



How We Work – Now and In the Future

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Welcome to this 5-session exploration of *How We Work – Now and In the Future – an Exploration of Workplace Culture, Practices, Policies, and the Future of Work*. We will meet on Tuesdays from 11-12:30pm on the following days. There will also be additional opportunities to spend time with me as well as with the exceptional guests I am bringing in to join us.

Session Dates: February 28, March 14, March 21, April 11, April 25

Study Group Summary:

The pandemic and societal events occurring over the past 2 years - massive employment displacement, the rapid shift to remote work, and the brutal murder of George Floyd – generated tectonic shifts in HOW WE WORK. These jolts to the world of work are joined and amplified by the acceleration of the sophistication and utilization of machine learning and AI.

This seminar will go beyond an academic exploration of these forces and focus primarily on their practical impact to the world of work, especially given that a person is estimated to work [one-quarter](#) to [one-third](#) of their lives. Specifically, when in college considering next steps or even internships, most are thinking about where to work and what occupation(s) to pursue. Few are thinking about HOW we work - now and into the future. And even fewer are thinking about their impact as future leaders on HOW we work. This seminar features an array of great thinkers and do-ers and is designed to help you be more intentional about the workplaces you choose and the future workplaces you lead.

Over the course of 5 sessions, the factors below that were some of the key quakes to the system will inform our discussions.

Key tectonic factors:

- Many US workers found themselves suddenly unemployed for indeterminate periods of time, and, at the same time, many other "essential" workers found themselves in high stress and high stakes continuous emergency work. This caused attitudes towards work and how we work to change dramatically. Many forced to leave work suddenly had the time to evaluate their priorities, motivations, and careers - some retiring earlier than planned, some spending more family time and others pursuing new occupations/entrepreneurial pursuits. At the same time, many who worked overtime and/or in dangerous or high-pressure conditions experienced profound trauma and stress causing them to also evaluate what work meant for them. Often

labeled "the great resignation", it feels like more of a "great recalibration" as many workers seek new skills for new occupations, and jobs with better job quality (i.e., higher wages, benefits and predictable schedules, opportunities for advancement, respect), and some employers newly invest in finding and training talent for newly open positions.

- The vulnerability of “contract” workers who found themselves needing a whole new benefit – Pandemic Unemployment Assistance – amplified and accelerated the challenges of the “[fissuring of work](#)”.
- The George Floyd murder catalyzed employers and workers alike to focus more heavily on diversity, equity, and inclusion and, overall, on workplace culture.
- The near instant transition to remote work caused a quantum shift in workplace technology utilization and place-based work. These have long-term implications for our labor (employment, health and safety) laws and workplace training programs.
- The ARP, infrastructure, CHIPS and Inflation Reduction Acts generated trillions of dollars’ worth of projects and a tremendous number of new jobs. This, in turn, will require massive recruitment, training and development efforts to deliver those projects in a timely fashion
- Rapid innovation in machine learning and artificial intelligence is accelerating the changes in the workplace, profoundly affecting the roles of humans vs. technology.

Fundamentally, I want you to walk away with insights into How We Work NOW and In the Future. That includes how you want to approach the workplace, in what sort of workplaces and spaces you might want to work, and, when you become a leader, what the workplace is that you want to lead - whether in the private, non-profit, or public sector.

In this seminar, we will hear from experts on workplace culture – especially double-clicking on diversity, equity, and inclusion; dive into workers’ rights and benefits; and discuss the future of work – both in terms of the new rise of an old method of work, apprenticeship, and in terms of the rise of AI, robotics and machine learning and their impact on jobs and the humans doing those jobs.

We will also celebrate the 143rd birthday of [Frances Perkins](#) (my she-ro) with an exploration of labor and social safety net programs past, present and future – here and abroad. We will especially dig in on those programs she midwived such as unemployment insurance, the workforce system (Wagner Peyser), and apprenticeship.

As a Brown alumna who has led public and private sector organizations ranging in size from 10 to 2500, worked closely with labor, catalyzed apprenticeship across the United States and run workforce policies and programs at both the state and national level, (a more detailed relevant bio is at the bottom), I look forward to guiding you through this seminar and to the robust and dynamic conversations it will inspire! I also look forward to introducing you to incredible leaders from across the nation and across sectors working on some of these areas to help you better visualize how YOU want to work and how YOU want to lead!

Session details:

Session 1, Feb 28: Culture Eats Strategy for Lunch - In this first session, we will get to know each other and discuss workplace values, culture & diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. This is increasingly salient as we see leaders such as Elon Musk demand workers be “hard core” and willing to work around the clock. This class will include:

- Welcome to the class
- A discussion on values and culture
- A panel w/industry and corporate DEI leaders
- Featured guests: [Brickson Diamond](#) (Executive Search Consultant for Spencer Stuart, DEI advisor and former Brown Trustee) [Dr. Karen Johnson](#) (Director of the Washington state Office of Equity), and others TBA

Session 2: Mar 14: The Future of Work: Apprenticeship: Alexander Hamilton, Benjamin Franklin and most people started their careers as apprentices at the start of our nation. It became mostly focused in the trades for the decades from 1940-2014, but has recently experienced a resurgence thanks, in part, to what we've learned from other nations. We will discuss the Swiss model of Apprenticeship, the history of apprenticeship in the United States and the Apprenticeship Renaissance currently underway.

- Tentative: a panel of apprentices and leaders fostering apprenticeship
- Featured guests: [Andrew Cortes](#) (Executive Director of the Building Futures) and others TBA

Session 3, Mar 21: Workplace benefits and policies: The pandemic provided the quintessential example of the need for an economic and social safety net with demand for unemployment insurance rising 28x in some places within just the first few weeks of March. In fact, through the CARES act, Congress created a whole new class of temporary benefit programs to address the safety-net needs of non-covered workers (ie - workers who receive 1099s for their work, not W-2s). A more recent example of the need for a safety net occurred in the fall of 2022 when tens of thousands of people who thought their high-tech industry jobs were secure, were laid off from the likes of Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Twitter, etc. What rights and benefits do workers get? Channeling Secretary Frances Perkins (the nation's first female cabinet secretary), we will explore safety net workplace policies/programs in the past, present and future - here and abroad including:

- Programs created & inspired by Secretary Perkins: Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, Workforce development and American Job Centers, PFML
- What is eligibility: Understanding what it means to be covered/non-covered employees (w-2 v. 1099) and asking the question of how new "gig workers" fit within the old model. If an Uber driver receives low ratings and people choose not to ride with them, have they been "fired"?
- Equity in program design and delivery – what was, is and will be.
- A global view – other countries are cleaning our clocks on this front – what can we learn and do?
- The Future of safety net programs – including a discussion on Universal Basic Income (UBI) and Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA).
- Featured guests: [Michael Tubbs](#) (former Mayor of Stockton, CA and founder of Ending Poverty in California), [Professor David Weil](#) (Professor and former Dean of the Heller School for Social Policy & Management at Brandeis University as well as the former Administrator for the Wage and Hour Division of the US Department of Labor)

Session 4, Apr 11: Labor Relations & Happy Birthday Frances Perkins: Over birthday treats for the proverbial patron saint of Labor, we will discuss what it is like to lead and/or work in an organization – public or private sector- with represented workers

- Tentative: A panel of labor leaders and organizers discussing the role, successes, and challenges of labor
- Tentative: A panel of organizational leaders sharing their experiences managing represented workers

- Featured guests TBA

Session 5, Apr 25: The Future of Work: Is Terminator 3, Rise of the Machines, Science Fiction or Our Inevitable Future? What role do robots, AI and Machine Learning have in the workplace now and how do we understand and attain the benefits and suffer unintended consequences? We will discuss the below and then we will then wrap-up and check out of the study group:

- What the prognosticators and analysts say about where we are and where we're going
- What is/should be in place to ensure a positive path forward
- Geographic differences and disparities regarding the impact of technology utilization
- Featured guest: [Elisabeth Reynolds](#) (former Sr. Advisor to President Biden for Manufacturing and Economic Development, former Executive Director of the MIT Task Force on the Work of the Future).

Housekeeping:

- Recommended podcasts, videos and readings will be shared in advance of the respective sessions. Consuming this content will not be essential for effective participation in the study group but will certainly enhance the conversation quality.
- Biographical detail on the guests will be forthcoming prior to the respective sessions

Course Leadership:

Ambassador Suzan LeVine currently serves as a board director and community organizer. Her non-linear career path, which features experiences from the public, private, and non-profit sectors, has a North Star of impact and was jump started by her Brown University dual Sc.B. and A.B. degrees in Engineering and English.

She most recently served as Acting Assistant Secretary for the Employment and Training Administration at the United States Department of Labor with a portfolio including unemployment insurance, apprenticeship, Job Corps, workforce development, foreign labor certification and more. She led the 1,000-person organization through the administration transition, managed an \$11 billion budget, grew the organization by over 10% in 6 months, oversaw the issuance of more than \$8 billion in workforce system grants, helped secure \$2 billion in American Rescue Plan funding for the Unemployment Insurance System, revived the Advisory Committee on Apprenticeship and created the first agency DEI director position in the USDOL.

This follows public sector positions as the United States Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein and the Commissioner for the Washington state Employment Security Department. During her time as Ambassador, highlights included increasing foreign direct investment by \$3 billion and growing the Swiss model of apprenticeship in the United States. To catalyze this growth, she secured the agreement of 30 Swiss companies to build their apprenticeship programs in the United States and helped create the first of three US-Swiss Apprenticeship collaboration agreements.

Among her many accomplishments as Commissioner, she ran the 2,500-person agency, hired the first DEI director and oversaw the on-time and on-budget launch of the nation's first built-from-scratch Paid Family and Medical Leave program, delivering half a billion dollars to over 100,000 people in its first

year. In the face of the pandemic, her agency hired 1,000 people in six months and provided over a million people with over \$14 billion in unemployment benefits in only ten months.

Her private and non-profit sector roles included Windows 95 product manager and Director of Communications for Education at Microsoft and Vice President for Sales and Marketing in Luxury Travel at Expedia, Inc. Twice during her career, she was a stay-at-home mom of two kids, during which time she co-founded two non-profit organizations. Suzi serves on the non-profit boards of CareerWise USA, RIPL (Research Improving People's Lives) and the Thomas Jefferson Foundation and, in the for-profit realm, she sits on the board of Publicis Groupe and the US advisory board for OpenClassrooms.com.

Most importantly, she enjoys spending time with her family, epic-walking, and paddleboarding.

* Featured guests are subject to change and will be a blend of in-person and video conference.