

THE URGENCY OF A LEADER

Malcolm Gladwell

Host, *Revisionist History* Podcast; Staff Writer, *The New Yorker*; Former Science & Medicine Reporter, *The Washington Post*; Best-Selling Author

Recognized as one of the 100 most influential people by *TIME* magazine and one of the *Foreign Policy*'s top global thinkers, Malcolm Gladwell is a world-renowned, five-time *New York Times* best-selling author and sought-after thought leader delivering expertise on management, innovation, history and leadership. He is the host of the popular *Revisionist History* podcast and has been a staff writer for *The New Yorker* since 1996. Gladwell's latest book is *Bomber Mafia: A Dream, a Temptation, and the Longest Night of the Second World War*.

Malcolm Gladwell inspires leaders toward innovation by recalling the true-life stories of Dr. Emil Freireich's breakthrough treatment of childhood leukemia and Apple's breakout success in technology. Drawing from these events, Gladwell observes how innovation involves two critical components—social risk and urgency. With clarity and an urgency all his own, Gladwell inspires leaders to innovate, and innovate now.

Reflect

Take a few minutes to reflect on Malcolm's two stories. What idea was the most impactful for you? Note it below.

Identify Your Innovation

When it comes to innovation, what *operational risk* (new idea or groundbreaking strategy) does your team need to take? In the space below, individually list two-three innovations/operational risks you'd like to see your team take.

Next, share your ideas with your team to discover where overlapping ideas may be. What common ideas have been listed? Identify one in the space below to focus on for the rest of this guide.

Take Social Risk

Gladwell continues that *operational risk* is one component of innovation, while *social risk* is the other. Social risk requires convincing others that what you are doing makes sense; it must overcome opposition. What social risks exist against the innovation you have identified? Take time to list them together below. (For example, fear of mistakes, customer expectations, industry standards)

Gladwell made the point that we are programmed for approval, not disapproval. Facing criticism is then a key task of a leader. In what ways can you strengthen your ability to face criticism?

Gladwell then identifies *urgency* as the key to leading through this risk. It compels you to stick your neck out and try something different. What compelling *urgency* exists today that drives your team to pursue the innovation you chose?

Act

Malcolm ended this talk by highlighting the key role Gordon Zubrod had in the success of Freireich's groundbreaking innovation against leukemia. Zubrod used his position to nurture the cultural disruptive spirit which allows innovation to happen. In light of the work you have just done as a team, now take time to personally reflect. How can YOU create safety to nurture innovative disruptions? How can YOU leverage a sense of urgency to take risks, lead through opposition, and face criticism? Write your actionable next step(s) in the space below.