

I am here with Doug Conant, who is the only former Fortune 500 CEO who is a New York Times bestselling author, a top 50 leadership innovator, a top 100 leadership speaker, and a top 100 most influential author in the world. Doug began his career as an entry level marketing assistant at General Mills and held leadership positions in marketing and strategy at Kraft before becoming CEO and president of Campbell's Soup Company. During his career, he also served as president of Nabisco Foods and chairman of Avon Products. And over 10 years as CEO at Campbell's, his employee engagement skyrocketed from being among the worst Fortune 500 to being world-class, as measured by Gallup.

So as a result of this and other key transformational improvements, Doug led Campbell's from a beleaguering 2001 to delivering competitive performance in their top tier of the global food industry by the time he retired in 2011. And now, he is the author of *The Blueprint— Six Practical Steps to Lift Your Leadership to New Heights*. I've been fortunate to interview Doug in the past. And I'm so excited to have him talk to me today about his new book. So welcome, Doug. Well, thank you, Diane. I didn't realize I had so many wonderful credentials until you read them all. That was a wonderful, long bio. I was basking in the glow. Thank you. That's the shortened version, too.

think I told you when we talked last time, I've taught, I mean, thousands of online business courses. And I think your case study is mentioned in just about every course I've ever taught, because nobody has done what you did with Campbell's. I mean, you're a hero in the business world, as you should be. And I think it's just such an interesting look. Before we get into your book, I want to just bring up the Campbell's Soup thing, because you're known for writing so many handwritten notes and getting people to feel like you really cared about them, because you did.

And I asked you, and I want you to think again on this one, how many notes did you write in the time that you were at Campbell's Soup? And who did you write them to? And so what I try to do wherever I work is bring balance to the conversation. So we celebrate what's working while we deal with what's not working. So at Campbell, I found we were really good at figuring out what wasn't working. So I said, I've got to move the scales in a new direction. I wrote 10 to 20 notes a day, six days a week, handwritten, sent them to people the very next day, if not the same day.

And I'm talking snail mail now, all around the world. And we were FedExing these letters to people all around the world, every day. And in the course of the 10 years I was there, I wrote over 30,000 notes to Campbell employees. And we only had 20,000 employees. So wherever you went in the world, you saw one of my handwritten notes stuck up in a cubicle somewhere, thanking someone for doing something that mattered. Well, as you're talking about this, it brings to mind some of my work with curiosity and culture and some of the things I've talked to a lot of leadership experts about, because we know culture comes from the top.

We know that you have to walk the walk. If you want to have, for example, you want a curious culture, you have to make people realize that their contributions matter, that no question is a dumb question kind of thing. But then a lot of leaders are afraid to ask things or to show that they maybe don't know all the answers, as well. So they lack the ability to really walk the walk and show people that this is what I really want to see from you, because look at what I'm doing. I'm

being vulnerable, too. Do you think that's a very hard thing, for leaders to show that vulnerability? I couldn't agree with you more.

And we're on Brene Brown territory here, with a touch of Maya Angelou, as well. And look, courage is essential here. I love Maya Angelou. She has a quote about courage being the mother of all virtues, because you can't do anything else with consistency unless you have the courage of your convictions. And what our book is about, *The Blueprint* is about helping people develop a fortified leadership foundation where they can have the courage to show up with conviction when they're being tested. I think the reason people are reluctant is they haven't really thought it through. They're not really well-grounded in who they are, how they want to walk in the world.

And if you're not well-grounded, you're going to be incredibly vulnerable to the winds of change. And we know the winds of change are blowing faster, from more directions than ever before. So I believe leaders need to be more fortified in their foundation. What's my purpose? How do I want to walk in the world? What are my core beliefs about leadership? What's my leadership model? What are the practices I'm going to use to show up that way every day? Thank you notes— that's a practice. At the core of my leadership model is honor people. It's at the center of everything I think about. And a practice I have is handwriting thank you notes to people, celebrating what they're doing right.

And if it's not working, I also have a practice of talking to them about what's not working.

But you have to bring it to life. And if they know that my commitment to them— it starts with honoring people, inspiring trust, and clarifying a higher purpose. Those are my first three elements of my Conant leadership model. They know how I'm going to show up. And then the challenge is to be so fortified in that foundation that when I'm challenged, I can show up that way with confidence.