

The Power of Multiple Perspectives to Solve Thorny Problems

13 Forward Thinking Insights from an
interview with Hillel Glazer, CEO, Entinex.



Meet Hillel Glazer

Hillel is the CEO, and Founder of Entinex. He is also the author of *High Performance Operations*.

In this presentation, I present the 13 most intriguing insights I discovered in my interview with Hillel.

Read the full interview for a fuller discussion on the insights at [Why Do We Go to Great Lengths to Do Things Right Yet Make It Impossible to Achieve?](#)

Get the fascinating backstory on how Hillel developed his superpowers at [The Remarkable Insight, Power, and Value of Having Many Perspectives](#).

— **Bill Fox, Founder, Forward Thinking Workplaces**



The Power of Multiple Perspectives to Solve Thorny Problems

1. It's not enough for people to feel good about what they do.
2. It comes down to something many people find a surprise.
3. Ensure you're giving everyone everything they need to do the work.
4. One thing that makes innovation happen naturally is that discussion around time.
5. Best performance is when people give us 100% utilization on value, not tasks.
6. What people long and work for is meaning.
7. What do you need to do the work?
8. What happens if I screw up?
9. Are we allowed to learn from our mistakes?
10. Are we giving everybody, ourselves included, the space to learn without fear?
11. When we leverage time, we get more output than we put into it.
12. People are happier when we don't violate the laws of physics.
13. Everything traces back to a single idea, reducing the time between an event and our ability to respond.

Question 1: How can we create workplaces where every voice matters, everyone thrives and finds meaning, and change and innovation happen naturally?

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #1

It's not enough for people to feel good about what they do.

It's about giving them the conditions where they don't have to constantly fight the circumstances in which they're operating to do their jobs well. It's been shown, demonstrated, written about, studied, and researched repeatedly around the importance of fulfilling work, self-direction, and controlling your career. On the surface, it sounds like psychology, but it's really about the working environment. A conducive working environment is about leadership. It's about management. It's about the conditions that make it possible to get the most out of the employees because the employees want to give the most when they're completely satisfied and comfortable and eager to do the work.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #2

It comes down to something many people find a surprise.

It comes down to hard to physics. It comes down to time. Time is the domain of physics. Time leveraging, planning work, and understanding how different parts of an operation fit together—in the dimension of time. It's not all about comfortable couches, tea and biscuits, and collaborative spaces. It's about creating the conditions that make it possible for people to excel, and those conditions are not “touchy-feely.” They're actual execution that leadership needs to think through, solve, and come up with ways of delivering at a highly complex level. For example, how do you avoid creating an environment that makes it hard to deliver your best? How do you not sign a contract that runs against your values? How do you get to a point where the contract delivers and it's a win-win, not a lose-lose contract? Now, those are not touchy-feely. Those are real business things.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #3

Ensure you're giving everyone everything they need to do the work.

That would include the knowledge, resources, freedom, flexibility, and accountability to be autonomous. There's a lot of talk about working smarter, not harder, and then companies go and fail to express what working smarter looks like. They don't give people what they need to work smarter and their people end up having to work harder. They don't allow them to say, "Oh, let's try this" and maybe fail, learn, and move on. Instead they're saying, "Oh, that was a mistake. You're clearly not working smarter." No one learns without failing at least a little at least some time. Sometimes you fail hard, but not often. Still, you need to fail to learn from something that doesn't work and don't do that anymore. But then the smarter, not harder crowd calls the failures "not smart." Many say, "if you're not failing, you're not doing anything interesting."



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #4

One thing that makes innovation happen naturally is that discussion around time.

In his book, 'Drive' back in 2011, Dan Pink got the part about accountability and empowerment, right. But he left out one thing that makes innovation happen naturally. It's that discussion around time. We need to relieve people from working on too many things at once. In addition to the autonomy over how they work, we need to give people autonomy over how many things they're working on. That also includes how much time they're spending on each one of their assignments. Because it's unfair if they have everything they need to do the job, but we sabotage them by having them multi-task and task switching. Then we don't give them the slack to be human between the tasks we're asking them to do. We fill their schedules as though a schedule with holes in it makes them underutilized to the accountants. If you look at the holes in the schedules, that's meant for all the stuff in our work that we didn't plan for. We're terrible planners. We need slack to actually get work done "on time."

Question 2: What does it take to get an employee's full attention and best performance?

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #5

Best performance is when people give us 100% utilization on value, not tasks.

There are an infinite number of things that people can do that are not tasks, but are entirely valuable. The confusing thing for many business leaders is that they have conflated best performance with 100% utilized on tasks. That's not when they're giving us their best performance. Their best performance is when they give us a hundred percent utilization on value. And sometimes they are going to be more valuable to us by having them learn the job better, learn the work better, learn more about the whole project, learn more about the product or the customers or the market, or learn and do tasks adjacent to theirs.



*Question 3: What do people really lack
and long for at work?*

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #6

What people long and work for is meaning.

I remember in several of my own jobs just sitting around. One of the first good pieces of advice I took from a supervisor was to journal my workday. The number of SSDD (same shit, different day) entries in my journal was just atrocious. Because there was nothing to do, I wasn't contributing. The way to summarize that is: people long and work for meaning. They want the work to matter. They want to get paid, but they want to earn what they get paid for. They don't want to get paid because they fill a box in the organizational chart. That's demoralizing. When they're done with work, they want to feel accomplished. Sometimes they have a job that's just a cog in a machine, and it just goes round and round and round. You never really see the bigger picture, and it never seems to end. You don't see the results. You never know what your work was contributing to or whether it was important to someone in some way. That's soul-sucking when you never get that satisfaction of being allowed to understand why you're there and what you're doing. Letting people in on decisions about their own work is one of many ways to help them have meaning.



Question 4: What is the most important question leaders should ask employees?

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #7

What do you need to do the work?

I see a leader's job as one that includes giving the employees the conditions that they need to get their jobs done and to be fulfilled. So I think the most important question leaders should ask is, "what do you need to do the work?" Or any other variation of that such as, "Do you have everything you need?" "Is there anything more you'd like to know?" "Do you need tools, equipment, resources? Do you need training?" "Would you like to spend some time talking to someone about the work or time thinking about the work before anything is delivered?" "What are you most concerned about regarding this work?" "Do you feel you have the space to learn?" "Do you have the opportunity to make and learn from your mistakes?" "Will you even have enough time to do the work we've asked you to do?"



Question 4: What is the most important question employees should ask leaders?

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #8

What happens if I screw up?

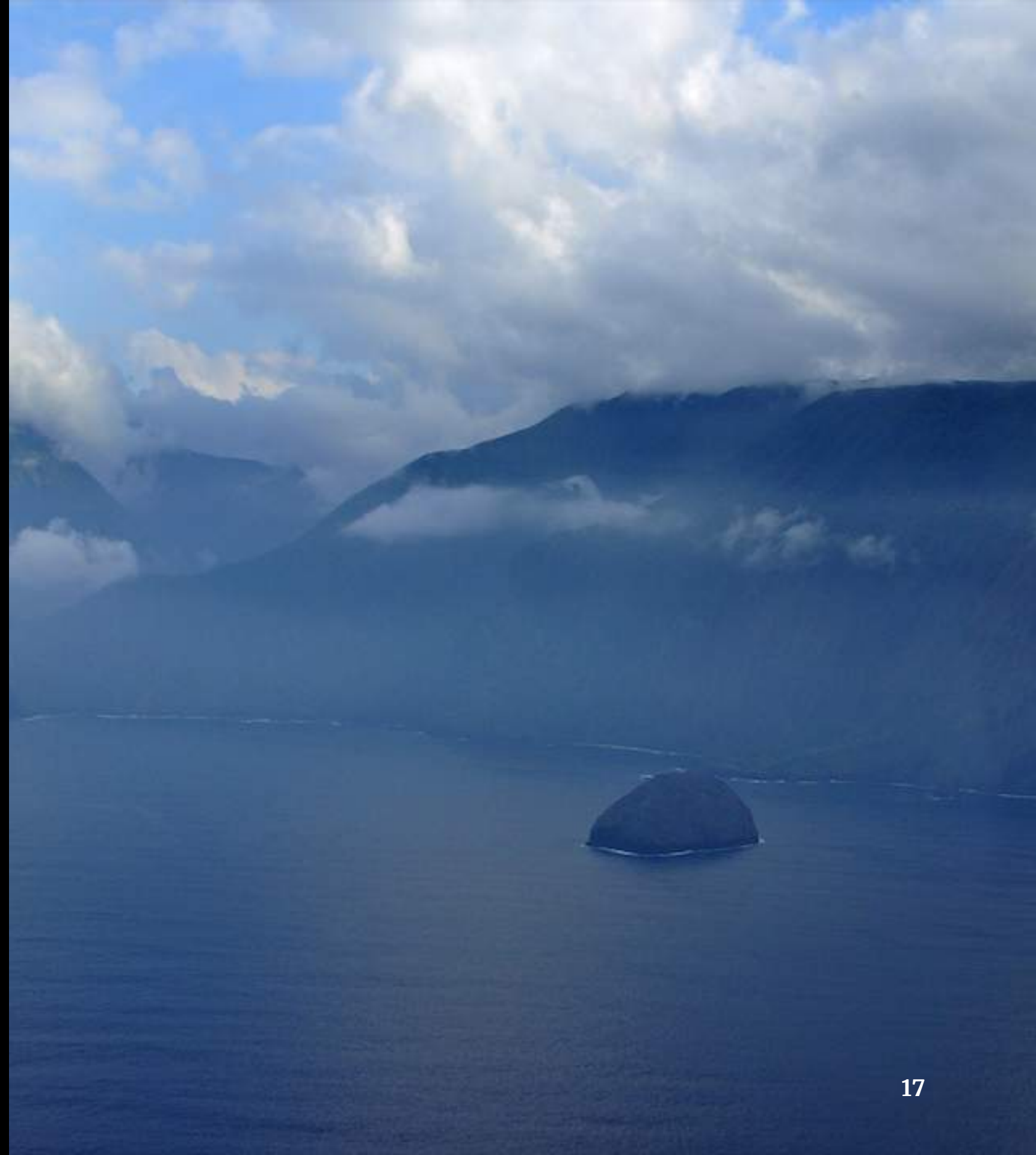
That's a tough question because if you have the self-confidence to ask these questions, then great. But too many people don't have the self-confidence to ask—especially if they're new on the job, but maybe they've been there a while, and then they will have the self-confidence. In a few years, let's say my son graduates from the university, gets his first job, and asks me, what should I ask my first boss? I'd say you should ask these questions during the interview, but ask, "what happens if I screw up?" "Who can I speak with if I'm concerned about not having the right answer or not doing the work correctly?" "Who do I talk to if I'm concerned about that before I've delivered it?" "What can I do?"



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #9

Are we allowed to learn from our mistakes?

A critical "tell" of a healthy workplace is whether we are allowed to learn from our mistakes. If that's just a bridge too far--going out on a limb like that, especially for a new employee--then maybe another way to approach it is "what happens if I see a problem?" A more comfortable way to ask those questions without having to actually ask those questions is to say, "what keeps you up at night, and how can I help you sleep better?" If you say that to your supervisor or manager, that will blow their mind. And you'll then be potentially able to tease out that they're actually worried about us and whether we're doing our work and mistakes that they're going to be held accountable for. Then you'd be able to feel a little more open to asking the other questions. Once you hear what's keeping your boss up at night, or what's on their leaders' minds, you might be able to say, "well, you know, we don't have perfect knowledge. We don't have a crystal ball. What happens if I screw up? Can we learn from our mistakes? How do we work through our work to make mistakes, learn from them and still be on time and budget?"



Question 6: What is the most important question we should ask ourselves?

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #10

Are we giving everybody, ourselves included, the space to learn without fear?

People that are serious about their work tend to be pretty hard on themselves. Sometimes, it ends up turning into being hard on others too. And it's not because we're hard-headed, it's because we're serious about it. We care about it a lot. And when we are very passionate about it, I think it sometimes erases our opportunities to give people the benefit of the doubt. Because in most situations in most cultures people want to do well at what they do. And if they're not, it's typically not their fault. And so we should ask ourselves, "are we giving ourselves and each other and those around us the benefit of the doubt?" "Are we giving everybody, ourselves included, the space to learn without fear?" "Are we generous with our time but still self-caring and protective of our own time and then respectful of others' time?" We can waste a lot of it if we don't give people the benefit of the doubt because then we become accusatory instead of inquisitive. So I think it can be easily resolved by just constantly putting ourselves in the frame of mind of giving ourselves the benefit of the doubt.

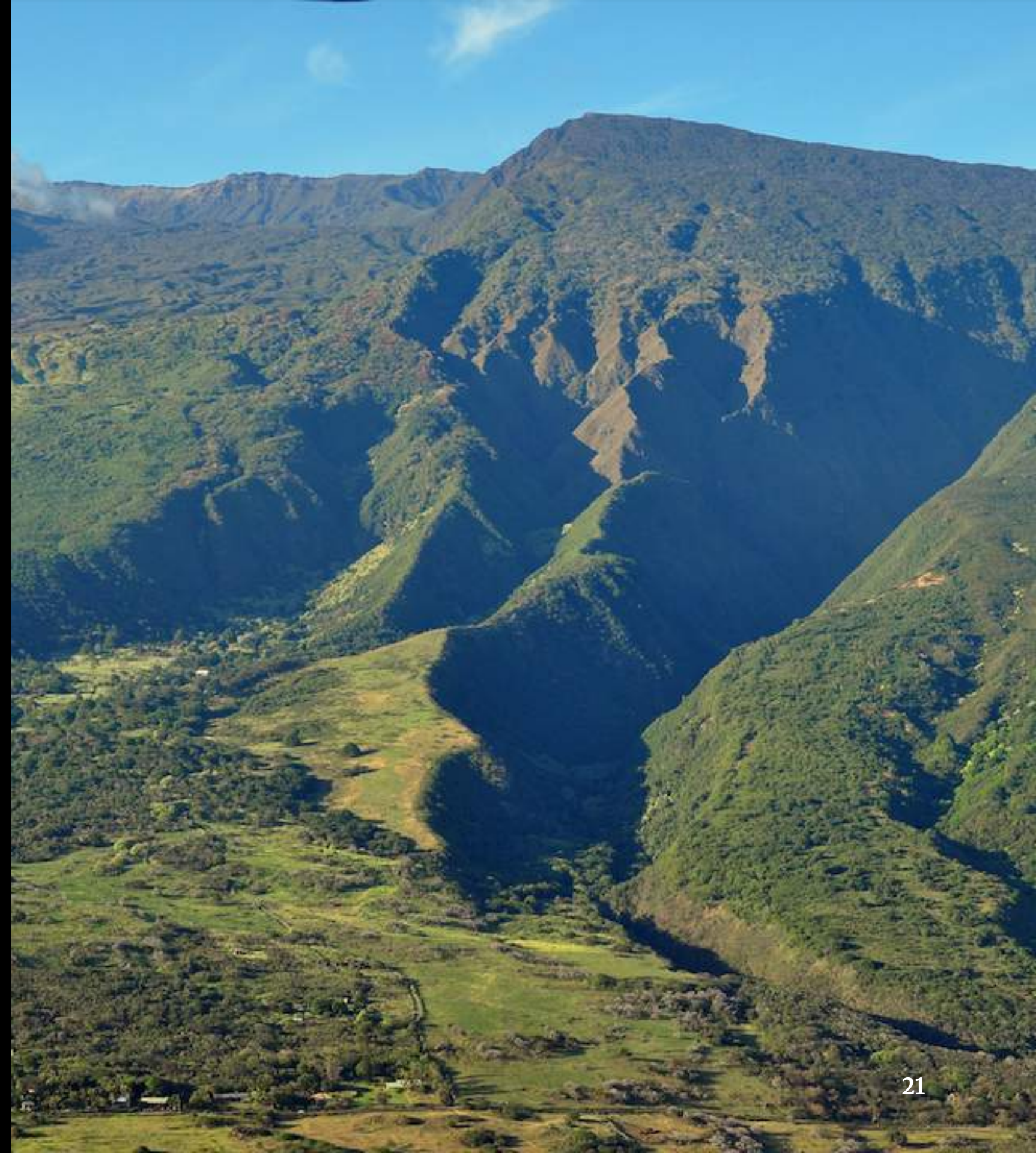


*Question 7: What is leveraging time
and how do we leverage our time
better?*

FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #11

When we leverage time, we get more output than we put into it.

The distinction I'm drawing is between managing time and leveraging time. We talked a little bit earlier about managing time, that is, where we work around our overlapping tasks, overlapping schedules, and our habit of putting too many things on the schedule. That's time management in a nutshell. Not doing all of those things is the first step in leveraging time. When you leverage something, if you look it up, one of the definitions is to get more output than the input you put into it. And so when it comes to time, what it means is you get more over time than just the time you put in. Therefore leveraging time is to not look at time as a constant, linear, thing that you race against. A better way to look at leveraging time is to look at it as the denominator in everything. In other words, how much of something over time. This typically looks like "how fast" or "how much" of something over time? It's a rate, not a clock.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #12

People are happier when we don't violate the laws of physics.

If we look at things as a function of time instead of simply consuming time, then the question, "how long does this task take" is just consuming time. But if we ask, "how many of these things we can make in a month?" we're looking at a function of time. That's the simple difference between managing time and leveraging it. When we look at things as a function of time, we can better leverage the time value of work because we can't ever beat time. We can't stop it. We can't control it. But, we can leverage how much we get done in a certain period of time. Otherwise, we're just allowing things to overlap or violate physics. This is where I was really coming from when I talked earlier about creating the conditions necessary to succeed. It's not exclusively about the emotional and psychological. It's about the physical. It's about physics. Dealing with physics is a lot easier than dealing with every individual's psyche. It just so happens that when we don't violate the laws of physics, people are happier. When we don't ask people to be in two places at one time, they're happier. When we don't try to have more than one thing happening simultaneously, they're happier... because these don't violate the laws of physics. After all, we are programmed in our DNA to be allergic to things that violate physics. Like when we fall off a bridge and splat at the bottom, our bodies respond to physics, not to emotion.



FORWARD-THINKING INSIGHT #13

Everything traces back to a single idea.

Everything traces back to a single idea: reducing the time between an event and our ability to respond. Our industry has long forgotten that the catalyst that started the entire body of work on lean and everything that grew out of it: TQM, Six Sigma, and agile. You name it. They all trace their roots back to a single idea, which was to reduce the time between an event and our ability to respond to that event effectively. That's it. That one idea. When this system breaks, alert the worker. That one idea spawned everything else. To facilitate doing whatever it takes to reduce the time between when an event happens and our ability to respond effectively. You can't have people who don't know what the work is. You can't have people afraid to speak up when something doesn't work. You can't have people distracted by things that aren't about the work. You can't have those conditions that prevent responsiveness. And as it happens, being responsive is incredibly fulfilling. Today we think of this in terms of TQM or lean. The Six Sigma of a process is the statistical validation of a stable, controlled process. But when that particular idea came to the West, we tried to force our current processes, which were ineffective or definitely not Lean, to look like Six Sigma statistics. So instead of being a representation of a controlled process, we started bolting on all this extra stuff to make the math look right. What if instead we'd pursued what it takes to respond to anything--good things or bad things--but quickly? This non-copyrightable term I call the speed of response. How fast can we respond to an event?





The moment you walk into a problem space with a box of tools and techniques, the problem presents you with something your toolbox can't fix. Tools and techniques alone aren't enough to deal with the real world.

— Hillel Glazer, Entinex, Inc.

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