



Smarter, Faster, Better: think less, slow down, give back!

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The bottom line: "You can kill yourself to get to the top (and crash and burn when you reach the peak), or you can create sustainability in your life and in your company. ... You are not just leading your organization; you are leading your legacy." Says Karlin Sloan.

"Smarter, Faster, Better: Strategies for Effective, Enduring, and Fulfilled Leadership" by Karlin Sloan with Lindsey Pollak, Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint, 2006, 256 pages with Resources and Index

In her book, "Smarter, Faster, Better," Karlin Sloan presents three paradoxical truths of 21st century leadership: To be smarter, stop being the expert and ask more questions. To be faster, slow down. To be better, stop focusing on personal gain and start focusing on giving back—to our organization, to our community, and to our world.

As you can imagine, Karlin's ideas can come as a shock to the average CEO. "I usually get one of two responses," says Karlin. "It's either, 'Oh my God, you are so right!' or 'Never!'"

Karlin's proposition for her clients: "Here is the bottom line: You can kill yourself to get to the top (and crash and burn when you reach the peak), or you can create sustainability in your life and in your company. If you don't want to experience early burnout, stress-related illness, turnover of valuable staff, and daily financial pyrotechnics, then you have to change your mind-set from the daily game of competition to the daily practice of sustainability for your career and your organization. ... You are not just leading your organization; you are leading your legacy."

The philosophy was born out of Karlin's own leadership crisis. Her first company crashed with the Dotcom which inspired a move from San Francisco to New York. She felt like she was missing out on her destiny as a leader. She had few clients, no support group and a vision of a thriving consultancy gone south. She felt anxious and lost, but she had the sense to hire her own *private thinking partner*. Karlin needed someone to shake up her thought processes. The first time she met with her coach, she was angry, whining and difficult. "I couldn't think my way out of a paper bag. My creative, impassioned, powerful leader-self was hidden under a blanket of disappointment."

With Cynthia's acknowledgement that Karlin could change her ways, she inspired Karlin "to transform, not just a frustrating situation into a better one, but the very concept of what it means to lead." In the present, as an executive coach, consultant and president of Karlin Sloan & Company, Karlin is passionate about the power of the coaching relationship. She has worked with "CEOs of global companies, engineers who didn't trust anything without an off switch, young managers who hadn't had to get anything done through other people before, and HR leaders who ran leadership programs. ... *Coachees* are the ones who do the work and transform themselves. The coach serves as a facilitator, sounding board, and consistent supporter."

In a fourth irony, Karlin recognizes the equality, necessity and value of leadership in all workers. Whether managing our personal life or in the workplace, we are each accountable for ourselves, sometimes for our peers and for those we oversee. "We leaders may not even be at the top of an organization any more. In less hierarchical workplaces, leadership is part of many employees' daily lives. We set visions for our teams at every level of the company. We inspire others each day. We make strategic decisions as they arise. Leadership is no longer just for CEOs."

Elizabeth Moran, Director of Global Learning, Getty Images, Inc. surmises from the book, "Leadership is a great responsibility, and it's not just about leading from our head, but bringing our whole selves, heart, and passion to inspire others around us."

In consultations and trainings Karlin sways even the most reluctant executive by presenting the logic of her thesis and by involving them in experiential exercises to learn to slow down; share stories; achieve energy-revitalization; and practice sustainability and giving back to the community.



"We do not need to become experts on great leadership as much as we each need to become expert at knowing what makes us each a great leader in our own way." Karlin says. First, develop the art of *Appreciative Inquiry*. "Take time to appreciate yourself and you will be much more able to see the positive in other people and situations."

To activate the appreciative eye, ask yourself: When have I been inspired, excited, or amazed by my work? What are the details of the story? How did I feel physically and mentally? What was the impact on me? What effect did I have on other people around me? And then, what opportunities for inspiration are available to me today?

Then build on the best aspects of existing performance by acknowledging the value and intelligence of all employees. Asking the right questions of yourself and your staff contributes to smarter leadership in three ways: It enables better thinking, cultivates rapport and relationships; and creates a smarter organizational culture.

Karlin calls this era the Age of Interdependence in which we must release ourselves from the traditional lone and less effective role at the top to more egalitarian and interactive

relationships. To achieve Interdependence: Let go of your expertise; develop and cultivate leadership in others. Embrace curiosity. "When we ask questions, as adults or children, we gather more information, we see things from new perspectives, and we clarify our beliefs and attitudes."

The paradox of slowing down to have more time requires a flip in our thinking. For this, Karlin teaches the practice of "present-moment time." To expand time, focus on a tiny amount of time—this exact second, right now:

Breathe. Take a deep breath, and then slow it down.

Focus on the person you're speaking with and to.

Focus on the way of communicating as well as the content.

Keep a physical reminder to center your mind and focus on the present—a shell or coin.

Pay attention to your heart—not just your head.

Stay with your emotions.

Scan your body for tension and relax.

Take a big-picture snapshot. How is your work today assisting your company, employees, and investors?

"Work shouldn't feel hard. When we're doing our best work, it actually feels easy and enjoyable. It's not a struggle. Rather, the work flows out of us with grace and simplicity, at just the right speed."

Beyond managing hours, minutes and seconds, we need to replenish our energy. Karlin says, "Well-managed energy translates into better workplace performance."

Energy Management Don'ts:

Don't spend any more time than necessary with people who drain your energy

When mentally drained, don't answer any questions.

When emotionally drained, don't make decisions.

When physically drained, stop.

Energy Management Dos:

Invest time in people and projects that add to your energy.

Watch energy patterns. Notice what builds and depletes your energy.

Cultivate a physical environment that increases and enhances your energy. If clutter brings you down, clear your surfaces. If plants make you happy, keep them around.

Practices for increasing and replenishing energy:

Get a good night's sleep

Take a nap (famous nappers: John F. Kennedy, Leonardo Da Vinci, Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Einstein, William J. Clinton)

Meditate—or just daydream in a chair for 10 minutes

Breathe clean air

Exercise

Receive a massage

Eat healthy food

Engage in stimulating conversation
Experience art and culture
Embark upon something new and unknown
Enjoy high-quality time with family and friends

In "Smarter, Faster, Better," Karlin presents Gary Erickson's story of his brainchild, Clif Bar Inc. as a model company. Clif Bar has won numerous awards for treatment of their employees, commitment to the environment and support for important causes. Gary says, "Our vision here is to work to live rather than to live to work. ... Inspiring and taking care of our people is critical. As the shareholders my wife and I want that to be the return on our investment." The other usual benefits are there also but they are secondary.

Karlin suggests the following essential steps to becoming a value-based company:

- Reorient toward purpose and values.
- Be a time-saving role model.
- State your goals clearly.
- Find opportunities for people to contribute.
- Create a play ethic.
- Encourage the opportunity for physical replenishment.
- Embrace a diversity of people, ideas and opinions.
- Network in a spirit of cooperative competitiveness.

What will adapting Sloan's philosophy achieve? Take a look at Laura:
"Laura is a hard worker, a long-time leader, and a well-compensated executive. She is also a friend, sister, mentor, and avid swimmer. She does laps every morning before work and raises money for an inner-city high school arts program. Once a month, she hosts an all-staff breakfast where she invites employees of all levels to share any ideas they have for the company, and she asks provocative questions of the group, like 'What are new ideas for great customer service?' or 'Who in our industry has a great employee development program that we can learn from?' She has a committed team that works hard and believes in the value of the organization—and in their role in its success. She also serves on the board of an industry association, where she networks with colleagues from competing companies, and they design ways to work together to create industry awareness. Once a year she takes a ten-day vacation to an 'undisclosed location,' where she turns off her cell phone and Blackberry and reads as many novels as she can. Sometimes the stories even give her business ideas." Laura is an effective, enduring, and fulfilled leader. She achieves excellent results for herself and her team, and she enjoys herself in the process.

"Smarter, Faster, Better" provides a workbook for changing our lives as individuals as well as professionals. Following Karlin's recommendations will raise standards in our personal and organizational relationships. Practicing the time and energy management techniques will invigorate and improve our health. Expanding social values at home and at work as essential responsibilities rather than luxuries will pay-off in self-respect and benefits to the local and global communities.

Karlin Sloan, through <http://www.karlinsloan.com/>, offers leadership coaching and consulting to clients in the United States, Europe, South America and Asia. Considered a "thought leader" in executive coaching, she is often called upon as a keynote speaker. A prolific writer, Sloan has been featured in numerous publications as an expert in workplace behavior. She has appeared on ABC News Network's "Moneyscope," Fox Channel Five's "Good Day New York" and Boston Cable Network's series "The Art of Coaching."

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