



Jeff Leitner

Social Innovation Pioneer &
High-Stakes Strategist

- Architect of the **Unwritten Rules**
- Designed first doctorate in social innovation
- Founder, Unwritten Labs
- Founder of Insight Labs
- Fellow, New America (think tank for American renewal)
- Author, *See Think Solve: A Simple Way to Tackle Tough Problems*
- Strategic problem-solver to corporations & governments

Areas of Expertise

**Leadership | Innovation | Organizational Change | Strategy | Disruption
Culture | Problem-Solving Team Dynamics | Transformation | Social Impact**

Harnessing the Power of the Unwritten Rules

The Big Idea--the kind that fundamentally changes our lives--comes along so rarely that our head snaps back when we hear it. Jeff Leitner's insights into **Unwritten Rules** is one of those ideas. His work unlocks the hidden code that shapes how we behave, what we believe, and how our organizations work.

The Unwritten Rules pulls open the curtain, showing how work really gets done, how communities actually operate, and how our culture truly functions. It gives us a new lens to understand what we can do to lead successful change, game-changing innovation, and real social impact.

Leitner spent years in the trenches working on some of the world's biggest problems, then deep in the latest research, where he developed a groundbreaking approach for identifying and changing social dynamics. The inaugural Innovator in Residence at the University of Southern California, the founder of Insight Labs, and the co-founder of the international award-winning UX for Good, Jeff and his approach have helped solve some of the biggest and most interesting challenges, including:

- **Starbucks:** As the company prepared to redesign all of its stores around the world, Leitner brought together design leaders from some of the world's most influential brands to develop a strategy for Starbucks to increase its creative capacity.
- **U.S. Department of State:** Faced with the lingering structural challenges of institutions like the United Nations, the State Department engaged Leitner to develop a new model for international organizations.
- **Professional Convention and Management Association (PCMA):** With more and more of our personal and professional lives moving online, PCMA engaged Leitner to develop and publicly present a strategy for them and their hundreds of organizational members to remain relevant in the digital age.
- **Allsteel:** As part of the company's effort to bring the latest social science insights to bear on office design and worker productivity, Allsteel partnered with Leitner to integrate his work on unwritten rules with workplace strategy. Leitner and Allsteel are now on a year-long, national tour presenting the product of their work to thousands of executives at hundreds of companies. unwrittenrulestour.com
- **Law 2023:** A partnership of national law firms and legal industry vendors engaged Leitner to project the future of the legal service sector. He enlisted experts in economics, sociology, and technology to partner to produce important insights, which are the foundation of recommendations for the industry. law2023.org
- **United Nations:** In partnership with the OECD in Paris, Leitner developed the first-ever sequence for solving the world's biggest problems, based on a year-long, international survey of economists, political scientists, and social scientists. sdgsinorder.org

Warm and funny, Jeff Leitner's presentations provide a profound "Ah-Ha" moment for audiences, with a smile of recognition on their faces. He weaves stories, science, and insights together to help us all break-through and get the real work done.

Speech Topics

The Rules That Matter Most

You will see what shapes people's behavior and beliefs, and will be provided a set of tools to tackle your most important challenges. This talk is ideal for audiences seeking impactful change, profitable growth, disruptive innovation, and the ability to solve the nearly unsolvable issues.

Jeff Leitner provides a rare insight into how people and organizations really work — namely that they're complying with hundreds of unwritten, unspoken rules. Armed with social science, real-world experience, and humor, he tells leaders how these rules work, about the relationship between unwritten rules and official policies, and how to leverage these mysterious rules to greatly improve outcomes and change behavior in companies, markets, and society.

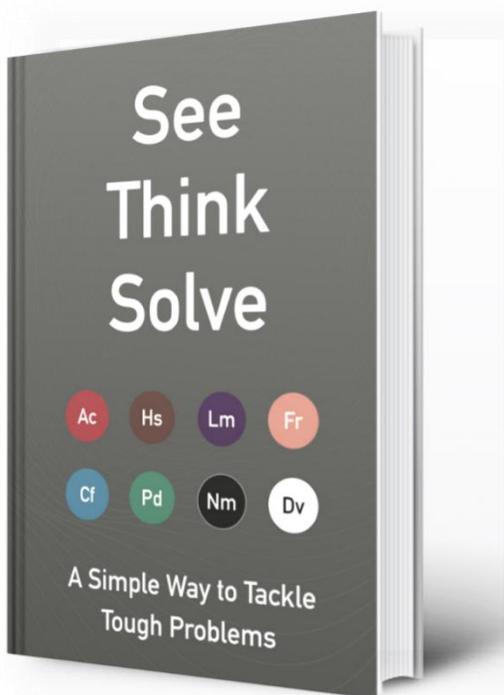
- ✓ **The Rules That Matter Most for Change and Innovation** - Jeff Leitner turns the tables on the dismal success rate of organizational change and market innovation, explaining the all-important role that unwritten rules play in crippling our best efforts. Then he walks the audience through what they can do immediately to begin to shift conditions and set themselves up for success.
- ✓ **The Rules that Matter Most for Social Impact** - Explore the biggest obstacle to real social impact: unwritten, unspoken rules that shape our behavior and doom our best efforts to solve big problems. Jeff Leitner will guide the audience through new insights — the foundation of the nation's first doctorate in social innovation, which he designed — that will prepare them to make significant and lasting impact.

Moderator / Facilitator / Idea Engineer

Jeff Leitner has led groups in unpacking and solving difficult challenges around the world — both on and off stage. Asked about his moderating style, he said: "I try to push beyond what people usually say to help find new, more productive ground that even they didn't know about before. If there's a panel, I look to produce big, new ideas where everybody's work overlaps. In short, I want the kind of combustion that comes when expertise meets expertise."

Leitner was the founder of Insight Labs, the first-ever philanthropic think tank. There, he engaged more than 700 scientists, artists, executives, and academics in designing original strategies to help more than 40 governments, institutions, and corporations. He was also founder of UX for Good, the first international initiative to engage user experience design in solving big problems. He is at home on stage or in boardrooms with big thinkers seeking to explore new ideas.

Books



See Think Solve: A Simple Way to Tackle Tough Problems

The mystery of human behavior shapes almost every problem worth solving. That's the bad news. But there's good news too. The mystery of human behavior also helps us see problems in new ways. By paying attention to people, we can discover new aspects of problems that help us solve them more effectively.

The nine steps in [See Think Solve](#) are designed to do just that. They will help you make sense of the mystery of human behavior that surrounds all tough problems.

- ✓ The first six steps are about seeing — each of them shows you a new thing to look for in human behavior.
- ✓ The next two steps are about thinking — each one is a tool you can use to better understand the human behaviors you have observed.
- ✓ The last step is about solving — it describes what you can accomplish with your newfound knowledge.”

Praise for the book:

“It inspires our entrepreneurs to action and equips them with a powerful new way of

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thinking - helping them to create compelling new ventures related to health, water and infrastructure; to raise substantial capital; and to set their sights on generating real impact.”

- Founder & CEO, 10.10.10

“The first time I saw this approach in action, back in 2014, I was blown away. I immediately put it to use in my classes in order to push students past the conceptual and theoretical and into how they can create impact and build innovation in the world. Students were more engaged, more enthusiastic and clearer about what they were trying to do. They understood their work within larger contexts. This is the best approach I have ever come across for understanding and designing complex change.”

- Professor, University of Southern California

“With See Think Solve, the guys have articulated and shared a process for pursuing social change that’s both pragmatic and philosophical. Having experienced the process myself, I’ve seen firsthand how this method can drive big breakthroughs amongst bold people in short amounts of time.”

- Founder, little things laboratory

“See Think Solve is simply a gem. Having devoted my professional life to identifying, understanding and connecting the interdependent variables that enable authentic transformation, this wise and extremely accessible book offers meaningful frames and questions for designing real and enduring social change.”

- Founder Emeritus, Illinois Math & Science Academy



Unwritten Rules: Organizational Change & Workplace Design

A beautifully designed transcript of talks delivered in Madrid and Boston in 2018, Unwritten Rules is the joint effort of Jeff Leitner and Jan Johnson, an expert in workplace strategy at Allsteel. The book is not for sale, but is available at talks on the authors’ 2019-2020 national speaking tour.

The book begins: “You’re surrounded in every part of your life by invisible forces that shape your behavior. I get that this sounds crazy, like fiction: forces that influence how you behave whenever you’re around other people, how you act and what you say in life’s most important and least consequential moments.”

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Testimonials and Appearances

Testimonials

"Jeff 's talk on unwritten rules was as insightful and thought-provoking as it was entertaining and engaging for my global marketing organization. It has inspired us to think more deeply about how we can successfully drive cultural change to better prepare us for success in the future."

- Chief Marketing Officer, MetLife

"Jeff Leitner has an uncanny and effortless ability to uncover that thing you know is in there, to scratch that mental itch, and to pull out the best from a group. I literally feel smarter when I'm in a room with Jeff - that sense of crazy possibility is palpable."

- Senior Vice President, Panera Bread

"What a wonderful speaker to work with . Jeff goes beyond bringing knowledge and expertise. He brings character, integrity, energy, and ability to connect with his audience. In 2018 Jeff was rated in the top 10% of all Speakers at the CoreNet Global North American Summit and is a recipient of the Luminary Award for Excellence in speaking."

- Vice President, Corenet Global

"Jeff Leitner gets to the heart, soul and guts of what it takes to make organizational change stick, by first taking us through the many clever and cute ideas that sound good – but don't actually work. He had our audience of corporate executives riveted and wanting a lot more of Jeff."

- CEO, Interim Execs

"Jeff Leitner's ability to understand the subject matter, command a meeting and facilitate a meaningful conversation—with results—is incredibly impressive. I couldn't recommend Jeff more as a thought partner, collaborator and colleague."

- Director, National Endowment for the Arts

"Jeff's superpower as a speaker and facilitator is the ability to communicate NASA-level constructs with sharp wit and refreshing insight that are totally consumable for the audience and that activate the audience's genuine desire to keep learning well after the program has concluded. Trust me. You will like who you are better and have more confidence in your leadership abilities after you have been inspired by Jeff's one-of-a-kind speaking and facilitation experiences."

- Managing Director, GrowthPlay

“We keep inviting Jeff Leitner back to facilitate or speak for our organization because he has an extraordinary talent for engaging an audience. He masterfully combines intellect with humor, thinking with doing, advocacy with contrarianism, and ideas with stories.”

- Founder & Managing Partner, Junto Institute

“Jeff has a rare combination of gifts that weave years of experience, razor-sharp intelligence, empathy, and the ability to provoke and instigate so that passive listeners are ready to take action. Regardless of the challenge, he ignites those around him and dares them to think beyond what would otherwise seem possible.”

- Founder & CEO, HATCH Global

Appearances

Academy for Global Citizenship
Aegis Trust
Akerman Law
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
Allsteel / HNI Corporation
Ashoka
Association of Performing Arts Presenters
Boeing
Cannon Design
Carnegie Endowment of International Peace
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Foundation
Chicago Public Media
Corenet
Creative Coalition
DePaul University
Echoing Green
Electronic Resources & Libraries
Executives Breakfast Club
Facebook
Future (NYC)
Harvard Medical School
HATCH
Illinois Institute of Technology
Illinois Math & Science Academy
Illinois Chamber of Commerce
Illinois Commerce Commission

Illinois Humanities Council
Indiana Humanities Council
InterimExecs
International Federation of Arts Councils and Cultural Agencies
Iowa Association of Business & Industry
Islandwood Roundtable on Social Innovation
Jewish Child & Family Services
Junto Institute
Kellogg Innovation Network (KIN)
Kent College of Law
MetLife
Microsoft
NASA
National Endowment for the Arts
New America
New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation
One D
Our Time
Panera
Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA)
School of Visual Arts (NYC)
Social Capital Markets (SOCAP)
Social Venture Partners (Chicago)
Starbucks
TED
The Dalai Lama Center for Peace + Education
The GRAMMY Foundation
U.S. Department of State
Union League Boys & Girls Clubs
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
University of Illinois Academy for Entrepreneurial Leadership
University of Southern California
YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago