengths instead of what they lack. Uniqueness is key to a strong team.**

# LIE #5

## People need feedback



Truth #5

People need attention because we all want to be seen for who we are at our best

Chapter five discussed the human need for attention and the inability to give useful feedback. Buckingham and Goodall stated that Millennials needing constant feedback was a myth. It has been assumed that because Millennials spend large amounts of time posting on social media platforms, they require feedback constantly. Studies have shown that the majority of Millennials detest feedback and prefer social media platforms without feedback options such as Snapchat. Millennials and people in general are actually seeking attention.

Buckingham and Goodall suggested the importance of positive attention. Focusing on the positive strengths of an employee allows them to continue building up their strengths. In terms of growth, Buckingham and Goodall proposed that people learn best in their comfort zones. This is where we are most concentrated, open to new ideas and creative. This is the zone where we should be building our strengths.

Buckingham and Goodall stated that it is impossible to give helpful feedback. When we give feedback, we give instances or examples of what we have done or would do in a situation. As Buckingham and Goodall have already established, we are all unique with a different combination of strengths. Our anecdotal feedback will not work for someone else because they are not us. Instead of feedback, they suggest leading our employees on to their own paths toward solution by giving them attention through conversation.

# LIE #6

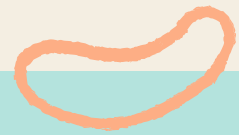


People can reliably rate other people



*Lie #6*

People can reliably rate their own experience because that's all we have



**Chapter six discussed how it is impossible to reliably rate other people and suggested a different take on analyzing the performance of others. Buckingham and Goodall found that, when it comes to rating other people, there is no way to teach this skill nor are there reliable programs that compute this. It is impossible to not bring in your own biases when rating others. That is why they say that rating other people actually says more about you than it does about them. Thus, any data gathered from human rating and computer rating is flawed data and should not be used. So, what should we do?**

**Buckingham and Goodall suggest rating others using our own experiences as our own experiences are all that we have that are reliable. For example, to rate a fellow team member, you can ask a series of questions to the people working close with them to gauge their experiences with that team member. This will give you reliable data on the performance of your team member and also get a sense for how your team works together.**

# LIE #7

## People have potential



Truth #7

People have momentum because we all move through the world differently

Chapter seven focused on debunking the word potential and driving our employees momentum. Buckingham and Goodall suggested that the word potential has no real, concrete definition and therefore no one knows how to measure it. There is also no way to 'improve' potential as it is seemed to be explained as a trait that some people just have and others do not. Elon Musk was explained as an example of the misuse of potential as he was the employee told numerous times that he lacked potential and thus let go. He went on to start multiple successful companies providing jobs to thousands of people and innovative products to consumers. Buckingham and Goodall proposed that Elon Musk had and still has strong momentum.

Instead of measuring an employees potential, Buckingham and Goodall suggested that employers measure momentum. Everyone has momentum. It is the strength of our momentum that can be measured. A person with strong momentum is utilizing their strengths and seeing abundant success while a person with weaker momentum may need to switch directions or tap into their strengths. Measuring and focusing on momentum allows for productive conversations to be had about performance in the workplace. It also focuses on the positives as everyone already possesses this quality and we can work at strengthening it.



# LIE #8

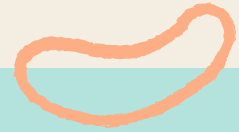


## Work-life balance matters most



truth 6

Love in work matters most because that is what work is really for



**Chapter eight focuses on the limits of work-life balance and the importance of love. Buckingham and Goodall suggested that work-life balance was an unattainable goal for all people. We will never find a 'perfect balance' between our work and our life. The world is quickly and forever changing and we are all unique with specific needs. The balance we seek is impossible and thus our focus should be on love.**

**Instead of attempting to create a work-life balance, Buckingham and Goodall proposed that we all attempt to find what we love about our work and our life and focus on making that a priority. Studies have shown that people who spend at least twenty percent of their time doing something they love, see a reduction in work burnout. Employers want to increase productivity and thus output and having happy employees result in positive attitudes, strong momentum and more output. Buckingham and Goodall reiterated that we are the keepers of our own happiness. We know what fills our buckets therefore we need to make those things a priority in every aspect of our life to be able to succeed. It is not a balance of work and life but actually love and loathe and our job is to outweigh loathe with love.**

# LIE #9

## Leadership is a thing



Truth #9

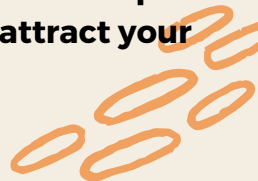
We follow spikes because spikes give us certainty



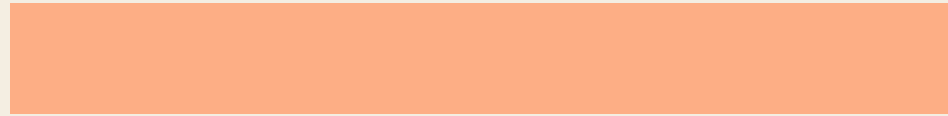
Chapter nine focuses on how to define leadership and what a leader truly is. Buckingham and Goodall believed that leadership is a broad, vague term that can mean different things to different people. There are many different types of leaders in the world displaying diverse characteristics. It is difficult to find a common denominator between all strong leaders. Buckingham and Goodall suggested this definition of a leader: **leaders have followers.**

Instead of focusing on a leader's characteristics, focus on their followers. A leader is no one without a group of strong followers. Buckingham and Goodall propose we examine the feelings of a leader's followers. The positive experiences followers have under their leader are indicative to the actions a leader took to evoke them. A mark of a strong leader is the followers behind them.

Although we can not find a common characteristic between all strong leaders, it can be said that they were all extremists in at least one domain. As touched on previously, Buckingham and Goodall suggested that our strengths should be our focus to see success. They also believed that that is what the strongest leaders have done. They have taken the one or two strengths they have and have become extremists with them. They have then used their intense passion to unite like-minded people. The moral of this chapter is that your uniqueness will attract your followers.



# REFERENCE



Buckingham, M., & Goodall, A. (2019). *Nine Lies About Work: A freethinking leader's guide to the real world*. Harvard Business Review Press.

