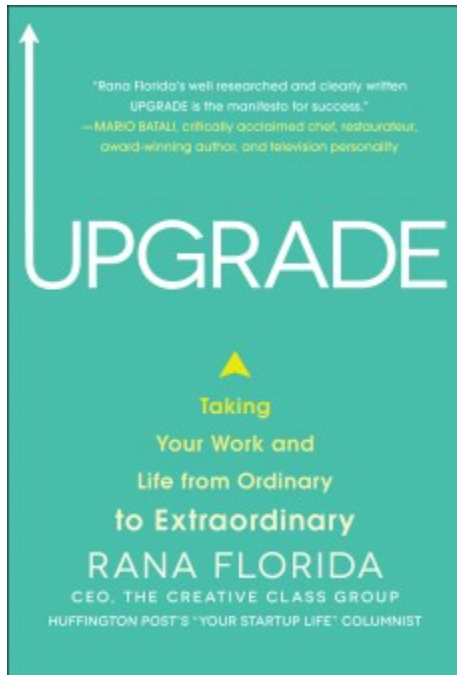# Rana Florida: Creativity, Innovation, and the Future of Work

Sep 30, 2013
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Rana Florida is the CEO of the Creative Class Group, an advisory firm that works with premier organizations on building economic competitiveness, cultural and technological innovation. Florida is also one of the leading thinkers on trends that are shaping the future of work and recently published *Upgrade: Taking Your Work and Life from Ordinary to Extraordinary*, in which she explores what makes innovative thinkers, creative leaders and CEOs successful.

Dedicated to creativity, autonomy and building the future of work, our colleagues at 10,000ft interviewed Rana about the seven creativity principles she lays out in her book. What she shared not only reinforces Artefact's workplace philosophy, but also provides useful insights on how to build a culture of innovation.

One of the seven principles in *Upgrade* is "Get Creative." Is this something that applies exclusively to the creative industries? Should more traditional industries, such as banking and law, care about being creative?

Every business should care about it. Creativity leads to game-changing discoveries at best and to productivity improvements at the very least. If you're not constantly innovating your business, whether it is banking, legal, healthcare, retail and everything in between, it will fall behind.

In *Upgrade* you share a piece of advice a friend gave you: "The big mistake people make in life is to focus on what's urgent, not what's important." Do companies make the same mistake?

A lot of companies and a lot of people are spinning their wheels because they've lost sight of their ultimate goals. Our inboxes are filling up, deadlines are pressing, but we all need to take a step back and focus on what really matters. Remember to ask yourself, what are the core values of the company? What is our higher purpose? That's not just true for business but for everything in life.

At 10,000ft, our goal is to support companies that are building cultures based on shared responsibility, openness and trust. What still has to be done to overcome micro-management practices and "prison-warden" managers?

Workers don't perform better when a prison warden chains them to their desks, demanding that they work at predetermined times and for longer and longer hours. Give people the freedom and the flexibility to manage their workload, whenever and from wherever they want. Managers need to set their teams free. If an individual's work performance is not up to par, then reevaluate.

Your research concludes that one of the pillars of business success is "collaboration," which contradicts the top-down leadership model. How is it that "bosses wagging their fingers and telling you what to do" holds back the team and the business overall?

A leader's job is to foster engagement and provide necessary education, but most importantly to inspire a vision that their team can get truly excited about. Team members want to grow and learn on the job; they perform better when leaders mentor rather than dictate.

In *Upgrade* you emphasize the power of collaborative environments, in which the possession of information is no longer a form of power. How does democratically sharing information with team members benefit both the team's performance and the overall business?

If you have information, it's your obligation to share it. A real leader knows when it's time to pitch in, and when it's better to hold back and let others take the lead. You can't empower people to perform if they don't have the information they need.

You have interviewed many successful creative thinkers whom we greatly admire, such as Dan Pink, Tim Brown, and Zaha Hadid. What is the one attribute all these successful people share?

They weren't afraid to take risks; and all of them embraced failure as part of the learning process. Rather than viewing it as a disgrace or a black mark, they used it as an opportunity to reflect, rethink, and grow.

One of the reasons why we created 10,000ft is to support a flexible work environments and collaboration. What impact do you think this new workplace philosophy will have on our society at large in the future?

For one thing, it will make us healthier. Studies have proven that our offices are literally detrimental to our health. As Steve Lohr wrote in *The New York Times*, "After an hour or more

of sitting, the production of enzymes that burn fat in the body declines by as much as 90 percent. Extended sitting, they add, slows the body's metabolism of glucose and lowers the levels of good (HDL) cholesterol in the blood. Those are risk factors toward developing heart disease and Type 2 diabetes."

The offices we've imprisoned ourselves in are increasing our healthcare costs and taking a toll on our productivity and mental health. We've created a work culture that rewards the workers who put in the longest hours with raises and promotions, not the ones who work most efficiently and productively.

Long commutes take their toll too. A study released by the Centers for Disease Control, the National Institutes of Health, and the American Cancer Society has confirmed what many have long suspected: lengthy car commutes are terrible for your health. Commuting is expensive too. The annual Urban Mobility Report calculates that commuting costs Americans an estimated $90 billion per year in lost productivity and wasted energy. Kevin Stolarick, the research director of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto has found that every minute shaved off America's commuting time is worth an estimated $19.5 billion dollars.

Fortunately, some organizations are starting to realize that healthier employees are more productive employees. The original Googleplex in Mountain View has plenty of green spaces and water features on its 26 acres and is connected directly to the Bay Trail; when my husband and I visited a few years ago, we saw staff on rollerblades and bikes, jogging, and walking dogs. Indoors, there were swimming pools, volleyball courts, and cafes and lounges.

Many Google workers design their own desks or work stations; some have standing desks, a few even have attached treadmills so they can walk while working. The thing is, you don't need a spectacular campus to do this. Most companies are located in places that have all kinds of amenities right in the neighborhood; workers just need the freedom to access them. I hope, more and more companies will Googleplex their worlds as well.