



Rebooting Work in the New Economy: A Conversation with Maynard Webb

By Kathleen Ross

Maynard Webb is a 30-year veteran of the technology industry. Chairman of the board at Yahoo!, he also serves on the boards at Salesforce.com and Visa, and is an active investor, philanthropist, and mentor to young entrepreneurs. Previously, he was the chairman and CEO of LiveOps and COO of eBay.

In his new book, *Rebooting Work: Transform How You Work in the Age of Entrepreneurism*, Webb investigates the current work crisis and helps individuals understand that it is within their power to take control of their careers. He points out that, in addition to enabling increased personal fulfillment, companies can achieve more success if they motivate workers to achieve happy, balanced lives.

KR: With regard to the theme of new realities for the new economy, I'd like to note that you identify a model that compares the paternalistic era with the new age of entrepreneurship. What are your thoughts about how HR executives can embrace the new realities of the age of entrepreneurship?

MW: I think one of the reasons that being in a start-up is so appealing to many people today is that corporations seem stodgy and antiquated. People yearn for the chance to make an impact and often incorrectly think that being in a start-up is the best way to achieve that. Generally, people work very hard in a start-up, and the failure rate is much higher than in the corporate world. Unfortunately, not much time is spent on this reality as people are pining to be entrepreneurs.

KR: So, you are challenging HR executives to replicate some of the elements of start-ups that make them so appealing to workers today?

We receive the benefit of people's skills and insights when they join us. We need to help them grow while they are with us—and leave the door wide-open should they leave us. Paradoxically, the more we invest in people, the more marketable they become *and* the more likely they are to stay.

MW: Yes, I think companies have to realize that not only do their employees have to get voted onto the team every day, but organizations also need to work hard to be the employer of choice every day. We don't own our people. In a world (thank you, LinkedIn) where everyone knows who our talent is, we must be the place where they know they are going to learn and grow the most.

KR: How might a traditional organization begin to adopt the mindset and practices of a start-up?

MW: First, it should give people more autonomy and let them and their team feel like they own their destiny. Second, it should find ways to make decisions more quickly. Communication needs to be frequent, and real-time employee feedback on issues should be encouraged and acted upon quickly. Think in terms of short, interactive weekly all-hands gatherings versus long quarterly meetings that tend to be more status updates.

KR: What organizations are doing the best job of adapting to these new realities?

MW: I am somewhat prejudiced because I am on the boards at Salesforce, Visa, and Yahoo! These companies are great examples of adaptation. Salesforce does an incredible job of being transparent with its employees and its customers. And despite much of the

press, the employee morale turnaround under Marissa Mayer's leadership at Yahoo! has been astonishing. I cofounded a company called Everwise whose mission is to provide seasoned mentors to employees. These mentors can be within the organization, but are often from other companies, thus further enriching the exposure, growth, and development of the individual.

KR: You highlight three aspects of meritocracy: hard work over entitlement, talent over tenure, and transparency over closed systems. How transparent can or should an organization be?

MW: I would err on the side of being more transparent, rather than less. Obviously, you have to comply with laws and regulations relative to confidential and proprietary information. We often think we are doing employees a favor by shielding them from problems. But generally, I have found that when people don't have all of the facts, they often assume things are way worse than they actually are. Also, people are amazingly creative at solving problems when they are given the information and tools to do so. That is why people are drawn to start-ups. They are given tough problems and lots of latitude to solve them. Any company can choose to move in that direction. As effective executives, the more context we provide people and the more human we can be, the better.



The Sweet Spot: CEO of One's Own Destiny

	Paternalistic Era	The Age of Entrepreneurship
Meritocracy: feels personally invested, proactive, willing	<p>Frame 1</p> <p>Company Man or Woman</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are a high achiever. You have a great attitude. You are on a promotion track. You have only as much future as the company you are v <p>Recommendation</p> <p><i>Continue your emphasis on high performance, but broaden your view of your career beyond the constraints of any one company.</i></p>	<p>Frame 2</p> <p>CEO of Your Own Destiny</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are highly successful. You are self-aware. You love the freedom that choice has given you. You opt in to being fully on the team every day. You work to build a network outside the office "walls." You have great and fulfilling career options. <p>Recommendation</p> <p><i>You can work for yourself or a corporation and still be the CEO of Your Own Destiny. This is the sweet spot for the future of work.</i></p>
Entitlement: feels deserving, frustrated, critical	<p>Frame 3</p> <p>Disenchanted Employee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are waiting to be discovered or recognized. You can't understand why others don't understand how good you are. You are not progressing in your career. You believe your circumstances to be someone else's problem. <p>Recommendation</p> <p><i>Take a meaningful look at what you want to achieve and the steps you will need to achieve it.</i></p>	<p>Aspiring Entrepreneur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You fully embrace controlling your own destiny. You don't have enough work to do on the terms you are willing to do it. You may not be addressing the gaps between your desires and your skills. <p>Recommendation</p> <p><i>Reassess your value proposition to understand why your view of your value is not aligned with your current environment; make appropriate course corrections.</i></p>

Maynard Webb, *Rebooting Work: Transform How You Work in the Age of Entrepreneurism*

KR: You advise people to "pick their battles." You urge us to fight for only those things that are really important. What are the two or three areas HR executives should be focused on to "move the needle"?

MW: It all comes down to culture. An organization's culture is either a major asset or a huge liability. We should spend time getting alignment about the kind of culture we want—then determine how we support culture carriers and hire people who embody that culture and will become future culture carriers.

Also, develop people—help people become great—period! We have talent gaps all over the world. We need more talented people. It is our job to help each of our people become

the best they can be, with the full knowledge that we only have them in our care for a little while. We receive the benefit of people's skills and insights when they join us. We need to help them grow while they are with us—and leave the door wide-open should they leave us. Paradoxically, the more we invest in people, the more marketable they become *and* the more likely they are to stay. **P&S**

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Webb also is the co-founder of Everwise, which provides workplace mentoring solutions. Through a data-driven matching process, Everwise connects professionals with mentors who can help them succeed at every stage of their career. maynardwebb.com

