

KEYNOTES

These are starting points, not canned talks. Each version is built around the audience.



SERIES 01 • CULTURE & LEADERSHIP

IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE



BORN FROM

Building the Culture and People Strategy at Venus Aerospace

Curt Steinhorst was Head of People at Venus Aerospace, the company that flew the world's first high-thrust rotating detonation rocket engine. This series is what that work taught him about culture and leadership: what people need to do difficult work well, and what leaders can stop asking of them. Two presentations, Rethinking Leadership and Rethinking Culture. Either one can be built around a change your organization is going through.

01 RETHINKING LEADERSHIP

A new model for leadership in the AI-driven workplace.

02 RETHINKING CULTURE

Building a culture that does hard things without burning out.



SERIES 02 • FOCUS & COMMUNICATION

CAN I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?



BORN FROM

Over a decade advising organizations on attention and workplace dynamics

As producing information gets easier, deciding what deserves attention matters more. Built on over a decade of writing, researching, speaking, and advising companies on attention and workplace dynamics, this series takes up both sides of attention: protecting your own focus and earning someone else's.

03 FINDING FOCUS IN A DISTRACTING WORLD

Focusing on what matters when everything is a priority, at work and beyond it.

04 BREAKING THROUGH THE NOISE

Communicating so people hear it, believe it, and act on it.

SPEAKING ABOUT AI

DO YOU SPEAK ABOUT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

SHORT ANSWER: YES.

Longer answer: I have been writing and speaking about how technology changes attention and behavior at work since 2012.

AI is being adopted faster than any workplace technology before it, and it is reshaping work through thousands of everyday decisions: when to use it, when to slow down, what to hand off, and where people need to stay fully engaged. **That is what I work on with leaders and teams.**

I also lead a team and run a business, so I use AI under the same conditions the audience does.

What I will not do is demo this week's tools, because next week they are different. Or tell you whether AI ends death and taxes or ends humanity.

RETHINKING LEADERSHIP

A new model for leadership in the AI-driven workplace.

Our model of leadership has needed an overhaul for years. Leaders are expected to make good decisions without enough information, keep up with a flood of messages, be available whenever someone needs them, and somehow still have time to think. More and more of the job has become keeping up.

AI can help with that. It can make information easier to find and take some of the load off. But it cannot make a group work well together. The human work we've labeled "soft" cannot keep being left until everything else is done.

In May 2025, Venus Aerospace flew the world's first high-thrust rotating detonation rocket engine. Whether it flew came down to the human side of the work: did everyone know their own job and let the others do theirs, could they argue without it getting personal, and did they like each other enough to laugh on a day when a mistake could cost a life?

In this keynote, Curt Steinhorst draws on fifteen years working with leaders from Nike to the U.S. Naval Academy and on his work as Head of People at Venus Aerospace to make the case for a leader's job that gets easier as the tools get better: what comes off their plate, what stays, and how to build a team that will tell you the truth while there is still time to use it.

YOU'LL LEARN TO

- Identify work you can delegate or stop doing.
- Reassess what your team needs from your leadership as the work changes.
- Protect the attention your team needs for work that requires careful thought.
- Keep your team questioning assumptions under pressure.
- Work through disagreements without making them personal.
- Make it easier for your team to tell you when something is wrong.

WHAT CLIENTS SAY

"A powerful call to lead with curiosity and clarity... Curt's the speaker you never forget."

BEND CHAMBER





RETHINKING CULTURE

Building a culture that does hard things without burning out.

Somewhere along the way, culture went from eating strategy for breakfast to cupcakes for the anniversary/birthday/get well soon monthly party. That version of culture is a distraction from the thing that decides whether a culture is healthy: the work people are asked to do, and how they are asked to do it. The test comes when the work gets hard, when someone has to admit they are stuck, challenge an idea, or try something that might fail.

At Venus Aerospace, the question was how to build a company capable of doing something extraordinarily difficult without burning people out. In the company's language: How do we move at Mach 9 without burning out? In May 2025, Venus flew the world's first high-thrust rotating detonation rocket engine, the result of the fastest and most capital-efficient rocket engine development program in history: from idea to flight in under four years and for less than \$80 million.

Curt Steinhorst was Head of People at Venus, where he wrote the Venus Flight Plan (five values that guided how the company worked, who it hired, and what it tolerated) and implemented the plan across the organization. Some of what the company tried worked. Some of it did not. In this keynote, he draws on both, and on fifteen years working with leaders across industries, to explore how teams work through uncertainty, what sustains people through demanding work, and whether greater pressure always produces better work.

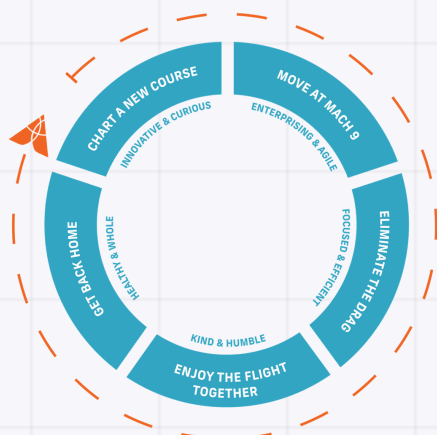
YOU'LL LEARN TO

- Assess your culture through employees' experience of doing the work.
- Recognize what makes it possible for people to admit they are stuck, challenge an idea, or try something that might fail.
- Keep a team working through uncertainty when the answer is not yet clear.
- Judge when more pressure will produce better work and when it will not.

WHAT CLIENTS SAY

"The participants walked away with a new understanding and some steps to take to improve a workforce that covers multiple generations."

KIM B. CLARKE • CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER • KEY ENERGY SERVICES



The Venus Flight Plan, the five values Curt wrote and implemented at Venus Aerospace.



FINDING FOCUS IN A DISTRACTING WORLD

Focusing on what matters when everything is a priority, at work and beyond it.

Technology can take routine work off a team's plate. It can also make it easier to send more messages, launch more projects, and fill every hour it saves. The question is whether it gives people attention back for work that needs their judgment, or simply raises the volume of work they are expected to keep up with.

Somewhere along the line, responding became the job and being reachable became proof you were doing it. A day cut into two-minute pieces by requests that have nothing to do with one another doesn't add up to a day's work, however many hours went into it. More often than not, the problem isn't how much people have to do. It's how divided their attention is, and because it got divided one reasonable choice at a time, that part a leader can change.

Drawing on over a decade of research and advising companies on attention and workplace dynamics, this keynote makes the case that distraction is confusion about what matters, and that the outcomes leaders are measured on, from productivity to how fast a team adapts to change to engagement and well-being, move when leaders protect attention on the team's behalf. That takes a different way of approaching, measuring, and organizing work, one that respects the limit on human attention, because the same limit is what makes a person valuable once it's pointed at the right thing.

For everyone in the room, it starts with deciding what deserves attention, recognizing what is pulling it away, and making room for the work and people they care about.

YOU'LL LEARN TO

- Use new tools to reduce routine work without filling the time they save with more requests.
- Recognize how the demands on your attention shape the decisions you make.
- Decide what deserves your attention when everything has been called a priority.
- Make a team's hours add up to a day's work.
- Protect a team's focus, starting with the meetings and messages they already control.
- Set boundaries that protect your attention for your best work and for a full life outside it.

WHAT CLIENTS SAY

"Curt maintained enthusiastic attention... His session was the highest rated of the conference, scoring 4.9 out of 5."

AMY DIESEN • VP WEALTH
MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS •
AMERIPRISE





BREAKING THROUGH THE NOISE

Communicating so people hear it, believe it, and act on it.

Producing a message is easy now. Getting someone to pay attention, trust it, and act is still human work. Your ability to lead an organization or win a customer's business depends on it. Information has exploded, publishing is free, and Graphite estimates that roughly half of newly published English-language articles are primarily AI-generated. What once captured attention now creates noise, and even what works today may not work tomorrow.

Why do people ignore information they need and pay attention to things they never intended to? The answer matters when you're asking someone to reconsider a decision, support a change, or buy what you're selling.

Your audience brings different experiences, expectations, and reasons for listening. And increasingly, they're accustomed to information selected specifically for them. How do you get them to consider an idea they weren't looking for, and might not initially want to hear?

In this keynote, Curt Steinhorst, bestselling author of *Can I Have Your Attention?*, draws on the science of attention to show you how to shape and deliver messages that break through the noise. This presentation is for anyone whose work depends on influencing others. It can be tailored to the communication challenges specific to executives, sales professionals, and communications leaders. You'll get beyond this week's LinkedIn algorithm tricks and into what makes people pay attention when the noise is so loud.

YOU'LL LEARN TO

- Recognize how information overload and hyper-personalized media have changed audience expectations.
- Communicate across generations, cultures, and geographically dispersed teams.
- Apply the science behind what captures and keeps attention.
- Adapt your message for the medium and moment.
- Use advanced rhetorical techniques to make ideas more compelling and memorable.

WHAT CLIENTS SAY

"Your talk set the tone for the conference... with people quoting frequently from your presentation."

BILL MCLOUGHLIN • EDITOR-IN-CHIEF • FURNITURE TODAY



HOW I HELP

KEYNOTES

Organizations: company-wide, business units

Leadership: senior, extended, emerging

Advisors: experienced, emerging

Clients: current, prospective

FACILITATION

Executive teams, cross-functional groups, business-owning families

HOSTING

Live: events, moderated conversations

On camera: executive interviews, thought-leadership content, brand campaigns

Emcee: the comedic timing from the keynotes, and the keynote's ideas carried through the rest of the conference as one thread

WORKSHOPS

Development programs: advisors, leaders

Team workshops: intact teams, cross-functional groups

Topics: communication, attention, leadership, AI adoption

COACHING

One-on-one work on presentations and consequential conversations

PROJECT OR ONGOING

Any of these can stand alone. An ongoing relationship lets each engagement build on the last and gives you someone who already knows the organization and can be useful in different settings across the year.