# LEADERSHIP IN THE AGE OF PERSONALIZATION®

You've heard of the great resignation. Several summit participants reject that term as backward-facing, focused on what you're leaving rather than what you're moving toward. People want to explore and expand individuality for themselves and for others. Leaders across industries share their own successes and failures in helping people do just that.

# The Great Unleashing

From stifled and suppressed to uplifted and unleashed

GLLG® press

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# WE SUPPRESS INDIVIDUALS
## WITHOUT EVEN KNOWING IT

*Glenn Llopis at the 2021 Leadership in the Age of Personalization Summit*

That's the primary obstacle underscoring nearly every challenge leaders are facing today—whether it's pressure to figure out hybrid remote teams, how to thrive in our perpetual state of uncertainty, how to fulfill their promises of inclusion or how to elevate their commitment to personalizing wellbeing.

We inadvertently keep people functioning far below their full capacity. We fail to see and support each other's dignity.

We do it because that's what our systems are designed for.

It doesn't have to be that way.

# Stop Suppressing and Start Unleashing

GLLG's work and research into personalization and individuality has generated a movement among cross-industry executives focused on shedding the limitations of standardization and suppression to thrive in our age of personalization. This movement includes a think-tank consortium across three cohorts (corporate, healthcare and higher education) that work together to redefine what leadership means in today's more personalized world.

This is how consortium member Bill Hulseman described it recently. He is an independent consultant who designs rituals, facilitates dialogue, and supports educators in developing school culture, and he has been an active member of the Leadership in the Age of Personalization Consortium.

> "I've had a front row seat to meaningful and visible change that has the potential to veer us away from cynicism and away from combative tribalism. In the past year, I've been engaged in a fascinating dialogue among leaders in higher ed, healthcare, and business to discern what the consortium characterizes as a shift from the dominant ethos of standardization (that sacrifices humanity to the gods of efficiency and profit) toward one of personalization (the radical notion that the person is the starting point for constructing the systems and structures that help us navigate the world).
>
> This dialogue began well before the pandemic consumed us and the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd enraged us, but the experience of 2020 only magnified the need to reconsider the world we've constructed. That reconsideration means examining and clarifying the purpose of each industry, of each organization, of each individual."

*Bill Hulseman at the 2021 Leadership in the Age of Personalization Summit*

## Join the Movement Toward Unleashing

Once again, 2021 has been a year requiring agility. Our annual Leadership in the Age of Personalization Summit was no exception.

Our inaugural gathering in 2019 was entirely in person. In 2020, we pivoted and took the summit virtual. This time, we took the hybrid approach. Many people were able to participate with us live and in person in Las Vegas at the production facilities of Lightspeed VT (our host sponsor). Several others joined, presented and actively participated virtually. The summit continues to be a microcosm for how all of us have had to be agile enough to adapt during a time of daily uncertainty.

As always, participants were generous and forthcoming about the challenges they're facing within their organizations and throughout their industries. People shared stories and ideas, both successes and failures.

What follows is a summary of some of the highlights, including links to short videos from the summit presentations and discussions. The summary is broken down into these chapters:

1. **ASSESS:** Success Should Not Be Defined By Institutions
2. **INTERRUPT:** We've Changed How We Work, Now Change How You Lead
3. **PIVOT:** Avoid Becoming Obsolete As A Leader
4. **BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER:** Evolve Your Organizational Culture

Here's more from Bill Hulseman:

> "One question lingers for me: How do you ask others to bring their authentic selves to work when you don't know who they are? This points to a related question that leaders need to address: How do you ask others to bring their authentic selves to work when you don't know who YOU are? It's too easy to hide behind abstractions like 'the great resignation' and avoid making the changes (and the sacrifices) necessary to really make work person-centered, to really make schools student-centered, and to really make healthcare patient-centered."

Excellent questions. Dive into this report for insights directly from industry leaders.

AGE OF
PERSONALIZATION

UP NEXT

**ASSESS:**

# Success Should Not Be Defined By Institutions

> "We've done a great job of telling our students what success is, and that just doesn't work. I want to make sure that our students understand how to define success for themselves. What is it that they want to do? Not what is it that we want them to do."
>
> —Adlai Wertman, David C. Bohnett professor of social entrepreneurship and founding director of Brittingham Social Enterprise Lab at the USC Marshall School of Business

*Adlai Wertman speaking at the 2020 Leadership in the Age of Personalization Summit*

Students, patients and employees are all tired of being told what success looks like. This was one of the core messages of the summit.

Here's why this message is urgent: one of the top trends for 2022, according to this article from Harvard Business Review, is that managerial tasks will be automated away, creating space for managers to build more human relationships with their employees.

But just because we have the space for more human relationships doesn't mean we know what to do with that space. Managers have been trained for those so-called managerial tasks, not for building those human relationships.

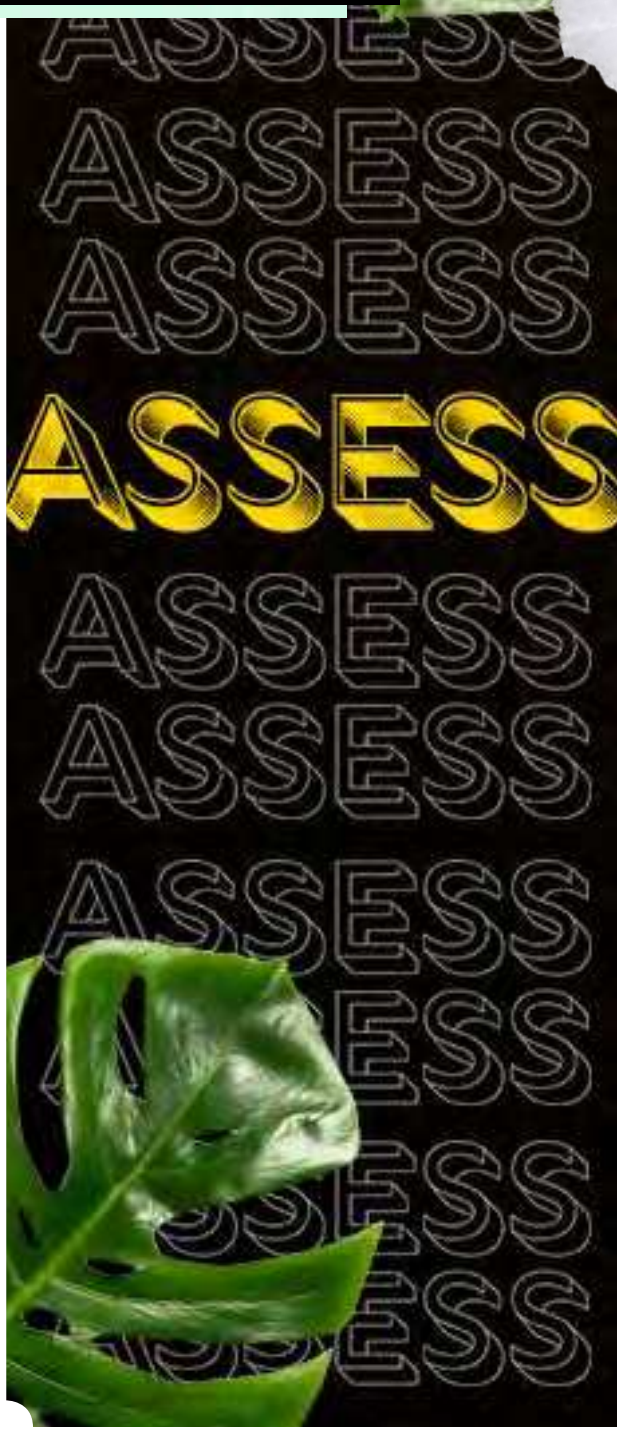
Gartner says organizations need to invest in "human-centric" managers.

The most human-centric thing we can do is to talk with those very humans. Do you teach students, treat patients, lead employees? Do you know them as individuals?

Individuality requires a concerted effort to know and account for the realities and the values of individual employees, customers, patients and students.

**WHAT DO THEY REALLY NEED AND WANT FROM YOU?**

**WHAT DO THEY WISH YOU KNEW ABOUT THEM?**



## *Listen to Students*

The events of 2020 radically disrupted higher education. What do students want and need from their teachers and their institutions?

Pete Baron, a student at Fairfield University, shared this at the summit: "In the age of standardization, the purpose of education was content. It was about imparting knowledge on students. If you're an accounting major, we're going to give you the skills to be an accountant."

But Baron said last year he heard an academic leader suggest that education should be guided by a question, not a major. "I started thinking about my question," said Baron. "I'm interested in sociology, philosophy, rhetoric, politics and history. I figured out my question is, 'are socioeconomic inequities inevitable? Or are they avoidable?' Now I have an individually designed major centered around that question. And because I'm leading with a question instead of just a discipline, in every course I take I'm thinking about my question and how it fits in with what I want to solve for."

How motivating! Watch this short video of Pete to get more of his story.

**The New Purpose of Education**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

Students are also watching our efforts at diversity and inclusion, and seeing where those efforts fall short.

In the video below, Brielle Lubin, a high school sophomore at Harvard-Westlake School in Los Angeles, shares her unique perspective about the dangers of social media and warns that our efforts to be more inclusive can inadvertently create environments where clubs (or diversity resource groups) feel exclusive.

**Social Media and DE&I Amongst the Youth**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

# Fools Don't Approach Fences
## By Brielle Lubin

*You see her on the side of the paved road*
*Sitting on the prongs of a mighty fearful fence*
*Her throat itches to sing an astonishing melody*
*Yet the serenade comes out scratchy and distorted,*
*Incoherent; unable to be interpreted.*
*Or are you familiar with her words,*
*Yet you dare not speak?*
*Take a closer look at her:*
*Her wrinkled little hands stay by her sides*
*Not held out to beg for your salvation*
*Yet she's asking you something; you simply turn your head away from*
*The pitiful sight making you reluctant to hear*
*Her story*
*You neglect to hear what she's saying*
*Just another meaningless, nonsensical ramble*
*Or are you scared?*
*You can't bear to turn your head her way*
*Are you afraid to hear what she's speculating?*
*After all, it's hard to trust her, sitting on the fence*
*Brooding, croaking, calling for you*
*To come back.*
*Yet you do,*
*You have yet to hear what the woman has to say*
*At first, the site makes you twinge*
*Her sharp toes wrap around the gilded wire*
*Her eyes are a void*
*That swallows all*
*And her arms hidden behind an ebony curtain.*
*You finally look directly into the face of her*
*And you notice the gesture to step forward*
*As she sings you the melody once again.*
*You can't help but be irked by the*
*Sound of an elder falling*
*Or a chair clattering to the ground*
*A silent storm with an outreaching hand*
*Ready to fasten on to the clawed feet of those fleeing*
*But within the cawing you hear the indistinct words*
*We shape our buildings, thereafter our buildings shape us1*
*A familiar chiasmus a wise one may have once said*
*And you just can't turn your head away.*
*The hot water boils*
*Crackling and popping in your ears*
*A flap brings you back and yet*
*Before you know more of this mysterious woman*
*She flies away.*

**Fools Don't Approach Fences**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

Brielle Lubin is always full of surprise. Back in 2019, throughout the day of the summit, she had been playing piano in the background. When she addressed the audience from the stage at the end of the day, she did it with the confidence of someone who already gives thought – and action – to these ideas of personalization. This time, in 2021, Brielle wrote us this poem to show how in touch she is with our current realities of suppressing individually. Then the GLLG Marketing team turned it into a video, that was played moments before she joined the stage. **You are welcome to watch by clicking the link above.**

*Kayla Redig and Kawana Williams at the 2021 Leadership in the Age of Personalization Summit*

## *Listen to Patients*

What does it mean to stop suppressing individuality within the context of healthcare? Obviously, this is a realm in which standards can be important. But we start suppressing when we let those standards obstruct our view of the individual in front of us at any given moment.

That's what happens when people are seen and known solely by their cancer diagnosis rather than by the unique individuals they are.

> "As an African-American woman, an undergrad, and an adolescent and young adult – those things should have been taken into consideration pre-treatment, during treatment, and post-treatment. Unfortunately, they were not," said Kawana Williams, licensed professional counselor at My Healing Center. "I'm an African-American woman in my youth with a cancer that is typically restricted to Jewish, white women in their forties. I was treated as a standard cancer patient. 'You're young. We can blast you with a crap load of chemotherapy. And once you're done, you'll be fine.' That's how I was treated."

Watch and listen to her talk about it in her own words.

*VINCIBLE: The Documentary is available at Amazon.com*

Kayla Redig is a competitive athlete and elementary school teacher. She had a similar experience with cancer in her 20s, and has produced a documentary film about the special challenges facing young adults with cancer.

In this short video below, she talks about her isolation. "When you're diagnosed with cancer at 24, you no longer fit in with your normal peer group. Good luck trying to date when you're bald and you don't have breasts anymore. You don't fit in on the outside. And then you go on the inside of the hospital, the space where you're supposed to be welcome, and I was lumped in with everyone who had the same diagnosis [older women in completely different life stages]. Not only did I not fit in on the outside, now I don't belong here on the inside."

She offers a suggestion: "I've had a lot of unexpected, out-of-control things happen with the cancer diagnosis. I'm willing to and wanting to grasp onto anything that feels familiar, concrete and sturdy. So if you [healthcare workers] can give me some of that control, I'll take it."

## *Listen to Employees*

It's tempting and common to put people in boxes based on one aspect of their identity, because that makes it "easier" and more efficient to deal with someone in the moment. But that's also what isolates us from each other, and it's what makes it hard for leaders to be what Gartner calls "human-centric."

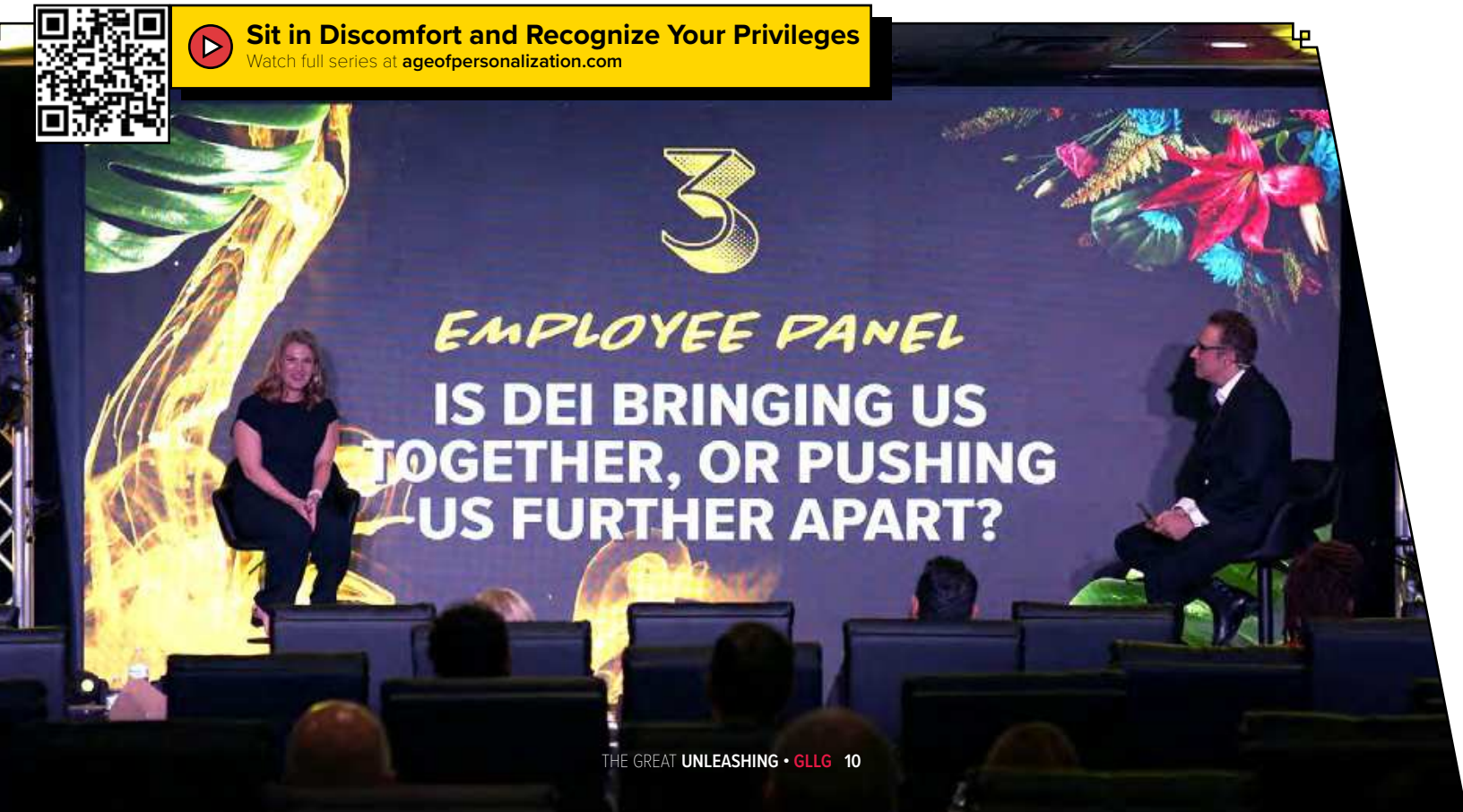
"We should never feel like we need to decide where we belong to feel included," said Ivy Nguyen, senior manager of security awareness at General Mills. Nguyen also said we shouldn't have to adapt and change who we are to belong and to fit in. In this video, she shares her own story of feeling the need to make things simple and easy for everyone else, rather than honor her own identity.

That's such a common feeling among employees – that they have to sacrifice their own identity for the sake of the organization.

**Navigating Between Inclusion and Individualism**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

Listen to Meaghan Gilhooly, doctor of veterinary medicine and director of field support for Banfield Pet Hospital. In the video below, she talks about the difficulty in recognizing individual employees, admitting that individuality is hard to scale and that we tend to avoid what's hard.

**Sit in Discomfort and Recognize Your Privileges**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**



Another challenge, according to Frank Ross, senior manager of cyber security engineering and operations at General Mills: "One of the mistakes I see is that we haven't incorporated the groups of people that we're trying to help in the solution." He talks more about that here.

Ross' point is a good one, and that's exactly why unleashing individuality must begin with a process for assessing how we might be suppressing people. You can't start unleashing if you don't first investigate and listen:

- Where can you find useful intel?
- Who do you need to listen to and how?
- Whose voices do you have the hardest time finding and hearing?
- Are people staying silent because they're afraid to speak up, or because they've learned from experience that speaking up is not safe?
- Or are they not silent at all, you just haven't heard them?
- Who can tell you who else you need to listen to?

STOP DEFINING SUCCESS FOR OTHERS.

START MAKING A WAY FOR THEM TO DEFINE AND ACHIEVE IT FOR THEMSELVES.

**INTERRUPT:**

## We've Changed How We Work, Now Change How You Lead

"Can we figure it out together?"

That's a quote from Kristin Gwinner, executive vice president and chief human resources officer at Chico's FAS, Inc. She's talking about how to organize the workplace around the new hybrid model (as you'll read about below), but her idea is actually at the heart of the three main topics covered throughout this chapter and at the core of every idea shared here.

We lose sight of each person's individuality – and therefore we start suppressing them – when we forget to include them in decisions that affect the way they work, learn or live.

This chapter includes insights from leaders who are working to interrupt suppression and start unleashing individuality in the ways their teams, organizations and industries adapt to the moment – with hybrid working, finding new metrics for success, and identifying the skills that will be necessary to thrive in an uncertain future.

## *Activating Capacity in a Hybrid Environment*

We suppress people by dictating where and how they should do their work. Sometimes there's no choice: a surgeon can't decide to do surgery from home. But where there is choice and flexibility, why not let people choose for themselves?

"I can't imagine going back to a regular office," said Guilherme Oliveira, a director of marketing and strategy. "One of the best ideas I had, it wasn't in the office or in a meeting. It was when I was surfing. Traveling is what sparks my thoughts. When I'm traveling and meeting new people, that's when I can get the best of myself. That works for me, and I know every individual is different."

It's no longer about the career defining one's lifestyle, it's about the lifestyle defining one's career. So it's worth it for leaders to make it easier for talented people to work with you from anywhere. But it will take effort, it will require new ways of leading, and it will require some creativity.

Joe Moscola gives us a great example. He is executive vice president of Northwell Health. Watch this short video to see how he led a redesign of their working environment because, as he put it: "One of the key things to understand is: what are your team members' needs? Not only in the workplace ... but what are their needs physically, emotionally, mentally, socially? When you can get to that level of depth of understanding, then you can unlock the code to the things that are needed to be successful."

**The Workplace Beyond Work**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

Kristin Gwinner extends that idea beyond the work environment to include the lifecycle of work itself. She is executive vice president and chief human resources officer at Chico's FAS, Inc., and she said when evaluating remote work, she looked across the entire lifecycle of work to see where the interdependencies are, and then looked at each role to determine if it can stay remote. But she didn't stop there. Watch and listen to her describe how she approached the decision about remote work. In her words: "Can we figure it out together?"

**Welcome to the Hybrid World**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

In this next video, Brad Williams, president of Dallas College El Centro Campus, shares some lessons learned about engaging employees at all levels when they had to suddenly go remote. He also gives us powerful reasons why it pays to work to get this right: "All of us want to lead lives that are filled with purpose and meaning and significance, and have a legacy of some type. When we look at those primary factors of activating capacity, it really begs a leader to create and foster a type of environment that allows that to exist."

As we all rethink how we work, these four leaders give us important perspectives:

1. We all get inspired differently
2. We all have many realities that extend beyond work itself, yet still affect our work
3. Remote or hybrid working is about more than just our physical location, it also impacts our interconnectivity across the organization
4. Putting in the effort to create an environment that unleashes people will help them live lives filled with purpose and meaning

Those are good places to look for possible interruptions in your own thinking and ways of leading. Another place to look for possible interruptions: what we choose to measure.

## *Measure Something Meaningful*

One of the most important decisions a leader makes is what will be measured to determine success: success of the business, success of a project, success of an individual. Because whatever it is, that is what people will focus on.

If you want customers or patients to know they matter, but you measure and judge employees based on number of people served, speed will eclipse quality. All too often our own metrics hold us back – keeping employees, customers, patients, and students locked into patterns that suppress their individuality. So make sure your metrics create the right incentives.

James Momon is focused on reducing equity gaps. He's a senior vice president and the first chief equity officer at 3M, based in Minneapolis. He believes we must start to measure and define new metrics and systems to propel equity.

"Equality is a noble aspiration that we've been talking about in our society for quite some time," said Momon. "The distinction I would make between equality and equity is that equity acknowledges the historical context of disparities that exist in our society today. And how do we actually address those disparities?"

He said one of his priorities for 3M, a science-based organization, is to focus on the impact they can have in driving more equitable access to STEM careers. Watch and listen to him talk about the difference in measuring equality compared with equity, and why his role was formed after the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Momon is addressing some big questions at the societal level. Now let's look at the level of an industry that has rapidly gone from operating in the background for most people to suddenly front and center: supply chain.

Lou Mercado has reinvented the supply chain function from a cost center approach to a profit center focused on growth. He believes that developing people, upskilling, and challenging outdated metrics are critical to getting the best outcomes. He's led supply chain for companies within healthcare, retail and technology. Today he is chief global supply chain officer for 99 Cents Only Stores.

He said, "In the past, we were very siloed. [Supply chain executives] weren't at the table."

When it comes to metrics and what organizations expect supply chain to contribute, he described how those expectations are starting to evolve from cost and service metrics to include growth: "We looked at cost. We looked at service, which is a key component of supply chain metrics. We weren't focused as much on growth in the past. But if you think about it, we should be very integrated with our organizations to ensure that we're providing growth. So that's starting to shift." Watch here for more from Mercado.

Another topic that has been front and center during the pandemic is access to health records. Mike Nash is co-founder and CEO of Lumedic, a health information logistics company, where he and his team are working to democratize patient data to shift the balance of power from the institution to the individual.

Healthcare is an industry with many competing metrics – privacy and security of information versus easy access. Standardized levels of care versus personalized levels of service. The list goes on.

Nash describes his work as thinking about the role that patients play in their own personal healthcare journeys, and what do they need to enable that level of individuality? "A big part of that really quickly goes down to something as simple as your health information, and how do you get access to something as simple as your medical history?" Watch here for more.

These three leaders have shown us how metrics can shape things at multiple levels:

1. At the level of society – equality versus equity
2. At the level of an entire industry – a cost-center approach versus a growth-centered approach
3. At the level of our personal health and access to our own medical records

Take a good look at what you choose to measure, and how those metrics are influencing the people you lead.

## *Non-Negotiable Skills*

To make decisions about how we work, and to re-assess what we choose to measure, we will likely need to learn new leadership skills.

City of Hope chief human resources officer Kety Duron said this about her priorities for preparing her healthcare organization for the new leadership skills needed: leaders need to evolve from being visibility-based (when everyone worked together in one location) to become empathy-based (especially when leading people in various locations) and learn human-centric leadership.

As she put it: "How do we think about each individual, and include every individual we encounter, making sure every individual's thoughts and ideas are incorporated in everything we do? We must evolve and evolve quickly. Otherwise, we will be irrelevant."

**Unlearning Old Standardized Habits**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

Gustavo Canton, analytics leader for Starbucks, said the one skill that should be top of mind is the skill of being human – to treat others and see them as the unique individuals they are.

But he also acknowledged: "I never got any education in the topic of emotions when I was in school. One of the big issues we have in organizations is sometimes we don't have empathy or that emotional quality to put ourselves in the shoes of somebody else and treat them in a humane way. So that skill is going to be very critical for us."

**Coexisting With Technology**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

This next story shows us why that skill is so important.

One of the biggest problems facing colleges today is that leadership becomes so focused on sustaining the operation of the institution that they forget about the student, according to Mike McDonough, president of Raritan Valley Community College in New Jersey. He generously shared a personal story about a failure that happened because, in his words, "I didn't know who my students were."

He tried a program to accelerate degree completion. "I thought this was a brilliant idea," he said. "I organized this schedule and put it together and nobody took it. We tried it and we tried it. Finally, a brand new advisor from the community came in and said, 'You know, Mike, I hate to tell you this, but the last bus leaves campus at 5:00 and you've got the class starting at 5:20.' I didn't know who my students were. I didn't realize they couldn't even get on campus. I was thinking I solved this, without thinking about who's actually going to take that program."

As you consider how you can evolve to meet the challenges of perpetual uncertainty, these leaders have demonstrated three key opportunities to interrupt the habits of the past:

1. Re-think the way your team works in this new hybrid environment
2. Examine what you choose to measure
3. Consider new leadership skills you need to explore

The good news: once you establish a habit of interruption, you create an ongoing cycle of evolution. It becomes easier to see where you might need to interrupt yourself. Next time we'll explore the next step in the cycle: how to pivot from suppressing individuality to unleashing it.

**PIVOT:**

## Avoid Becoming Obsolete As A Leader

A recurring theme within the stories shared throughout the day was this: we have systems that were built to function within certain realities and based on certain criteria that are no longer true or valid.

- The realities have changed
- The circumstances have changed
- The priorities have changed
- But the way we do things remains the same

**Why?** Because people don't take time to re-examine how they do things, why they do them that way, and whether or not it's still good to continue to do things that way.

We don't need to change just for the sake of change. But we DO need to change if it's warranted, for the sake of the individuals who get gobbled up in the old ways.

## *Evolve or Become Obsolete*

According to Robert Johnson, president of Western New England University: leading in ambiguity is the new norm. He also showed how our educational systems were created within the context of a reality that is no longer relevant or true. So we need to change those systems.

**How it started:**
Johnson said, "Our K through 12 system was created for an agrarian economy and it evolved to become more and more mechanistic" and standardized. Also, for all industries: "Once upon a time in a world far, far away, you could predict the future in your organizations because of standardization and [most] everything was predictable."

**How it's going:**
[After the changes of the pandemic,] "if anyone thinks that we're going to go back to the old way of doing it within higher education and in most industries in this new world, they are sorely, sorely wrong."

He said, "We have to evolve or become obsolete." Watch this short video for more.

Johnson described our role: "We have this crucial role as leaders to create what the next new normal is going to look like. And it centers around personalization."

**Education in a World of Ambiguity**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

## *What Was 'Weak,' Now is Strong*

Wendy York, dean of the Wilbur O. and Ann Powers College of Business at Clemson University, talked about this particular "before-and-after" that many women are familiar with.

**How it started:**
She said in business school she was taught that so-called feminine traits made her weak and would get her "chewed up on Wall Street" – traits like having a heart for people, being empathetic, and being aware of other people.

**How it's going:**
"... [Those are actually] major strengths in leading organizations built on trust. Because if you create a trusting environment, you create an innovative environment. And when you let people come to work as their whole selves, they bring all sorts of talents and skills and passion."

Watch here for more from York.

Several leaders had specific advice for how to avoid becoming obsolete as a leader.

## *Use Technology to Gain a 360-Degree View*

Malvika Bhagwat is partner and head of outcomes for Owl Ventures, a venture capital firm focused on education technology.

**How it started:**
"I've always been fascinated with the idea of blurring the boundaries," said Bhagwat. "Right now we spend a lot of time thinking about learning that happens in a school, versus things that happen at home, outside in nature, or in different environments where we have hobbies and have fun. Right now we don't have a holistic picture of the learner and everything that they're engaged with."

**How it's going:**
"For me, with the help of technology, getting to a point where we can see that 360-degree view of a learner would be huge – where we can start pulling into the classroom learnings that they're doing outside of the classroom, and vice versa, and bridge those gaps at any level of their journey."

Watch here for more.

## *Change Rules That Are No Longer Relevant*

Sometimes our lives depend on it.

Ed Kim is physician-in-chief of City of Hope Orange County, a leader in cancer treatment. He stressed the importance of re-thinking criteria for clinical trials (criteria are the standards people need to meet in order to be considered to participate in any given trial of a new drug or treatment).

**How it started:**
"I've written probably several hundred clinical trials. There is a lot of regulatory standardization. And as someone who's been on both sides (I've been on committees to review protocols,) I never understood why there were so many eligibility criteria: 37 criteria is the median number. It's because our therapies in the past were only incrementally better. So, in order to measure statistically any improvement, in a way that would be enough to pass an FDA or regulatory hurdle, you needed to really control your population."

**How it's going:**
"But we don't want those incremental drugs anymore. We want great drugs that make a big difference in people. So the bar needs to be reset. And we need to reset it to include everyone."

He said one of his missions is to reduce those eligibility criteria. After seven years, they've reduced seven criteria and they have six more on the way out.

"I know it doesn't sound like a lot," said Dr. Kim, "but seven out of 37, that's a start. That's what I want to see, because we know medicine moves slow in some areas and rapid in others. This is an area we've just got to fight that standardization and be transformative."

**The Power of Personalized Medicine**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

## *Rethink Who You Consider to be Experts*

When you're redesigning a cancer center, who is the expert: architects who've built many cancer centers in the past? Or patients, who have felt isolated by facilities designed for the convenience of caregivers rather than the humanity of the people receiving care?

Tom Jackiewicz is president and chief operating officer of University of Chicago Medical Center/UChicago Medicine Health System. He shared a story from personal experience, when he was confronted with this reality, when his institution was planning to build a new cancer center on campus.

Jackiewicz pointed out a flaw that most of us have, no matter our field of experience: when we rethink something, we start with what we know. As Jackiewicz put it: "When it comes to architecture, you ask people, 'What's the perfect space?' They know their current space, so they'll tell you the three things that are wrong with it." The temptation is to start with what you know, fix what's wrong, and go from there.

But that's not transformational. And Jackiewicz said that's not the kind of thinking they needed. The realities have changed, with the explosion of virtual health, and a renewed focus on patients as individuals.

"We want to think about patients," said Jackiewicz. "When they walk in, what's the experience we're going to create? That's a very vulnerable moment for people. They've just gotten a diagnosis of cancer. They're coming in. They want to hear about their treatment plan. How are we going to make that experience different than it is today?"

**How it started:**
Jackiewicz said he had a meeting with architects, and the discussion was around making the new building cool and scientific, a very traditional healthcare building.

**How it's going:**
He said two days later, they got the feedback from patients: "That's exactly what they DON'T want. They don't want it to feel like an x-ray. They want it to be warm. The want to feel like when they walk in, they're part of the family that they're going to be taken care of."

Jackiewicz said the building is really just one aspect of the change. "This is about training people differently, to think about what we're going to do when patients come in. It's not just about the surgery or the treatments. It's about the whole experience we've created for each individual that really matters."

## *Give People Freedom to Try Without Fear of Failure*

Mony Iyer is chief operating officer of Banfield Pet Hospital, the leading provider of preventive veterinary care in the United States with more than 1,000 hospitals in 42 states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and Mexico.

He said the value in strengthening culture by unleashing individuality comes from allowing people to do their best when they're not worried about how they're perceived. He continued the thoughts shared earlier by Malvika Bhagwat and Tom Jackiewicz, about seeing the whole student, patient or, in this case, employee.

"As leaders, we need to make sure we're treating the whole individual when they come into work, and allowing them to be comfortable doing what they do best and ensuring they're not worrying about how they're perceived."

**How it started:**
"When people are worried about how they're perceived, they tend to focus on that rather than on doing their best work," said Iyer.

**How it's going:**
"We want people to come in and be able to try new things and not worry about failing. And that means removing the fear from them and allowing them to be comfortable being their true selves at work, being their whole selves at work."

He gave an example to show what this can look like. A team from Banfield's home office created something new to help support the field offices. He said it landed "with a thud." But, he said: "The team took the feedback, re-engineered the solution, and put it out there again – this time to rave reviews. They were willing to own it themselves, not be afraid that that failure was going to cost them, go back and come up with a new solution that resulted in a better outcome for everybody. That is really what we're trying to get to by allowing people to not be afraid of failure."

They wouldn't feel free to fail if leaders didn't make it known that they were valued as individuals with capacity and dignity.

## *Change The Culture, or it Won't Stick*

Ninfa Saunders is former CEO of Navicent Health, a nonprofit health system. She shared an adage that she uses: "Culture is like pinning gel on the wall. If you're not careful, it will never stick completely unless you do what needs to be done."

**How it started:**
"There is this intersection between relevance and sustainability. Sometimes we're so focused on sustainability and we're not thinking about relevance."

**How it's going:**
"So the question must be asked as you go in and out of situations like the emergence from this crisis of COVID," said Saunders. "Could we begin to ask the question, 'What is the relevance of the current culture, and what is the pivot capability that we have defined ourselves in to be able to execute differently? And I think that's just so very important. This is always going to be a work in progress."

## *It's Always a Work in Progress*

As we've learned from each of these leaders, we have to be able to succeed in a world of ambiguity. And to do that, we need to be nimble enough to recognize what's changed and change along with it. That's a process that must never end.

**BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER:**

## Evolve Your Organizational Culture

Father to son (after son got suspended from high school): "You know better than this! Why are you showing up this way?"

Son to father: "Because, Dad, you don't make me feel safe."

That's a real interaction shared at the summit by Mark Gunn, chief human resources officer at 99 Cents Only Stores.

Gunn said his perspective changed that day, thanks to his son. He realized how important it is to listen to other people's truths.

"From that moment on, I understood that when the human being doesn't feel safe, you're just going to get goofy behaviors out of them," said Gunn. "So the ability to listen to other people's truths, where they're at in that moment in time, and then being able to accept it, is the critical way to be able to accept people in their own individuality."

Gunn's insight ties together many of the themes featured at the summit, and it's the key to preparing ourselves to lead in a world of perpetual uncertainty and change.

To listen to people's truths, we first have to make it possible for them to share their truths. Most organizations don't.

## *Our Organizational Cultures Are Not Suited to Our New Reality*

There's a massive shift happening right now, and leaders are not prepared for it. That's the stark warning from Nik Modi, managing director at RBC Capital Markets.

Modi brings a critical Wall Street perspective to the summits each year. He says we're embarking upon what he calls the individual revolution – a shift in power away from traditional institutions into the hands of individuals. RBC Capital Markets calls this likely "the single biggest disruptive force" ("RBC Imagine: Preparing for Hyperdrive").

One reason leaders are not ready for this new reality is because most don't know how to make people feel safe or listen to other people's truths.

"[Many] younger consumers have a belief system that is all about the environment and proper governance, and these individuals are going to be directly affecting market cap of these large global multinational companies," said Modi. "As technology democratizes everything, people are going to be able to align around a common set of beliefs and start actually having real say in what is happening in our society. We're already seeing it."

Modi said corporations are not prepared for this because they're still governing with an old legacy model of standardization.

"The reality is, what is happening in society is now starting to bleed into the institution in a much more meaningful way," said Modi. He gave this example of how the power shift is starting to show up: "Fifty four percent of white collar workers would quit their job if they do not have a hybrid work environment. I mean, that's a big number for something that is so new."

The current ways we are leading, learning and conducting business are unsustainable in a world where the balance of power has shifted from the institution to the individual.

How can leaders prepare themselves and their organizational cultures for this kind of power shift? In the closing sessions of the summit, leaders from healthcare, education and corporate America each encouraged people to change some key definitions.

**The Individual Revolution**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

## *Change the Definition of Productivity*

Harlan Levine is president of strategy and business ventures for City of Hope, a leader in cancer treatment. At the summit, he discussed a new initiative called AccessHope, which brings NCI-level cancer care to people where they are, by bringing experts specializing in a specific type of cancer to partner with local treating doctors. They are partnering with organizations to make this accessible to employees.

He said we need to challenge the assumptions of what we consider to be "productive." In the past, we may have wanted employees or colleagues to keep quiet about their personal struggles and focus on work. But that's not productive.

He talked about the importance of giving employees space and a place to actually talk about what they're going through. As they've been building out AccessHope, they've learned that "employees not only don't have access to great care, but they don't know how to manage having cancer. There's this Old School thinking of keeping it to yourself. In our AccessHope program, we have a nurse line where people are able to unburden themselves and talk about how alone they felt as a cancer patient."

He said when employees see that their employers are giving them access to something like that, they start to believe that it's okay to talk about their cancer.

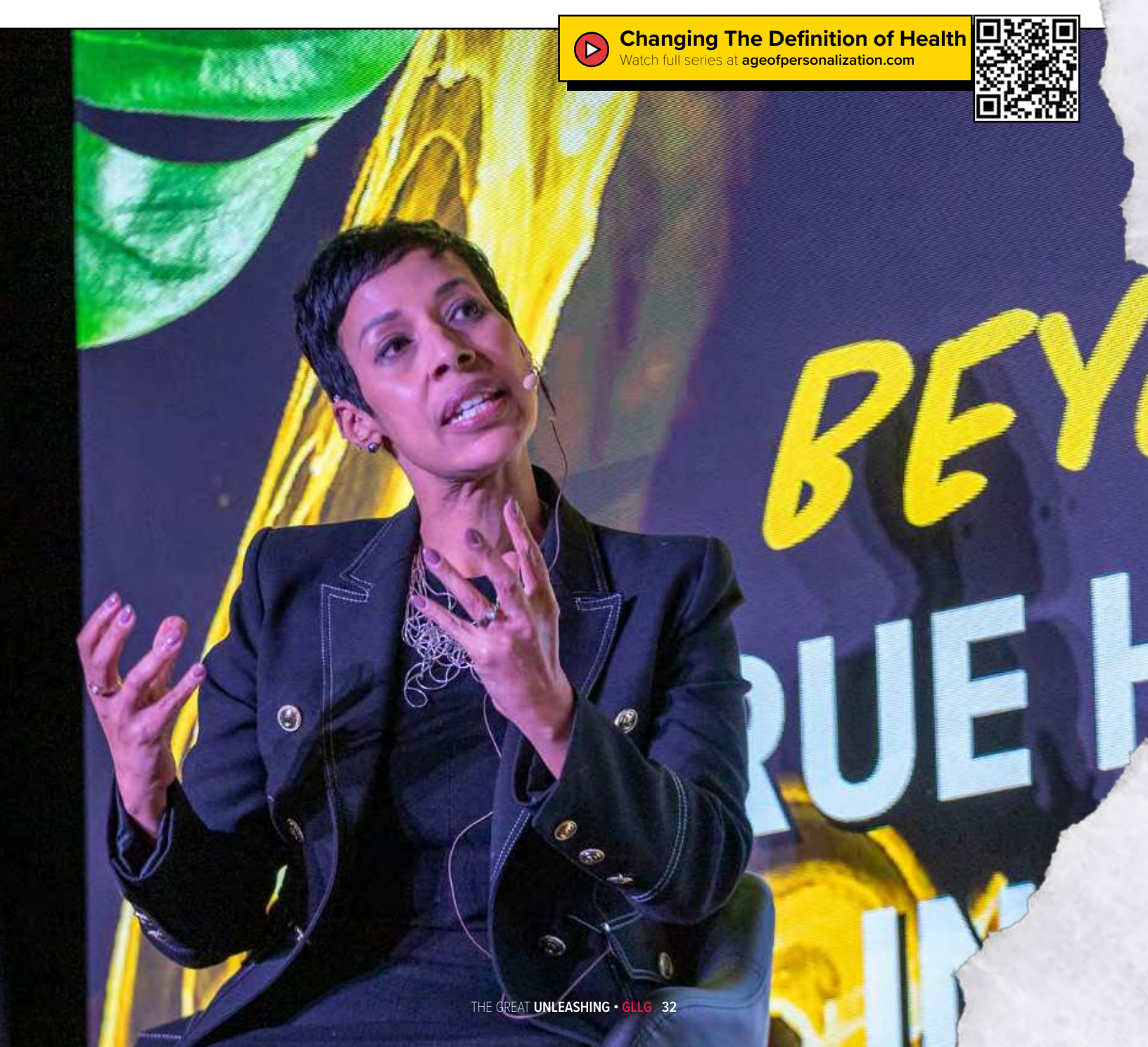
## *Change the Definition of Health*

DeAnna Minus-Vincent is executive vice president and chief social justice and accountability officer for RWJBarnabas Health.

She shared insights on how we can create healthy communities.

"We have to change the definition of health," said Minus-Vincent. "We have to think about the whole person—the social and economic and educational outcomes as well as the health outcomes. When 80% of all health outcomes are due to social behavioral and environmental factors, we can't only think about the 20% [related to clinical]."

Watch here for more on her work for social justice within healthcare.



## *Change the Definition of Influencer*

Andy Sulick is president of Santa Margarita High School in Southern California's Orange County. He talked about how he has been empowering students and allowing them to influence the institution.

"For the first time in our 34-year school history, we've incorporated seven student leaders into our leadership meetings," he said. "We invited different cross-sections of kids—we have a transfer student, an international student, an athlete, a thespian. We've got an eclectic group of people."

All sides have benefited from this interaction.

"We're really excited about these meetings and have received a lot of good feedback from the students and also from the administration," said Sulick. "It builds bridges. The kids see our point of view, and we see their point of view. We hear 'Oh, okay, I wasn't thinking about it that way.' It's really added to the connections, the wellbeing, and just the overall health of our student body."

**Mental Health and Wellbeing in Schools**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

## *Change the Definition of Courage*

Arthur Valdez is executive vice president and chief supply chain and logistics officer for Target. He talked about owning your destiny, taking calculated risks and trusting your ability to act rather than wait and regret it later.

"I define courage as an individual who is able to demonstrate their authenticity, even in the face of [pressure to] not be the individual they are," said Valdez. "It's not always easy [to maintain] your sense of who you are, your upbringing, your heritage and then being yourself. Courage comes from a place of confidence in who you are."

That means you might be misunderstood for a while. But that's okay.

"You have to be willing to step out there and take some chances and lean on what you know," said Valdez. "You have to be willing to be misunderstood, and that's not a comfortable place to be for most people. But if you do that and you work hard and you figure out that path, you will finally see—and others will see—how you can be understood. Then you've got adoption and you've got disciples to help you get done what you need to get done. So, being misunderstood until you're understood is a path forward for me."

**The Courage to Be Authentic**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**

## *Change the Definition of Vulnerability*

Back to Mark Gunn, chief human resources officer at 99 Cents Only Stores. He believes courage has to coexist with vulnerability.

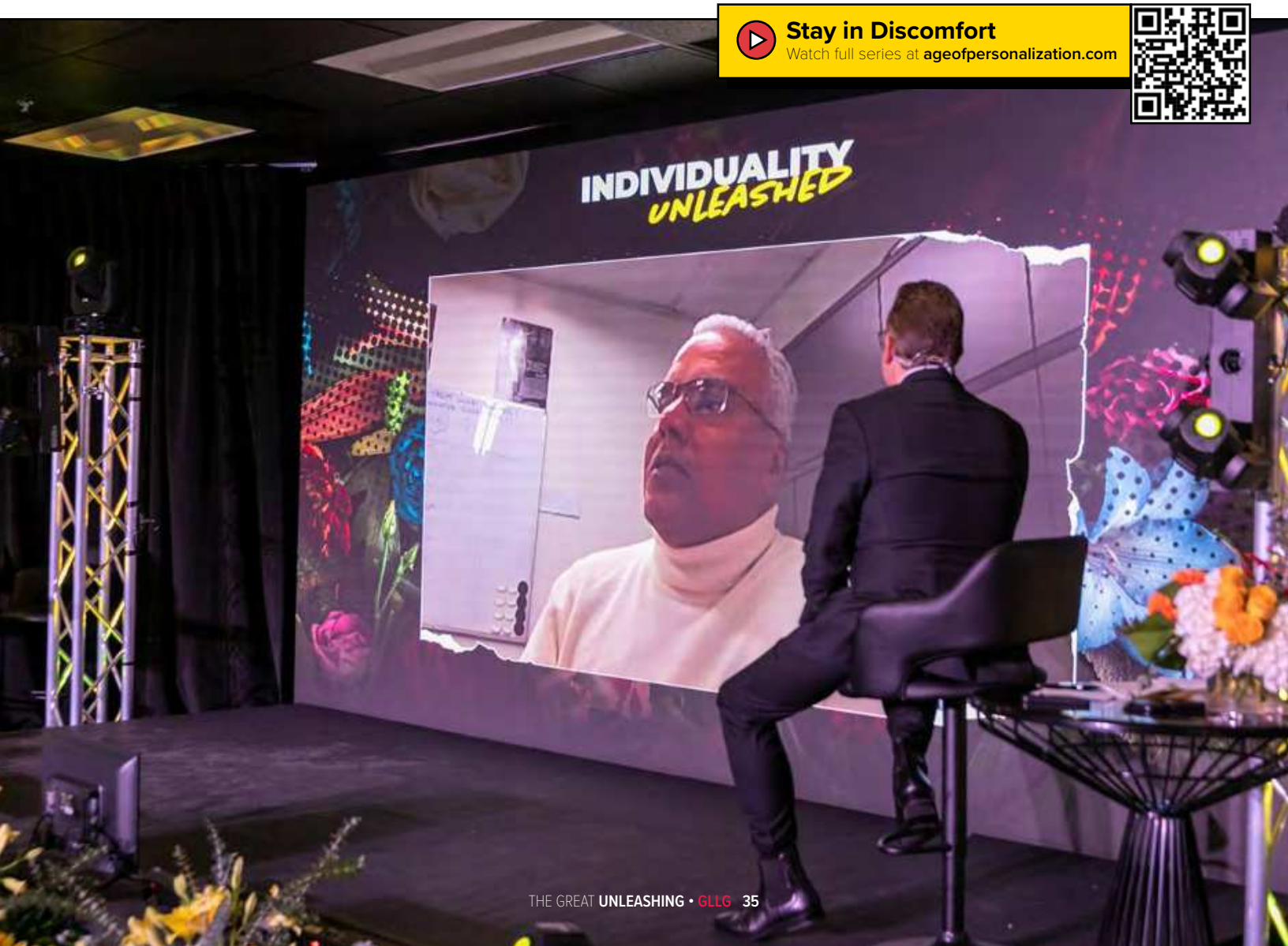
"The only way to demonstrate courage is to show people that you're vulnerable, especially from a leadership perspective. The best way to get people to follow you, from my experience, is to have them understand that you're willing to be vulnerable. And being vulnerable means you have to have some courage."

On that day that he had to pick up his son from high school, it was early in his career, he was raising three children as a single parent, and he was one of the few diverse executives at his company. He was in a meeting with fellow executives when he got the call from the high school saying his son had been suspended.

"I had to lean over and tell my boss, 'Hey, I have to leave to go pick up my son,'" said Gunn. "His first response to me was, 'Have your wife pick him up, this is an important meeting.' I had to say, well, you know, there is no wife. I have to do it."

### LISTEN TO EACH OTHER'S TRUTHS.

**Stay in Discomfort**
Watch full series at **ageofpersonalization.com**



*Teri Fontenote at the 2021 Leadership in the Age of Personalization Summit*

## *Conclusion: The Time to Unleash is Now*

According to Teri Fontenot, CEO emeritus of Woman's Hospital and member of several public and private boards of directors: CEOs of large public companies "made a major philosophical pivot last year when they announced that public companies should no longer consider shareholder returns to be the most important priority. They now say that corporations should focus on their broader societal impact and responsibility."

This is a trend to prioritize impact related to environmental, social and governance, known as ESG.

ESG is a priority for boards: the Center for Audit Quality looked at the most recent publicly available ESG data for S&P 500 companies and said that 95% of S&P 500 companies had detailed ESG information publicly available.

ESG is a priority for CEOs: the 2022 EY US CEO Survey finds chief executives maintaining growth strategy while pivoting toward ESG and sustainability.

But ESG is meaningless if it doesn't put individuals at the center.

Consider these trends:

- The No. 1 environmental, social and governance (ESG) issue for Americans isn't climate change: it's treatment of workers.
- First on HBR's list of trends for 2022 is an emphasis on fairness and equity (the authors said its frequency as a topic on earnings calls has increased by 658% since 2018).
- Helping people feel worthy is a skill leaders need to develop: according to Deloitte Digital Chief Experience Officer Amelia Dunlop, it matters to 9 out of 10 people to feel worthy, but 5 out of 10 struggle to feel worthy, particularly at work.

# Unleashing individuality is non-negotiable.

We're all working toward many big goals these days: increasing diversity and inclusion, boosting employee engagement and retention, elevating employee performance, improving our leadership development and team building.

But if you really think about each of those goals, at the center is the beating heart of an individual with a life full of joys and concerns, friends and family, skills and experience, dreams and fears. And truths about their work and their lives. They're either hiding those truths out of caution and fear, or sharing those truths out of trust and empowerment.

You can't help someone become more engaged at work (or improve team building or anything else) if your organizational culture isn't designed to make sure people know it's safe and beneficial to share who they truly are and what they're grappling with in their lives.

ONCE YOU START LISTENING TO EACH OTHER'S TRUTHS, YOU IGNITE THE GREAT UNLEASHING.

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