Share a book letter: Hit Refresh

Subject: Embracing a transformational culture

Dear ……,

*The leadership role in a transformation phase*

Transformation starts at the top, by understanding each other better, by connecting what leaders stand for as individuals with what the enterprise is capable of. Then there is very little that cannot be accomplished, Satya Nadella, CEO Microsoft remarks. He continues by saying: *“As long as I can remember, I have always had a hunger to learn—whether it be from a line of poetry, from a conversation with a friend, or from a lesson from a teacher.”*

His personal philosophy and his passion, developed over time and through exposure to many different experiences. No one leader, no one group, and no one CEO would be the hero of transformation. A cultural transformation will be slow and tiring before it will be rewarding. The purpose is to build deeper empathy for our customers and their unarticulated and unmet needs. My passion is to put empathy at the center of everything I pursue—from the products we launch, to the new markets we enter, to the employees, customers, and partners we work with.

We witness the most transformative wave of technology yet. One that will include Artificial Intelligence, mixed reality, and quantum computing. It’s about how people, organizations, and societies can and must transform—hit refresh—in their persistent quest for new energy, new ideas, relevance, and renewal. At the core, it’s about humans and the unique quality we call empathy, which will become ever more valuable in a world where the rapid overwhelming flow of technology will disrupt the status quo like never before.

Satya believes in a quote from writer and poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875 - 1926) who once wrote: “*The future enters into us, to transform itself in us, long before it happens.”* Rilke was saying that what lies ahead of you is very much within us, determined by the course each of us takes today. That course, those decisions, is what is set out to be described in his book *Hit Refresh*.

Satya’s vision was to rediscover the soul of Microsoft, the reason for being, by asking key questions, like: *“Why does Microsoft exist?”* and “Why do I (Satya) exist in this role?” These are questions everyone in every organization should ask themselves. Every person, organization, and even society reaches a point at which they owe it to themselves to ‘*hit refresh’*—to re-energize, re-new, re-frame, and re-think their purpose. Sure, in this age of continuous updates and always-on technologies, ‘*hitting refresh’* may sound attractively unusual, but still when it’s done right, when people and cultures re-create and re-fresh, a renaissance can be the result.

The core of leadership is bringing out the best in everyone. It is perhaps the number one thing that leaders must do: to strengthen the confidence of the people they are leading. It is searching to understand people’s thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Being empathetic, bringing that desire to discover what is at the core, the soul, that makes you a better leader. But it is impossible to be an empathetic leader sitting in an office behind a computer screen all day. An empathetic leader needs to be out in the world, meeting people where they live and seeing how the technology wave affects their daily activities.

Satya learned a lot about creating urgency and mobilizing leaders with different skills and backgrounds toward one common goal in what was a new area for Microsoft. He realized that in a successful company it is as important to *unlearn* some old habits, as it is to learn new skills. He refers to the book *The New Psychology of Success*, written by Dr. Carol Dweck. Her research is about overcoming failures by believing you can. *“The view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life.”* She divides the world between *Learners* and *Non-learners*, demonstrating that a fixed mindset will limit you and a growth mindset can move you forward. Passion, extremely hard work, and training can help you to increase rapidly above the usual level. She even writes persuasively about what she calls the ‘*CEO disease*.’ A cause of pain and harm of business leaders who fail to have a growth mindset. Her final conclusion, *Learners* win.

To my first question, why does Microsoft exist, the message was loud and clear. *“We exist to build products that empower others”.* That is the meaning we are all looking for to infuse into our work. Awan ted a clear, tangible and inspiring vision. People want to hear more frequently about progress in transparent and simple ways. On my second question, where do we go from here, I became convinced that the new CEO of Microsoft needed to do several things very well right away, during the first year:

* Communicate clearly and regularly our sense of mission, worldview, and business and innovation ambitions.
* Drive cultural change from top to bottom and get the right team in the right place.
* Build new and surprising partnerships in which we can grow the pie and delight customers.
* Be ready to catch the next wave of innovation, by reframing our opportunities, driving our execution with urgency.
* Stand for timeless values and restore productivity and economic growth for everyone.

We pushed for change with a steady drumbeat and realize that real change depends on culture change. Culture separates into four different meanings, but the most relevant for an organization is the *values*, *customs*, *beliefs*, and *symbolic practices* that men and women live and breathe each day. Culture is made up of acts that become habitual and accumulate to something logical and consistent and meaningful. Culture is how an organization thinks and acts, but individuals shape it. It is about a dynamic learning culture, embracing a *growth mindset*. Be able to start listening, learning more and talking less. When we talk to customers, we need to listen. It’s not an idle exercise. It is about being able to predict things that customers will love. That’s growth mindset, disrupting a fixed mindset? The key qualities of a growth mindset are diverse and inclusive and acting as *One* company.

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Here is the [link](https://globalreadingclub.com/books/hit-refresh) taking you straight to the book *Hit Refresh.*

Enjoy reading and listening.

(Your name)

P.S. Attached is the Newsletter, covering the book Hit Refresh