



*Building the Best Organizations in the Insurance Industry*

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## **ARE YOU A SENSATIONALLY CURIOUS LEADER?**

By: Mike Thompson

It's interesting how, as a society, we think about curiosity. We don't like our kids asking "Why?" five times in a row when we tell them to "get away from that."

In an office environment, it isn't uncommon to hear, "Don't question it; that's just the way we do things around here."

Curiosity is a vital trait that many view as annoying -- even dangerous. The saying goes that curiosity killed the cat . . . but as far as I know, cats always land on their feet. And because the Anywhere Leader's curiosity leads to valuable insights and understanding, she lands on her feet as well.

Thinking about today's [business landscape](#): many companies are so desperate to keep up with rapid change that they blindly rush into new initiatives and processes -- bullishly believing that it's the only way to go. But if you lack curiosity -- and the understanding that comes from it -- the only change you're likely to see is increasing irrelevancy for both you and your company.

Panic leads organizations and managers to make changes for the sake of change, without any insight behind it. The desperate leader says, "Something's wrong -- quick, do something -- anything." The Anywhere Leader asks, "What's wrong? Where did the problem begin? And how did we get here?"

### **Diagnosing Problems with Curiosity**

I recently had the opportunity to observe an emergency room and see how doctors and nurses respond to critically ill patients with dire prognoses. I learned that even in the most extreme circumstances, the critical care team's first response is to assess, not to act. A wrong move would only make things worse. The right move would make all the difference toward a hopeful recovery.

In an emergency room, quick and decisive actions save lives, but understanding the issues is the crucial starting point. Why do we want our doctors to be curious about our illness, understanding of our history, and aware of our vitals, but we want our employees to go straight to the answers -- to the solutions? Like the ER doc, the Anywhere Leader assesses before acting -- which is why her actions are usually productive.

Curious leaders would rather pose the right questions that give them a deeper understanding than compete to deliver answers in hopes of acknowledgment. Curiosity allows the Anywhere Leader to adopt an exploratory mindset in everything she does.

When she finds herself in a new role or [leading a new team](#), she's quick to gain meaningful insight into the people around her, the organizational culture, and the processes of the business. And she's able to discover and maximize all available resources. She starts by asking who, what, where, when, and how -- not by stating new ground rules and implementing new procedures right out of the gate.

Sensationally curious leaders have the additional strengths of being reflective, receptive, and perceptive. They're able to dissect any issue and get to its core because they keep asking themselves -- and others -- that vital question: "Why?" Being open to new ideas allows them to seek and use the insights of others to make progress.

And because they observe people and processes, they have a deeper understanding of the situations they're in. Curious [leaders](#) use their reflection, reception, and perception to tackle challenges head -- on.

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