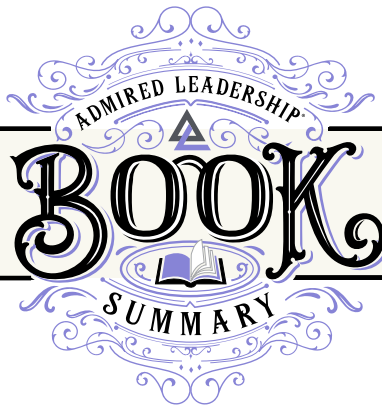




Eight Minutes, Not Eight Hours



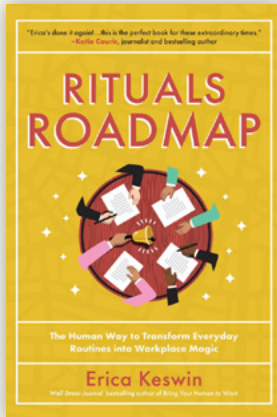
November 2021

Rituals Roadmap

The Human Way to Transform Everyday Routines into Workplace Magic

Published 2021

BOOK AUTHOR: ERICA KESWIN



The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly closed offices and shift-ed business operations from in-person to online. Employees adapted to the new way of working by developing remote processes and identifying ways to replicate collaborative working. This change also revealed one of the most vital tools for managing our well-being both at work and at home: rituals. Erica Keswin explores the significance of rituals in creating opportunities for people to connect more deeply with themselves, others, and their work in purpose-filled ways. The book is also replete with examples of the effective rituals performed in successful companies. To truly drive performance and a sense of fulfillment, organizations should look to create rituals that authentically reflect their mission and values and that also drive connection – either in person or virtually.

KEY QUOTE

“Whether employees work remotely, in an office, or somewhere in between, I’m more convinced than ever that even the simplest of rituals is the human way to transform everyday routines into the workplace – even worldwide – magic.” — **Erica Keswin**

Key concepts:

Why Rituals? Rituals in the workplace help provide the “three p’s”: psychological safety + purpose = performance.

Rituals for Recruiting, Hiring, and Onboarding. Certain approaches from the outset create a sense of belonging that leads to better retention and performance. Create onboarding rituals that aren’t just reviewing lists of policies, but which reflect your company’s values. Continue “onboarding” in this way well past the first day.

Rituals for Beginnings: March Through the Arch. Whether beginning and ending your own or your company’s week, meeting, project, or event, bookend things with small rituals which elevate work and activities.

Rituals for Meetings: Gatherings That Matter. Every meeting should be well-organized and have a carefully and specifically defined purpose. To foster true mental presence when you gather, use strategies to create a sense that concerns are to be left behind, and the work to focus on is the business at hand.

Rituals for Eating: The Most Important Meal of the Day, the One We Share. Organizational psychologists have found that eating together is good for business. Meals are one of our most primal instincts and pleasures, and breakfast, lunch, pizza, or dinner on the clock fosters camaraderie and drives performance.


Rituals for Taking Professional Development Personally: Spotlight on LinkedIn's InDay. LinkedIn's InDay is short for "investment day," and it is one whole day each month in which the company seeks to invest in their employees' personal and professional development. It helps business and decreases burnout. Employees count on the day coming. There are established themes, and people can personalize their day as they see fit.

Rituals for Taking a Breather: The No-Smoke Break.


Disconnecting from work for small social rituals and big ones helps colleagues to connect and demonstrates that no one is indispensable.

Rituals for Recognizing and Rewarding: We See You. Whether small or big, quirky or serious, rewards and acknowledgments can become powerful rituals that help employees feel seen and connected, and the best rituals take on a life of their own.

Rituals Spotlight: Why Starbucks Is a Rituals Rockstar. Coffee tasting is a part of your first day on the job at Starbucks (a ritual called "First Sip") as well as a part of every meeting and event across the company. Starbucks has created a warm ritual that brings colleagues together and simultaneously reminds everyone of the company's main purpose.



Whether small or big, quirky or serious, rewards and acknowledgments can become powerful rituals that help employees feel seen and connected, and the best rituals take on a life of their own.



Rituals for Tidying Up: At the End of the Roadmap. Consider closing your meeting, activity, day, and week with a ritual.

Rituals for Turbulent Times: Design Your Own Roadmap. Personalize the concepts and examples shared in the book to fit your company and life and check to see that they are meeting the litmus test of those three p's. Adapt and adjust your rituals in a difficult or changing time, such as during a pandemic.

WHAT IS A RITUAL?

A study by organizational psychologists defines a ritual as "a predefined sequence of symbolic actions, often characterized by formality and repetition that lacks direct instrumental purpose" (p. 5).

While a routine is performed with the goal of preparing for something, "a ritual is performed without a specific goal of preparation in mind" (p. 5). The example given is that of an athletic routine, with prescribed exercises before practice designed to strengthen certain muscles or skills, contrasted to an athlete's ritual of, for example, bouncing the basketball 3 times before an event or doing a special sequence of steps.

“Leadership and management writer Gwen Moran writes in a Fast Company article, Rituals signal to us that it’s time for a specific mindset or activity. They act as triggers to more effortlessly get us ready for what we need to do” (p. 36).

A ritual can take place with just one person. Rather than connecting with another, a ritual provides an opportunity to connect with oneself (p. 40).

IMPORTANCE OF RITUALS

Rituals are embodied by psychological safety, purpose, and performance. A ritual that allows one to experience a sense of psychological safety and feel a connection to a greater purpose is directly correlated to positive performance (p. 10).

According to workplace strategist Daisy Auger-Dominguez, lack of psychological safety “reduces the chances of a free exchange of ideas necessary for innovation and high performance... we can often make others feel excluded or at risk of rejection without realizing it” (pp. 10-11).

A 2016 study by Ivy League psychologists found that performing a ritual improves a person’s performance in public and decreases anxiety (pp. 4-5).

“I often tell people they have to get their values off the walls and into the halls for their purpose to come to life” (p. 12).

According to researchers Emma Seppälä and Kim Cameron, “The American Psychological Association estimates that more than \$500 billion is siphoned off from the U.S. economy because of workplace stress, and 550 million workdays are lost each year due to stress on the job” (p. 8).

Loneliness and isolation are the biggest health risks that workers face and directly contribute to workplace stress (p. 6).


CREATING EFFECTIVE RITUALS

When creating a ritual, keep an eye out for what already exists in day-to-day life and determine how it can be ritualized (p. 27).


Find opportunities to tie company values to rituals to reinforce the organizational mission while also creating psychological safety and purpose (p. 25).

A ritualized activity is one that is “composed of steps that are not logically necessary” (p. 6).

The key to practicing individual rituals is to identify when the brain is at its peak creativity and use that time to focus on work or brainstorming (p. 42).



According to workplace strategist Daisy Auger-Dominguez, lack of psychological safety “reduces the chances of a free exchange of ideas necessary for innovation and high performance... we can often make others feel excluded or at risk of rejection without realizing it.”



WELCOME RITUALS

“Companies that have an intentional way of welcoming their new recruits start as they mean to go on. They understand this is an opportunity to help new employees feel psychological safety, connect-ed to the purpose (their own and the company’s), and ramp-up to great performance” (pp. 30-31).

“The Boston Consulting Group published a report in 2012 that ranked onboarding as having the second-highest impact out of all HR practices. The first highest impact was delivering on recruiting or being adept at recruiting” (p. 23).


According to Jodi Kovitz, founder and CEO of #movethedial, in beginnings, it’s more important for people to “feel glued together, connected, grounded, valued – like they have a reason to be there” (p. 40).

Some examples given of onboarding rituals include sending a company-branded box, receiving an email from a current employee with first-day tips about what to wear, where to park, and where to sit, or having a colleague be a first-day buddy (p. 26).


“When onboarding... get started by mapping out your recruiting and onboarding processes. Are there already rituals built-in, and if so, are they working? Where are there opportunities for rituals? Which value(s) could you bake into the process?” (p. 31)

It is “important to not let the rituals go after people get up and running. The best beginnings go on and on, helping people find their way around their new life so that, hopefully, they’ll stay awhile” (p. 27).

Rituals that mark a beginning are not just for the beginning of a new job or life stage. They can be structured as the beginning of a workweek, workday, or work task (pp. 39 – 40).



Some examples given of onboarding rituals include sending a company-branded box, receiving an email from a current employee with first-day tips about what to wear, where to park, and where to sit, or having a colleague be a first-day buddy.



WORKDAY RITUALS

Employee complaints regarding poorly organized meetings are the following:

- 1) They take up time that could be spent productively
- 2) They are confusing
- 3) They can lead to a loss of focus on a project, and
- 4) They weaken relationships through inefficient processes (pp. 52-53).

Meetings can be made productive through rituals by 1) having a purpose and 2) inviting the presence of those involved (p. 53).

“When we sit together and solve a problem, when we get a new idea, or laugh, or move the needle on some big thinking we’re doing, our feel-goods go up, and our stress goes down” (p. 54).

“Before jumping into the news and status of the day part of your meeting, it’s always a good idea to take a moment to gather people together, asking them to leave what they were doing before at the door” (p. 60).

“The human workplace honors relationships ... eating together is a great way to relationships. Another way to honor relationships with employees is to show them the door at the end of the day and encourage them to honor their relationships at home to keep their work-life balance in check” (p. 78).

“A study at MIT showed workers whose group cohesion was in the top third showed an increase in work productivity of more than 10 percent” (p. 71).

According to Tony Schwartz, an author and CEO, “the human body is hard-wired to pulse... to operate at our best we need to renew our energy at 90-minute intervals – not just physically, but also mentally and emotionally” (p. 103).

Schwartz explains that downtime “replenishes the brain’s stores of attention and motivation, encourages productivity and creativity, and is essential to both achieve our highest levels of performance and simply form stable memories in everyday life” (p. 103).

Structuring a specific day or amount of time to focus on personal or professional development creates psychological safety and allows an individual to reexamine their connection to the company’s purpose (p. 92).


EMPLOYEE ACKNOWLEDGMENT RITUALS

“All human beings share the need to be recognized” (p. 150).

One study found that “60 percent of Gen Zers reported that they want multiple check-ins from their manager during the week; of those, 40 percent want the interaction with their boss to be daily or several times each day” (p. 120).

Millennials and Gen Zers crave recognition at work – the recognition of constructive feedback (p. 120).

There are “three different kinds of rituals that can send the message We see you: 1) rituals that reward individual performance, 2) rituals that reflect milestones, and 3) rituals that connect to the collective” (p. 121).



There are “three different kinds of rituals that can send the message We see you: 1) rituals that reward individual performance, 2) rituals that reflect milestones, and 3) rituals that connect to the collective.”

CRAFTING YOUR OWN RITUALS THAT BRING IT ALL TOGETHER, IN GOOD AND BAD TIMES

Starbucks is a good example of a company that has found a ritual that brings people and the mission together. Coffee tastings begin and end meetings and events, are central to breaks, and even are part of onboarding and saying farewell. Food is included in these coffee rituals at times, and people are recognized. Rituals can become check-in points between colleagues and bosses, as well.

To bring rituals to your workplace, start by looking for the ones that are already there – some rituals may already exist unnoticed at your company.

Look for opportunities to introduce rituals. If you want to create rituals, a few steps can get you started. Begin with your company values, then remember that rituals “can be top-down or bottom-up, so ask your team for ideas” and be “willing to scrap rituals that aren’t working” (p. 169).

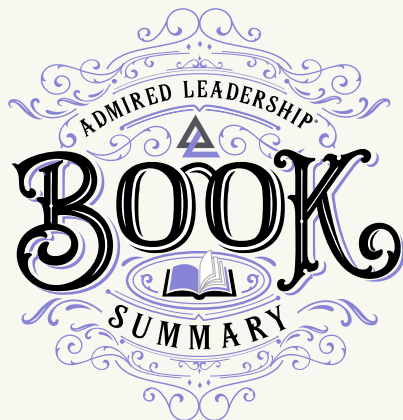
Aside from the three p’s, there is one last litmus test – a question to ask yourself about the rituals in your company. Would people protest if they went away? An effective ritual will be missed.

Troubled times are an opportunity to use rituals to pull people together, even remotely.

Some examples of companies who adapted and continued rituals during Covid-19 quarantines: Allbirds employees continued to do daily push-ups at 4 pm. Udemy’s team continued to partner people up for coffee or lunch, but remotely, across time zones. DoSomething employees still virtually receive a stuffed penguin from colleagues, to show appreciation.

“Rituals are good for people, great for the business of being human, and will help all of us through good and turbulent times” (p. 187).

Erica Keswin (2021). **Rituals Roadmap: The Human Way to Transform Everyday Routines into Workplace Magic.** McGraw-Hill Education.



Look for opportunities to introduce rituals. If you want to create rituals, a few steps can get you started. Begin with your company values, then remember that rituals “can be top-down or bottom-up, so ask your team for ideas” and be “willing to scrap rituals that aren’t working.”

The Latest and Greatest Books for Leaders

We work hard to stay abreast of the current writings on leadership, especially those books our clients are reading or have been recommended to read. As a benefit to our clients and to facilitate our own learning, the Admired Leadership team has long maintained a tradition of summarizing the newest books of interest to leaders. Better to read a summary for eight minutes before investing eight hours in the entire book. After reading a good summary, we believe leaders are able to make better choices as to what to ignore, what to peruse and what to make the time to read closely.