

EVERGREEN JOURNAL+

BY TUGBOAT INSTITUTE

EJ+ Live Content Session #3: Innovation, Creativity, and Learning in Times of Change

Rob Cordova with Ryan Drew

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Live Event Transcript

Ryan Drew:

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to this Evergreen® Journal Plus virtual event on innovation, creativity, and learning in times of change. It's great to have everybody here. We're thrilled to be joined today by Rob Cordova. Rob is a global educator known for transforming corporate learning into dynamic, powerful experiences. Having worked in over 20 countries, he's empowered thousands of people to think more creatively and embrace experimentation and change. Many of you are already familiar with Rob's insights from a recently published Evergreen Journal video or his talk with us at Tugboat Institute Summit last summer. In that talk, Rob highlighted the belief that creativity isn't simply optional, but a leadership requirement during uncertain times. Today's session is going to be a little bit more unique in terms of format. We're going to be immersing ourselves into an interactive workshop, more of a learning experience dynamically with Rob here. And in a moment, you'll see we're going to be promoting everyone to be panelists in that status. So, you'll see a brief shift on your screen, and please accept that prompt. We strongly encourage you to turn on your video, lean into the experience. Rob's got a bunch of fun, interactive things to do with us today. And I'll let Rob lead the way. Rob, thanks for being here. We really appreciate it.

Rob Cordova:

Ryan, thank you so much. I'm excited to be here and I'm excited for everybody else to be here. And everybody gets to start off with a promotion, which is good. All of a sudden, you're promoted to, what is it, a host or something. So you got to make sure to add that to your LinkedIn. Hey, I'm off to a good start. So happy Tuesday, everybody. So excited to be here. Thank you for the introduction, Ryan, and thank you, Tugboat, for having me. I'm so excited to be talking about something that I'm super passionate about and sharing it with you guys. And I'm just going to say it right now. And if you want to leave the call, you can, but please don't, but I'll just say it. I don't have any slides. Okay? I'm not going to be showing any slides today. Look at that mass exodus, Ryan, like everybody just left.

How am I supposed to learn something without any slides, Rob? What if I got to request the slides? So, I don't have any slides for you guys. Instead, I thought I'd tell you some stories and have us go through some activities. And if you want to engage, I would encourage you and I would love for you to do that. I don't want you to feel pressured to, but I would love the engagement in the chat box and different things as we move along here. And on that note, if you're willing to play, can you go into the chat box and just give me like, what is a song that you're totally listening to right now that when it comes on, you crank it up. And I think we're past the Demon Hunters kind of stuff. So, let's let that go, the K-pop Demon Hunters, but let's see if anybody's willing to share.

This is a very revealing ... It takes a lot of psychological safety to be saying, "This is the song that I listen to," because immediately people judge you. And they're like, "Oh, really? Pink Pony Club?" – which is a

jam. Kona Vibes playlist on Spotify, Christopher. Thanks for sharing that. If anybody ... Oh, Enough by Jeff Tweedy, Thinkin bout you by Flea. Oh, I haven't heard that new Flea album. What an awesome God. Okay. I love this and I am judging you all hardcore. Anything Lauren Hill. Miseducation. Stop it. Oh my God, I like this group. Let's actually just talk about music. Let me start out by sharing a couple of things that I'm passionate about. And I told you this topic is one that I absolutely love, but just to give you a little bit of background on myself, for those of you that don't know me, I thought I'd draw a couple of pictures and maybe intimidate you with my artwork.

And if you have any guesses on what this art is, you can go into the chat box and say that. But that's my first picture I want to share with you guys. Those are my kids. And I've got a full range of kids, everything from 21. My daughter just turned 21, my oldest daughter, and then my youngest daughter's seven. So help. Got a lot going on. The other thing that I'll draw for you is this, give you a little bit of background on myself. And that's kind of me teaching. I've been in learning and development for about 30 years. I love this stuff. Delivered workshops in 24 different countries. And my favorite place that I've ever delivered is Idaho with Tugboat. Hey, O. I love this. I love that you guys are here. I love that we're dedicating time to think about what we need to do from a leadership perspective to help grow our businesses.

And I love everything that you all are doing. So that's kind of two things. And my third picture, feel free to rate my drawing in the chat box as well.

That's kind of fun. That's funkier than I wanted it to be. That's a light bulb. And that represents how many workshops and workshops I deliver on innovation and creativity. I've probably delivered 1500 different workshops all in an effort to try to help organizations and leaders understand what is innovation really about? What is creativity really about? What is change really about? And all of those words might be quite intimidating to people if you kind of don't understand them. So what I hope to do today is just offer a couple of tips that will maybe ease your mind and think, "Oh, here's some things that I can do to lead in times of change." So hopefully that sounds good to you guys. And what I've experienced over the years, and maybe I'll start out with my first tip, which is just a foundational tip, is I have come to believe and realize that everybody loves certainty.

Do you like certainty? Yes or no? Go into the chat box and tell me. And certainty is like, I know what's going on. I have a good grasp on how the day's going to go or how the year's going to go or how my customers are going to react or what our goals are. I mean, we really just kind of appreciate certainty. It's like, I don't know, maybe it's a safe, comfortable, warm blanket and everybody's saying, yeah, but it can turn into board. I'm Christopher, good point.

And when we're over here, we can rely on, and we do rely on the status quo. We can always look to standard operating procedures and say, okay, well, maybe something popped up and it's like, what should we do? Well, let's see what we did last time or let's see what the standard operating procedure is. And we can jump to that status quo and find the answer. And maybe that's a comfortable place to be. And when we're operating on this side of the paradigm, it's relatively easy to find or create or implement solutions. Something goes wrong, check the status quo, check what we did last year, implement that solution, boom, everything's good. And I think we're pretty good on this side of the paradigm. This side of the paradigm is not necessarily what I'm talking about today. I'm talking about this side of the paradigm. Any idea, going to the chat box, how many decisions adults make every single day?

Just take a guess. Just crash your keyboard and see what comes up in terms of how many decisions adults need to make every single day. Chuck's got a busy life, man. 1.2 mil. But then we got, Richard's keeping real good track. "342, Rob. Yesterday I was at 341. I was trying to hit my quota." So, Casey actually comes in with the correct answer, which is 35,000. 35,000 decisions that we make as adults every single day. And I hope that the majority of them sit on this side of the paradigm. I hope when we talk about creativity and uncertainty that we don't feel like the entire world is in chaos, even though sometimes it feels like that, or our business is in chaos, but we also need to balance hopefully a lot of the time we're over here. And when we're over here, this is what I want to talk about today.

It's when we're not in certainty. It's when we're in guesses, uncertainty. And uncertainty is kind of like, "Hey, you're going to ask me a question and you want an answer." I don't even know if I understand your question. I don't even know if you understand your question. It could be so complex and there's so many variables that there's nothing really certain about it. And when we're over here, we do want to go back to status quo, man. Sometimes we crave it like, "I wish I knew what was going on and I wish there was a standard operating procedure and I wish I could just see what we did last time, but it's not necessarily there." So instead of the status quo, any idea what would be over here when we're dealing with uncertainty? Man, we would crave those standard operating procedures, but they're not there because I'm in uncertainty, I am not able to access that.

I am, oh, Christopher coming in, is it creativity, Rob? I love the guesses. It's another "un-word." So we had uncertainty and now we're un-status quo, the unknown. We're swimming in the unknown. We're in uncertain times. This is risky times. There's times of change and I don't necessarily know what exactly I should do. And I don't necessarily know what the future holds. And I just want you to kind of have a mental check-in right now. How does that feel? Does that feel like scary and dangerous? And oh man, certainty is like super safe and comfortable and a warm blanket and uncertainty is like, ah, I can't wait till it goes back to certainty. And I'll tell you that I've been teaching leadership for about 30 years. It used to be that leaders kind of like needed to know the answers. A sign of good leadership is, well, I don't know what to do, so I'm going to go to my leader and my leader's going to give me clarity and they're going to tell me the answers and they're going to tell me exactly what to do.

But what I'm suggesting is when we are in times of uncertainty, it's normal, it's okay, it's even expected to acknowledge that we're swimming in the unknown. And that means from a leadership perspective, it's perfectly okay and appropriate to tell your organization, "I don't know." And those used to be scary words, but I'll tell you, I was at a tech company two months ago in Denver, most senior person sitting at the front of the room talking about AI. It's a tech company, right? So you say, "Oh, they must know the answer." And the most senior leader talked about, "We tried this and we're thinking of doing that and blah, blah, blah." And then it was like Q&A for the audience, top leaders in the organization. Hands went up there asking all these questions about AI. And time and time again, the most senior leader in the room said, "I don't know."

Are we going to do this? Have we thought about doing that? I don't know. Does it have the capability to do this? I don't know." And it was not a sign of weakness and like shame on you. It was like power to me because we were acknowledging that we're in an uncertain space and that we don't know the status quo. We don't have the standard operating procedures. It's okay that we're swimming in the unknown. And because of that, even if we want to go find solutions, and man, we love solutions. We love it. There's a problem. I'm not going to be telling you guys about the vanilla ice song, but if we see a problem and we identify it, we want to go and solve it, but over here we don't have that luxury.

What we're left with, anybody know what I'm going to write right here? It's probably my favorite word. I don't know if it's my word of 2026. It was definitely my word of 2025. I haven't decided yet. It's too early in the year. When we're in uncertainty and we're swimming in the unknown, we can't really look for or try to find solutions because they might not exist. So instead we need to focus on anybody willing to put something into the chat box. Maybe I'll give you a prize like this floppy disk. Is it creativity? Is it problem definition? Is it questions? I like the responses coming in and I'm going to tell you that it is possibilities, meaning that we need to brainstorm. We need to acknowledge that we don't necessarily know what's going on. We're in times of uncertainty. We do not have the answers and we do not have a status quo to rely on.

And maybe nobody else in our industry has the status quo to rely on. So we are in this space at this time with this moment and we get to acknowledge that we don't know the answer and we get to explore possibilities. Scenarios, Casey put, options. I like that kind of stuff. And a lot of that, Christopher put in their problem definition. We need to spend some time figuring out what exactly is going on so that we can generate the possibilities to hopefully move into a place of more certainty.

Now let me ask you a personal question. You guys like me or not? I'm getting kind of a weird vibe. You know what I mean? It's virtual, but is this good or not? All right. I'm seeing a lot of thumbs downs. The question that I have for you is when we're operating over here, and again, I want to say we're not always over here. I hope your business isn't always over here. There's some of this, and at certain times we feel this, but when we're over here, what do we need as leaders? What do we need? Give me some thoughts in the chat box. When we're operating on this side of the paradigm, so when we don't have certainty, we don't have a status quo or rely on, we don't have those solutions to go to like, what do we need in order to be successful and like ride that wave?

And I'm seeing some responses coming into the chat box. I got, Rob, we need self-trust. Trust is a big word. We've got to be able to possibly have some constraints around what we can and cannot do, Ryan said. I've got Chuck coming in going, "Rob, we need discovery and I see trust again." Peter comes in and goes, "We need direction, vision, a north star." We've got to have some idea of where we're headed. We got team feedback, we've got ideation, we've got collaboration, we've got innovation. All of these are wonderful, but they're not the right word. This is where the educator's like, yes, but no, yes, no, no, no, no, yes, but not what I'm looking for. So I'm looking for one thing. And I'm actually going to say that all these things that you put in the chat box are true. You do need that.

But the one thing I'm looking for that I want to talk about in terms of tip number one for you is a little something that I like to call ... Anybody want to take more guesses? You wish I had a slide. You're like, "Rob, just hit the slide and let's go. Let's see the word right there, Rob." But I don't have a slide. What you need is, see if you can get into the chat box before I spit out.

It's two words. You need creative ... If you're watching the video, you can just speed up. Let's just go to where he says it. Creative thinking, you need creative thinking. Because if there isn't a status quo and we don't know what's going on, that actually gives us the opportunity to go, "Well, what might we do? And what might we do is this magical place where we get to consider a future that doesn't exist." So if we have a boring mindset, we're just going to say like, "Well, why don't we just do this, which is kind of like what we were doing and blah, blah, blah. And that's boring. I'm going to suggest, here's your time to shine." Let that creativity shine and say, "Well, if it's unknown and we're coming up with the possibilities, why don't we ... " Super creative stuff.

Go into the chat box and give me a percentage on how creative you think you are. 100% is like, "Rob, I'm the most creative person on the planet. Actually, I'll take over this webinar and talk about creativity if you want." And zero's like, "Rob, I don't think I have a creative bone in my body." Where are you from zero to a hundred? Chuck, you're killing me with the 31.74. He put all of his life's work into AI and asked it like, "How creative am I?" And then AI came back and said, "You're 31.74 creative." Okay, Richard's coming in at 15. We got some 25s, we got some 30s. Okay, all right. Well, I'll tell you this, there's a lot of research that talks about adults and whether or not we think we're creative. I did my grad work at NYU and I studied business education and how adults think, and I'm now going to explore that further.

I just got admitted into a doctorate program at Columbia where I get to continue to research this stuff. And what we find in the research is that as adults, we don't think we're very creative. We think of creativity like, "Oh, isn't that what kids do or isn't that what artists do?" But in business, in times of uncertainty, I'm going to say that it's important. And there's also this really cool piece of research that says if people don't feel that they're creative, all you have to do is give them permission and say, "Hey, you can be creative right now." Or, "I expect you to be creative." Creative ideas are welcome and then all of a sudden, it's like, "Oh, okay. Well, if you're asking me to be crazy and come up with creative stuff, I'll do it." So let's do some.

What time is it? It's Origami time. Go find a piece of paper on your market set go. I want you to find a paper and it kind of doesn't matter what size it is. I'm using your standard eight and a half by 11. This is probably like a 20 pound. You know what I mean? Pearl white, but you can get whatever you want. Just go find a piece of paper and I know what you're thinking. Rob, paper, don't we live in a digital world? Well, yeah, but just see if you can find a piece of paper. Now you got to go into your printer and like, what's paper? Ron's got to get up from his desk. Look, Ron went to his printer. I can see it. Paper, what are you talking about? But go find a piece of paper and we're going to do a little bit of origami to kind of get the creative juices flown.

And I'm going to put you to the test in terms of creativity and see what we can come up with. So if you have your piece of paper, let's go landscape and give it a fold in half. Okay? It's like the hardest thing you've had to do today. And you could make it perfect if you want to. Oh, I got to line it up, Rob, and then I'm going to get a ruler and really give that crease like a hard crease. Okay. You fold it in half and then fold it in half again. Okay. This is simple origami. We're not making paper cranes over here. We're just making a four-part worksheet. So if you did this right and you open it up, you have four panels. If you did it wrong, if I may insert an origami joke right here, if you did it wrong, maybe yours looks like this.

Remember those? Fortune teller. All right. So this is going to be your four-part panel and I'm going to switch over to mine. And if you would, you also need to find a pen. What, Rob? I have to write with stuff. And I'm just going to put some hard borders on mine and let's talk about creativity and leading in uncertainty. And in box number one, which is upper left, this might sound crazy to you, I want you to draw a pig. Okay? Just draw a pig. It's all the instruction that I'm going to give you. Just draw a pig. And I know a lot of you, your brains just went, "I can't draw." And some of you are like, "What does a pig look like again?" And then some of you are like, "Does it have hooves or feet? Does it have floppy ears or pointy ears?" There's all these questions going on, but this is the first task that I'm asking you to do. And I'm not going to draw one because I've already shown you my drawing and I don't want to continue to intimidate you, but I want you to just draw a pig because that'll be fun to see. And if you're willing and brave enough, will you just hold it up to the camera so I can see what's going on there? Don't worry about it. Okay. Let me just see what's going on. All right. I'm getting some brave souls over there. And

Christopher, that looks cute, but the pig looks like it's worried. Ron, that's kind of looking good. All right. I don't know about the feet. Chuck, not too bad. Okay. Kind of looks like a missile, Chuck, to be honest. I'm just judging. Okay. Ryan, would you put yours down? It's making me uncomfortable. Okay. So I was just kind of testing out where you all are from an artistic perspective.

So let's just leave that for a minute and let's go into box number two. And in box number two, if you would give me three bullets and I'm going to show you in a moment something that is living in the realm of uncertainty.

And what I would like you to do with those three bullets is I want you to give me, or to give yourself first on your piece of paper, three creative solutions. I'm going to show you a problem and I'm giving you three because even if you say like, "Hey, I'm only 31.74% creative." Do a boring answer on your first one like, "Oh, I just do this. Everybody's going to say this, all that." But then bullets two and three, I want you to increase your creativity so the creativity monitor just goes up with each bullet. So I want three creative possibilities and I'm about to share with you the problem that we need to solve and I don't want you to overthink it, okay? I want to talk about like we're trusting each other. So I trust that you're going to come up with stuff and I just want you to go with your gut and see what happens.

And don't put anything in the chat box. Don't come off of mute and like share your ideas because I want to see like individually how good we are at coming up with creative possibilities. And I'm encouraging you to crank up the creativity scale. So get ready, get your pen ready.

If you're writing with a marker, get that ready. Maybe give a sniff of your marker. Maybe your creative juices will start flowing a little more. If you get a little uptake on that ink. And here is what I want you to address. Give me three, not in the chat box, just on your piece of paper, three creative solutions on what we might do to solve this problem that is living in uncertainty. And I'm going to encourage you to completely crank up the creativity scale. I know it's like for some of us, it's before noon and some of us it's around lunchtime. So it's like, Rob, I don't know if the creative juices are flowing yet, but just make them flow. Force it. Three, creative solutions on what we might do. And also, I want you to recognize I'm not going to hold you accountable to this.

If you're like, "We could do this." And then I'm like, "Yeah, go do that." Sometimes people are afraid to offer ideas because then they're going to get tasked with doing it. So, I will tell you that you can come up with whatever you want. I'm testing your creativity. I might even go as far as to say, you have unlimited budget to do whatever you want. You are not going to encounter a bunch of red tape or like me as your leader coming in and going, "No, you can't do that." So, imagine you just have like total creative freedom to solve this problem. You got to come up with three creative solutions on your piece of paper. Rob, stop talking. I'm trying to come up with three creative solutions. Fine. I'll give you about 30 more seconds, okay? And the first bullet can be boring.

The second one, oh. And then the third one, ooh, I want to be blown away by it. I want you to wow me. I need it on this Tuesday.

Don't be looking up AI. Okay. I see Chuck, it looks like you're over there talking to ChatGPT. Don't do that. Okay. If you have your three, go to the chat box and just give me the number three or Roman numeral three or a math equation that equals three. You guys, my kid is 13 and the math is just off the charts. Okay. I don't even know what's going on. All right. The slope. Are you kidding? I don't know how to do this stuff. All right, you guys are putting in the answers. I didn't want you to put it in. I just wanted

you to give me number three. All right; we've got some responses. Go ahead. Put your responses in and you can put it in as one chat too. So, you could do like first idea, comma, second idea, comma, third idea, comma, and then hit enter so that I can be wowed by your creative responses.

And I'm not even going to look at the chat box yet. I know that it's there, but I just see it kind of scrolling and I'm not going to look at it yet. And don't be intimidated by looking at other people's creative ideas. Okay? Don't let that judgment come out and be like, "I said that. " And that was my idea. And I put it in first, then you just put what I put. None of that. Come on, we're all friends here. All right. Let me get a couple more responses in here and then I'm going to look at it and I'm going to see if I'm going to be wowed, excited, disturbed, or happy. Those are my only options. Okay. Let me see what we got going on. Christopher, stop it with Ugliest House in America. Why am I addicted to that show? I freaking love that show.

It's too much and it's not enough at the same time. My wife's like, "Let's ugly our house so we can get on that show." It doesn't make any sense. All right. Anyway, let me see what you guys put.

Giant bonfire, a speakeasy, tear it down and build an ice cream parlor. Ron, people were just walking around going, "I wish there was another ice cream parlor around here. Apply for the ugliest house in America or open a haunted house, blow the roof off, knock down the walls and make this a trampoline park for the floors, new flooring, sheet rock, curtains over the closets." All right, let me just kind of judge your creativity. It's okay. All right. I'll just be honest with you. It's okay. It's robbed judging time. Pretty good. Okay. Meditation room/dance floor at the same time. So, you've got half of the audience trying to meditate and you've got the other half of the audience using it as a dance floor rehearsal space, really challenging. I'm just reading the comments that are in the chat box.

So let me tell you the good and the bad. The good is I'm generally pleased with the creativity and the responses. And if we were running a project team and I'm like, "Hey, I need some solutions on this thing. Let's form two teams and the two teams go back and research and come back to me and give me your top idea and ask me for investment dollars." Maybe team one's like, "Hey Rob, we want to do a haunted house." Just toss in some numbers in the chat box. How much do you think it would cost? Rob, we're thinking of turning this thing into a haunted house. All we need is a chainsaw without the chain on it and a couple of community theater dropouts to come and be the scary people. So maybe we don't need a ton of money but just give you a number in there.

So, you might come out and go, "Alright, we're the haunted house team. We need, Rob, I don't know, six months to get this thing going. I don't know when Halloween is. It probably seems like in about eight months. And maybe we need, I don't know, several thousand dollars to get this thing going. " So that's team one comes to me and says, "Let's do this. " And team two says, "Rob, we're going to be crazy. It's actually a speakeasy/meditation space/dance studio." And if I were to ask, "Well, how much time would that take and how much investment would that take?" That sounds like a lot going on. Plus, you need a liquor license, and you probably need a meditation license. So maybe that's going to come back and it's like, "Rob, we need \$2 million in three months or a year to make that happen." So, I said there was good and the bad.

The good is I like the creative responses. I like the creative juices. I also like that we collaborated. Nobody sat there and went, "I don't know, Rob. You asked me to be creative, and I don't have anything to put." If you're playing along, you put down some things and you were able to share it. So that's what

we need when we're dealing with uncertainty. But the bad news part of this is none of the solutions that I see in the chat box actually solve the problem.

Based on the responses that I see in the chat box that are on your paper, as a reminder, I would assume that you were assuming that the problem to be solved was a physical space in need of physical repair and those are the responses that you were giving me. But what I'm going to tell you is the problem is not that this is a physical space in need of physical repair. So, here's what's interesting about certainty and uncertainty. Certainty, we can make very quick decisions if we're sure that we're in uncertainty and we can go check on the status quo and find solutions, but when we're in uncertainty, which is what I told you this was going to be, the urge we might have is to steal like, "Let's go find the solution." And I don't just want to say, "Well, be creative in that."

Okay, I'll go find the creative solution because we don't necessarily know what's going on. " But our natural tendency, we're so solution focused, we're so action oriented as adults and business leaders, that we just jump into like, "Let's go do this. It looks like that. Let's go do this. " And if I allowed that to play out, we could be wasting millions of dollars and tons of time. Tip number one in dealing with and leading through uncertainty, well, first you got to realize, am I uncertainty or uncertainty? And then if you're in uncertainty, tip number one is hit the pause button and just figure out, do I actually know what's going on? I got to hit that ... I know my natural tendency is to just move this forward, but because I'm in uncertainty and I don't really know, I got to hit that pause button that looks like this. You guys, it's just a visual effect. I'm going to wait for somebody in the chat box to be like, Rob, your screen's paused. Or maybe you tried to hit play or something. So how might we figure out what the problem is? Just type in some responses in the chat box. I'm telling you that it's not what it appears to be. It appears to be a physical space in need of repair, but that's wrong. So what do we think it is? Or the better question is how might we actually figure out what is going on with this? We'll see if there's any responses coming in.

We might pan out. And it's funny, sometimes ask this question and people are like, "Well, Rob, maybe we need to question is it a problem with society? Is it a problem with the community? Is it a problem with drugs? Is it a problem with gangs?" We kind of go down that route, but I'll just tell you all, essentially, we need to ask questions. And maybe the simplest question to ask is, do we actually know what's going on here? And I don't think we do. Or even if we think we do, we stop and go, "Wait, do we really know what's going on here?" And really the most appropriate question to ask to the most appropriate person would be you all asking me, "Hey, Rob, what's the problem?" And then I get to see if I know. And actually, I do know, so I'll tell you.

The real problem is that there's an iStock photo watermark on this image and I'm using it illegally. Do you all see it? And in my own mind, that would be so clear to me because maybe I love this image and I'm like, "I just got to get rid of this thing, but I don't know how to do it. " So, it might be appropriate that I'm coming to everybody and saying, "I want creative responses." Budget is no problem because I'm like, how much could it be to remove an iStock photo watermark? Spend all the money you want. I'm not going to get in your way because I know what the problem is. And I'm like, "Just go do it. " But then my whole company's out there going, "We need to fix this physical space in need of repair. The boss just told us to do this."

We better go do it. Let's go spend millions of dollars and be creative." So, we got to hit that pause button and recognize that we are action-oriented individuals. We are creatures of habit. And creatures of habit mean I'm going to say, "Well, this looks different, but it's kind of like what I did last time, so I'm

going to do that. " And actually, once I tell you that the iStock photo watermark is the problem, then what solutions do you have? Go into the chat box and tell me. So, there's kind of like two things that need to happen. The leader needs to be clear. Clarity is important. And as employees, we need to understand and our employees need to feel safe and have that trust where they can say, "Hey, before I go find answers for you, can I ask you what the heck is going on?"

I don't want to waste anybody's time." Maybe I'll ask questions like, "What have you tried? Or can you describe the problem more to me? " Or like, "You may have some parameters or some guidelines around what I can do to solve this or how much money might be available or anything." We just got to have that discussion. Thank you, Casey. Hire a lawyer for Rob, make an offer to buy, go find the owner and buy it, pay to license it. I was going to see if anybody was going to say go into Photoshop and remove it. I'm just checking your values. So, tip number one, we got to hit the pause button when we're in uncertainty. So, we have to try to understand, am I uncertainty or am I in uncertainty? And if I'm in uncertainty, then I got to hit that pause button and make sure that there's as much clarity as I can have. And when we're in uncertainty with the people in my organization, I want to try to get to a point of clarity and a point of alignment, then we can move forward.

Let's go to box number three. In terms of clarity and alignment, in box number one, you all drew a pig, or should I say you attempted to draw a pig? Or should I say you attempted to draw something that possibly resembled a farm animal known as a pig? And I would say that anybody I ask that to, they could probably draw something, even if they're like hesitant like, "Oh, I'm not an artist. Okay, I'll just draw something, and we end up drawing something." Seems like an easy task. Draw a pig. There's clarity there. What do you want me to draw, Rob? A pig. "Oh yeah, I know what a pig is. I'm going to draw it. " But I would venture to say that everybody on this call or everybody who might be watching this later, if you drew a pig, probably drew a different type of pig. Ryan's look like some kind of possessed evil creature.

Anna's look cute because she loves pigs. Chuck, was yours that looked like the torpedo? They all looked a little bit different. So in terms of alignment, do you think it's possible that we could get everybody on this call or watching this call to draw a pig with some level of precision where we're all drawing the same thing? Because that's what box number three is going to look like. In box number three, get a chance to redeem yourself. If you would, please draw a tic-tac-toe thing. Okay. By the way, speaking of TV shows, Hollywood Squares is back on the air with Drew Barrymore is your center square. Classic. Okay, give me a tic-tac-toe. And the question that I'm going to ask you is, when we're in uncertainty and we're not aligned, and I want to try to get everybody aligned, what do we normally do in that situation? Answer that question.

If my organization is dealing with a time of uncertainty and we're dealing with something that might feel chaotic and we don't have a status quo to rely on, and I'm trying to get everybody aligned on it, what might I do to say, "Hey everybody, we're not on the same page. Let's get on the same page." And Ryan's coming in by saying, "Well, maybe we're going to add some rules, Rob." Maybe I'm going to add some guidelines and say, "This is exactly how this is supposed to be framed and I'm going to communicate and communicate and communicate. I'm going to give directions and I'm going to add parameters." And Christopher's saying, "Can we please have another meeting about ... We're going to have meetings and let's have another meeting. We're going to continue to talk about it in meetings. I might take a poll. I might listen to everybody, Gretchen, thank you.

But I would suggest that our standard reaction to like, "Oh no, people are kind of doing different things. We're not aligned. Let's get everybody aligned is maybe we'll write some rules or write a standard operating procedure." So, I'm going to show you guys a standard operating procedure for drawing a pig and I want you in box number three to use your tic-tac-toe to bring this thing to life. Here is the standard operating procedure for drawing a pig because we need to standardize this and we need to get everybody in line. The procedure number is PIG-0001-A. This was revised in August of 2005, and it stood the test of time. Using the tic-tac-toe structure that you've created in box number three, please follow these tasks. I will read them aloud to annoy you. Number one, draw a letter M at the top left intersection.

Number two, draw a letter W at the bottom left intersection. Number three, draw a letter W at the bottom right intersection. Number four, draw an arc from letter M to the top right intersection. Oops, I forgot the sub tasks. 1.1, bottom center of M touches intersection. 2.1. Top center W touches intersection. 3.1. Top center of W touches intersection. Number five, draw another arc from the top right intersection to the bottom right W. Number six, draw an arc between the two bottom Ws. Ryan, has anybody dropped out of the webinar?

Do you know what I mean? If you're getting excited about this, please drop out of the webinar. Is this what we normally do? In order to get everybody online, let's set some standards and boom, now we're totally good to go. Let me take this down. Show me your box number three. Okay. Hold it up. You showed me your box number one. Let me see if it got better or worse. Chuck, I'm glad it's blurred out a little bit. Okay? I don't know that I really want to see that. I'm guessing it ... Give me a thumb up or a thumbs down. Thumbs up, it got better, thumbs down, it got worse. Okay. So that might not be the solution. So maybe here's tip number two. When we're in uncertainty and we need that creative thinking and we need to get people aligned, maybe don't default to let me just over communicate the rules and the guidelines.

I'm going to show you how to draw a pig in a different way. Oh man, I want to reserve that. So maybe find another piece of paper. Come on, Rob. And with your tic-tac-toe ... Actually, yeah, find another piece of paper because you're going to want to hang this one up. Anna's collecting these drawings, by the way, and she's going to make a collage of tugboat. It's going to be this wallpaper of like, here are all the pigs that ... So, you've got your tic-tac-toe and let me just show you how to draw a pig and draw it with me.

We're going to do an M right there. Oh, that's where I messed up. We're going to do a W there and a W there. Okay. And maybe you're already starting to see what's happening here. I'm going to draw the little belly right here. And then I'm going to bring around this back and touch it there. So it's like, oh, there's like the little back in the body. Then I'm going to draw a circle right here. Guess what that is? The snout. I think Ryan drew his pig with like a human nose. It's like the most fundamental ... You can draw anything. Oh, it's a pig. It's got to have a little snout. Give it some nostrils. And then I'm going to take this and connect it, and then I'm going to take that and connect it. And look at this. I'm so dang close. And then it's up to you.

You can give it whatever eyeball you want because I also want to highlight like this isn't about everybody needs to do exactly the same thing. This is about; can we get aligned? And alignment doesn't mean that it's like procedurally like this should be two centimeters. So, draw your own eye, draw your own mouth, which showcases how you're feeling right now. Maybe it's a smile or a frown or whatever. And then give it whatever curly cue tail you want. You want to go two curly cues or three, it's up to you. Just go crazy

with it. And now I would venture to assume that we are better aligned in drawing our pigs. So, tip number two is that we've got to find ways, creative ways to align people. I've got to be willing to challenge kind of the standard idea of like, well, we align this way when we're in certainty.

We write policies and procedures and we have a status quo and we communicate it and we have meetings to do it. How might I align my organization to help us understand what we're dealing with in uncertainty and then collaborate creative ideas to go around it? That alignment is key. So how might we do it? Maybe we model it. Maybe we bring people in to have a discussion. Maybe we have a debate. Half of you take the pro and half of you take the con and let's argue it. I've worked with organizations where it's like, let's fill in a mad lib together. Our biggest problem is blank. If we don't fix it, we are going to blank and blank. The solution we might need to implement is blank. And then you let people give their answers and then you see like, are we aligned or not?

But it's key before you jump into solutioning. I don't even like the word solutioning because you're driving not for solutions, you are driving for possibilities.

Before you start brainstorming, you got to get clarity and alignment. All right. Box number four. By the way, is there anybody in the chat box that wants to argue that your pig in box number one looked better than our aligned pig that we just did together? And Anna, do not go into the chat box. I know. You love pigs and you probably, they're so cute and it's got a little ... It's dressed up in something and like it's having a little party with other farm animals. I get it. Box number four. You guys having a good time, by the way? I don't know what that looked like. Okay. Box number four, I want you to ... This is tricky. I want you to draw a rectangle that kind of looks like that.

And tip number three that I want to leave you with is when we are dealing with uncertainty, we need to kind of show up differently as leaders. For 30 years, I've been teaching leadership workshops and it's kind of like helping leaders do stuff on the left-hand side. It's like, here's how to create a vision and here's how to set some goals and here's how to have feedback. And it all kind of lives over here. But when we're over here, we need to possibly change the way that we're interacting with our employees and behaving as a leader. And the one I already told you is over here it's okay to say, "I don't know." And over here, it's kind of like not okay.

So, I want to share with you an acronym. Yay. I didn't get any slides, but I got an acronym. And the acronym is CORE and CORE represents four things that we might want to do to change our CORE behaviors. I'll see the tie-in. When we are leading in uncertainty, in times of uncertainty, we need to be innovative. So, the C in CORE stands for, you've got to be able and willing and model for people that we can challenge norms. In times of uncertainty, it is absolutely okay, recommended, should do it, that we are willing to challenge the status quo because we are acknowledging that the status quo kind of doesn't apply to this time of uncertainty. So, it is a time where you go, "Hey, we don't know necessarily what's going on and we're not bound to our normal status quo." And that could be like procedures, process, success measures, like let's just change the way we're defining success on this thing that lives in uncertainty.

So, you've got to be willing to challenge norms. And that's something you could do a little self-assessment on and go, "Am I good at that? Or have I been the person that's like, these are the norms, everybody do them." The O in CORE, this is a fun arts and crafts project. Do you agree? Stay open. And really stay open means stay open to new ideas. If I am truly recognizing that I'm operating in uncertainty and I'm asking my entire company and all my employees to help generate possibilities, I

don't want to be that person that's like, "We're open to everything." And then someone's like, "What if we did this?" No. "What if we maybe tried that? We already tried that. We don't have the budget for that." We have this standard tendency to, as soon as somebody tells us we should do something differently for whatever reason, our immediate response, "Let me play devil's advocate." No. So I got to force myself to stay open. I got to recognize I don't have the answer. I don't know what the answer is. There's not a status quo for it, but I'm willing to hear what people have to say, even if it's a bit strange. We've got to challenge norms. We've got to stay open. We've got to take risks. And I don't know which one of these is more challenging for you. You could do a little self-assessment ranking, like maybe you're fine with challenging norms and you're great with listening to new stuff, but taking a risk, uh-oh, it might work and it might not. But imagine when we're dealing with uncertainty, we're generating possibilities and that's a plural thing. So we should come up with a lot of options, and we have to try out those options and maybe some of those options will work and maybe some of those options will not. So I've got to be able to take risks and maybe that's an exercise in defining a good risk versus a bad risk, a smart risk versus a dumb risk. Maybe I need to give examples to my company about, so let me tell you what a good risk is.

Maybe we'll lose a couple bucks. Let me tell you what a bad risk is. Don't try something brand new with our number one client who could make or break the year. And the E in CORE, explore connections. When I was living in New York City, I would host what I called innovation field trips. And innovation field trips is I would have a certain company come into New York City. I'll give you an example. You guys like Mentos? The company that makes Mentos, they're Dutch companies. Anyway, they came into New York and I said, "We're going to go on an innovation field trip." And they probably thought, "Oh, Rob, you're going to take us all these different candy and grocery store places, but that's not what I did." I took them to Kid Robot, like a toy store in Soho. And then I took them to a furniture store on the Upper West Side, and then I took them to Whole Foods. And the idea was sometimes you got to zoom out of what you're doing and see what else is going on in the world.

And you might find that somebody has already answered or addressed or is addressing what you're dealing with in uncertainty that you never would've thought of because maybe it's not your industry. So Explore Connections is like kind of keep your eyes open and keep your heads up. Also, when I lived in New York, it was like, don't just look eye level, like look up and look down because there's always stuff going on all around you that you should consider exploring. I was working with a company two weeks ago that we were talking about voice of the customer and they were so focused on like, "We're the company, we got to get the voice of the customer." And I just flipped it like, "Well, when you're the customer, what makes you want to fill out an NPS survey?" "Oh, I never thought of that. I thought we were just a company trying to get our people to do it."

No, we'll just put yourself in ... Explore that connection. Who do you respond to and who do you not? "So these are tip number three, four things that you might want to consider in terms of behaviors when you might find yourself or your organization dealing in uncertainty in the unknown. And this little worksheet that you've created gives you a super sweet little recap. Number one, we've got to get aligned. We got to hit the pause button. We got to make sure we understand what's going on. We've got to be able to generate creative possibilities and make creativity an okay thing to do. And when we do that, we start to figure out what we might do."

And maybe I'll end on a little bit of a personal note. So, this paradigm I've been using for probably 15 years, and I've been teaching innovation for that long. And I even taught a course at Fordham University called Innovation and Resilience. And I think it's a cool paradigm to look at. And I think I told this in the

summer to Tugboat, but one of my kids that I drew, I'm not going to show, but I had twins and my twins are nine years old. And when they were three, we started to recognize that something was interesting or different between the two of them. And I tried not to judge them, but we did some tests, and we found out that one of the O-bros, it's Otto and Azi, was diagnosed at age three with autism, nonverbal autistic.

And I still remember the diagnosis because I'm like, " Well, I thought I knew what to do as a parent and I'm kind of a good parent because I have these two older kids and I'm killing it and now I got these twins, and I've got a special needs situation. I don't know that it's going to work over here. Maybe I need to be over here. "And not just on a one-time basis, but since that diagnosis, my family has lived on this side almost every single day and we've found a reason to embrace it. And some days Ozzy would do something and then the next day it's gone, he can't do it. And then two days later it comes back or he digresses a ton. And instead of getting frustrated and going, "That's not the status quo. We got to find the solution. Is there a pill? What's going on?"

We're just like, " Every day is going to be kind of uncertain. We're going to walk into every day going, I don't know what's going to happen, but let's try our best and come up with possibilities in order to make Ozzy's life as successful as it can be. "Ozzy's now nine years old and the truth is when I came to Idaho to speak last summer, it was one of the first times that Ozzy gave me a complete sentence and an expression of emotion because I drove there and he came out in the garage and he's like, " Dad, please don't go. I'm going to miss you. "And it's like, I felt so overwhelmed with emotion one because I'm going to miss you too, but two, you gave me a complete sentence, and you expressed emotion and it was just an amazing moment. So initially when I introduced this, I kind of had you think like, " Is this comfortable?

Is this uncomfortable? Is this safe? Is this not safe? "And I guess my closing note to you is to suggest that even though initially we might think this is hard and difficult and we wish it wasn't there, this is where innovation lives. This is where we get to define what our company is going to do in the future and possibly change the trajectory of our organization to allow us to survive and live the most successful life and drive the most successful businesses. So, the more comfortable we can get with this, the more successful we're going to be in the future as leaders and as business owners. I want to thank you guys for your time today. You can always find me on LinkedIn. We don't have a ton of time for Q&A, but also Q&A can kind of go off the rails. So, I would just suggest to you that if you have any questions on anything that I talked about today or you're like, " Rob, how can I implement this?

Or how do I do brainstorming with my team? Or how do I get people comfortable with uncertainty or how do I talk about it? How do I recognize when I'm in certainty and uncertainty? "Maybe reach out to me on LinkedIn and I'm happy to have that conversation. Then I'll just bill Tugboat. I'm just kidding. It's free. I'm an educator and I want to offer that stuff, Ryan, okay? So it's not a click to pay. It's like, please engage. Thank you all for your engagement today. I know we've got a couple more minutes, Ryan. I'll pass it back to you.

Ryan Drew:

Yeah, no, just was going to, on behalf of everybody that joined, thank you. I know not everyone was able to join as a panelist. I know we had chats coming in from folks that chose not to share their videos. So thank you for being a part of that. I'm sure that you got as much out of it as I did. And I've got a pig to hang up on the wall, Rob, better than the first one.

Rob Cordova:

Show that again Ryan. Yeah, that one's good. That one's good.

Ryan Drew:

Yeah, that was on purpose. See, there's my other pig. No, thank you for doing this with us, Rob. We really appreciate it, and we look forward to seeing everybody very soon in person. Thanks for taking time out of your day after President's Day yesterday to join us today and do this, and we'll see you all very soon. Have a great day.