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PERSPECTIVES


WITH DR. LINDA HILL

Thoughts on some of **today's toughest issues** from one of the world's top scholars on **leadership** and **innovation**.





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Linda A. Hill is the Wallace Brett Donham Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School and chair of the Leadership Initiative. She is regarded as one of the world's top experts on leadership and innovation. Author of the management classic *Being the Boss* and highly acclaimed *Collective Genius*, she is also a founding partner at Paradox Strategies.



1 SOCIAL JUSTICE

*In the wake of George Floyd's murder and the resulting broader societal focus on Black Lives Matter and racial equality, **what has surprised you** regarding corporate America's response?*



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What I'm waiting to see is whether their feelings, their emotions, and the statements they made actually **turn into actions** and change the way their organizations work and more opportunity is, in fact, created for people of color and for Black people in general.





I do think that many people out there, many executives, are very well intended. But we all know that dismantling the systemic factors that drive inequality in this country, will demand **a long and challenging march.**

We don't even know how to have constructive conversations about race, most of us in this country, particularly when we involve other people who are not of our race.

2 ACADEMIC TENURE



*You became the first Black female tenured professor at Harvard Business School at a young age and were **the only tenured Black female professor** for more than two decades. What can we learn from your experience?*



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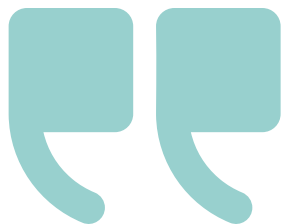
What I've learned is, you need mentors,
and you need sponsors from every race,
every gender, to be supportive of you
because **we truly do need others.**



What do you see as **the biggest challenges for Black business leaders** advancing in organizations and how can they help themselves irrespective of the challenges?



3 LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Systemic racism is really about the fact that **stars are more made than born when it comes to organizational life.** And what I mean by that is, it turns out that what you know is based on what you get to do. And what you get to do is based on who you know, so **if you don't know the right people, if you don't have the right mentors, and sponsors,** you don't get those assignments that allow you to learn what you really need to learn and therefore be prepared to take on more responsibility.

To get those stretch assignments, someone has to bet on your potential. And guess what, the research is very clear that **we tend to bet on other people who are more like us**, so if you're someone who is different, it's human nature, not to kind of bet on you and to bet on someone who's more like you. So if you're only one of the few black executives in an organization, you are at a disadvantage.





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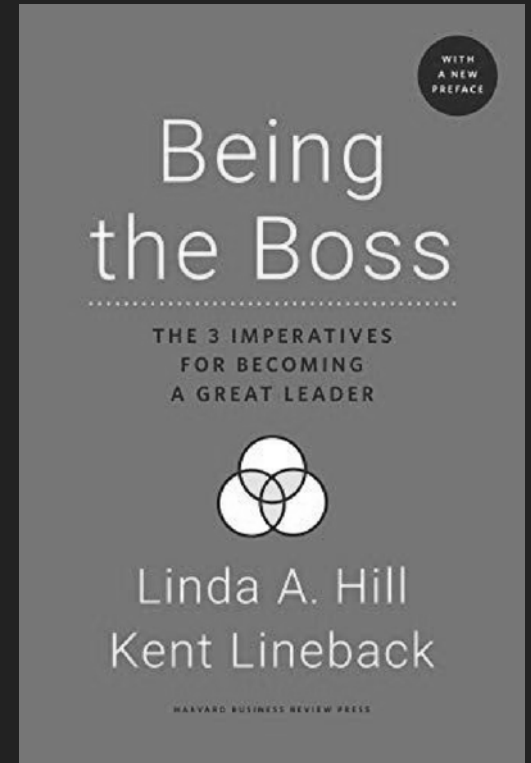


You do need to figure out how are you going to **build those relationships with people so that they will be willing to bet on you**, even though you are different. And that process is one that I think is very difficult to navigate for a number of reasons.

One, it just is – to figure out how it all works. And many of us who are Black don't come from families or businesses where people can give us guidance on how you work your way through all that.

4 BEING THE BOSS

The 3 Imperatives



*As you think about Black History Month, how does your book **Being the Boss** really apply to Blacks in business?*



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I wrote **Being the Boss** based on my research but also because of all the conversations I've had with high potentials **who have not realized their potential**, who have derailed. And a subset of that group, frankly, have been people who are different in their organization – women, people of color, people for whom the dominant language in the company is different from their native language. I wanted to help them understand **how they can be proactive** and fight to get access to equal opportunity to learn and excel





The pattern was is that too often, these people who were high potential spent their time really focusing on both their teams and their bosses. They did not spend as much time focusing on the peers, the network.

And as I began to do research on what goes wrong and why they derail, and as I began to understand what it really takes to be able to build an innovative organization, **I saw that that network piece was so critical.**

The network piece, all those people over whom you have no formal authority but you're deeply dependent on to get your job done, that is a leadership responsibility. Managing yourself? That is a leadership responsibility, just like managing your team.

So that is why I wrote it. And I think again, it was looking at high potentials, you know, every gender, every race and ethnicity from all over the world. This issue of **not understanding broadly that leadership includes the network piece** is really what I often hear when they derail.



*What do you think organizations **are missing**
by not diversifying their ranks?*



5 DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

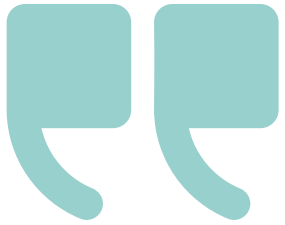


Organizations are missing **so much** when they don't have **diversity of thought**. And diversity of thought is critical to innovative problem solving.

It turns out that **you rarely get innovation without diversity and conflict**. What I see is that many organizations don't have diversity of thought, or they don't *unleash* diversity of thought.

The challenge is, if you don't have an inclusive culture, it doesn't matter if you have that diversity of thought, or that demographic diversity. Because if you don't have an inclusive culture, **you never hear what those individuals are thinking.**





Leaders who really are making a difference today understand that one of their most important roles is to actually ***amplify* difference, not minimize it.**

When you don't have it, you really are impoverished and the probability of you being able to do something that really will allow you to grow as an organization goes down, and there's lots of research on this.

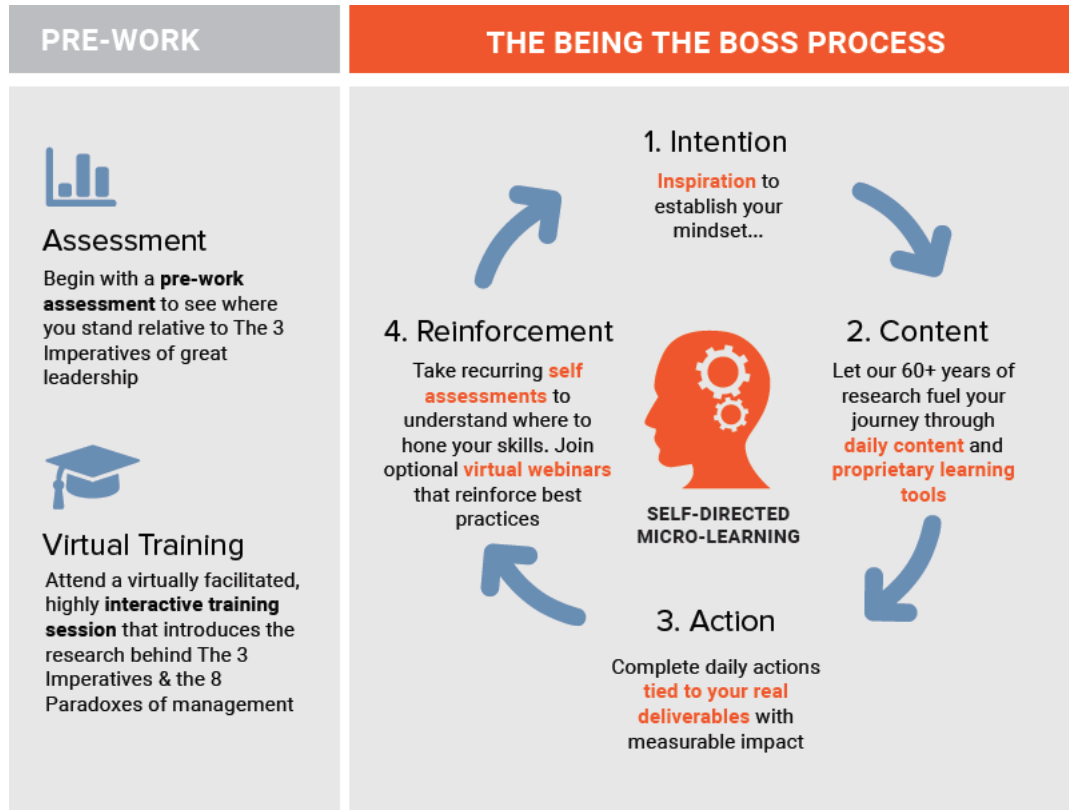


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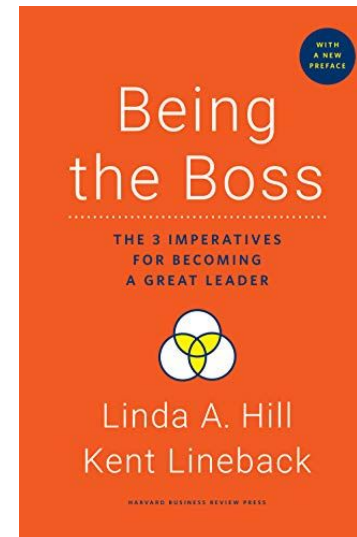
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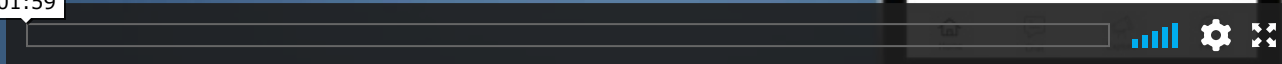
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