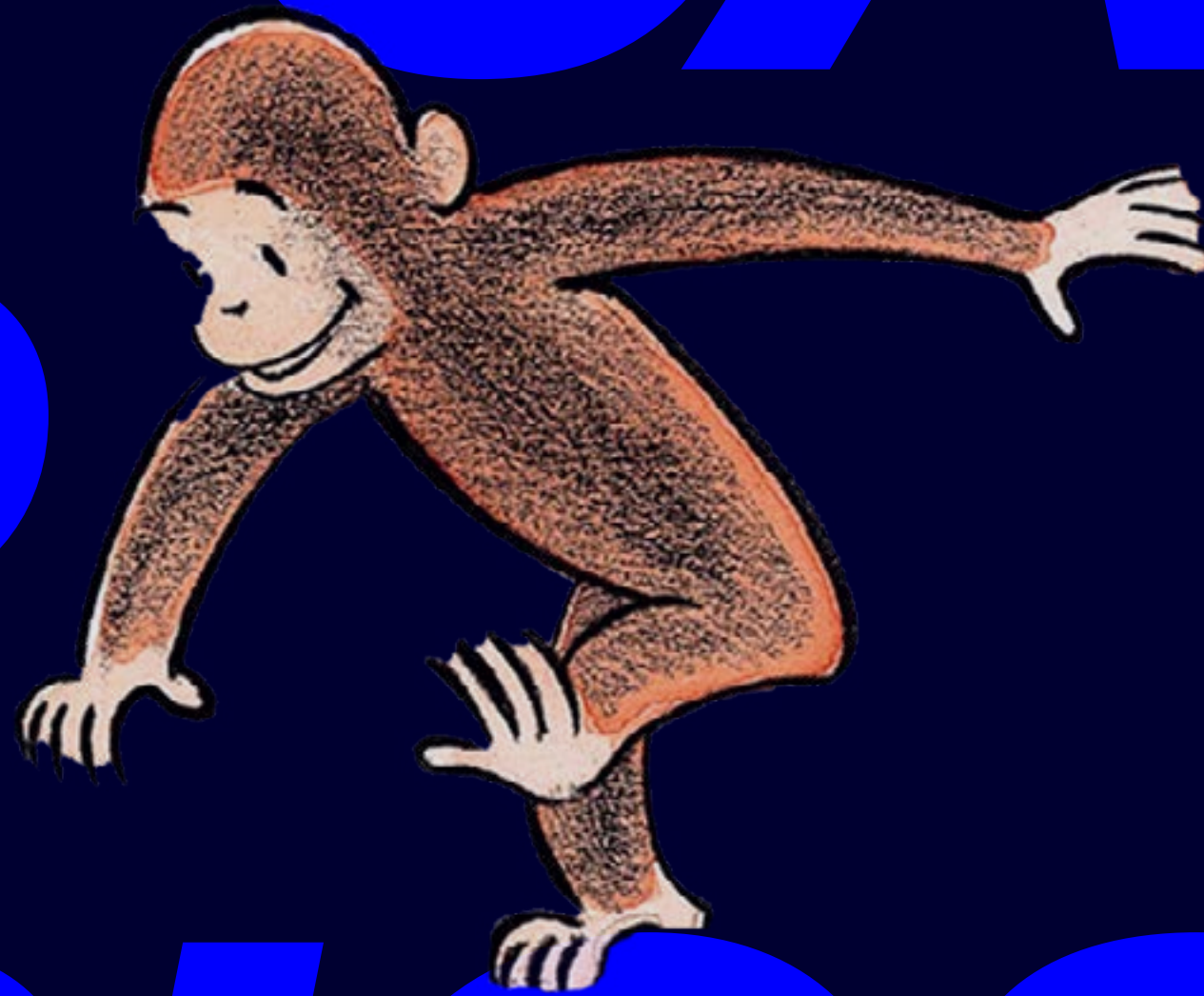




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# THE CASE FOR CURIOSITY



Fostering Creativity, Innovation,  
and Growth in Your Organization

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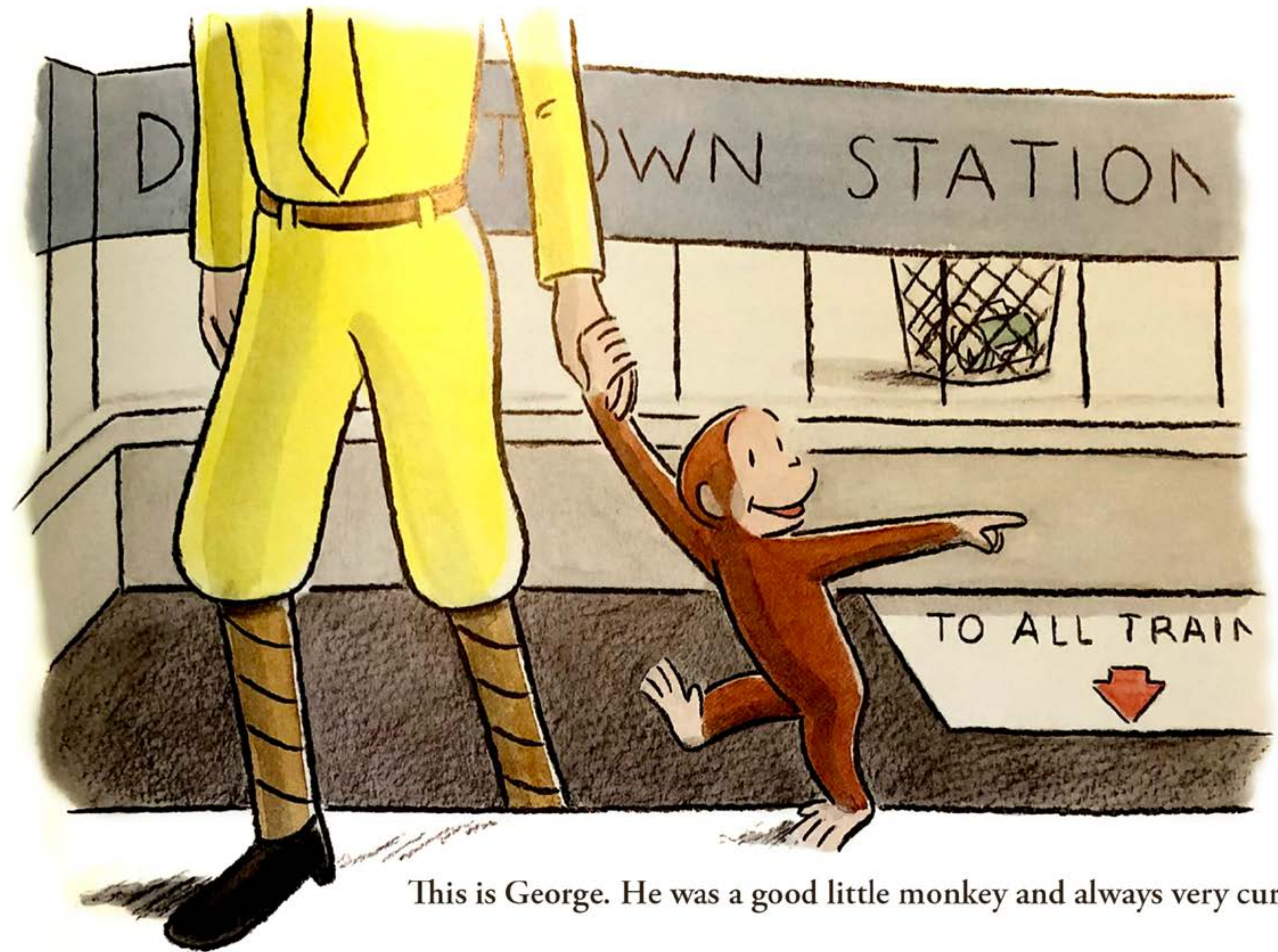




If you have kids or if you WERE a kid at some point, chances are you have read a Curious George book. They all follow a similar formula, and all begin with the same line.

“This is George. He is a good little monkey, and always very curious.” The Man in the Yellow Hat tells George to stay put and out of trouble.

George soon forgets.



This is George. He was a good little monkey and always very curious.







Something catches his eye.

A train. A giant balloon.  
A family of ducks. A ball.

And George begins to follow his  
curiosities. Inevitably he causes  
a huge uproar. He ruins parties  
and parades.





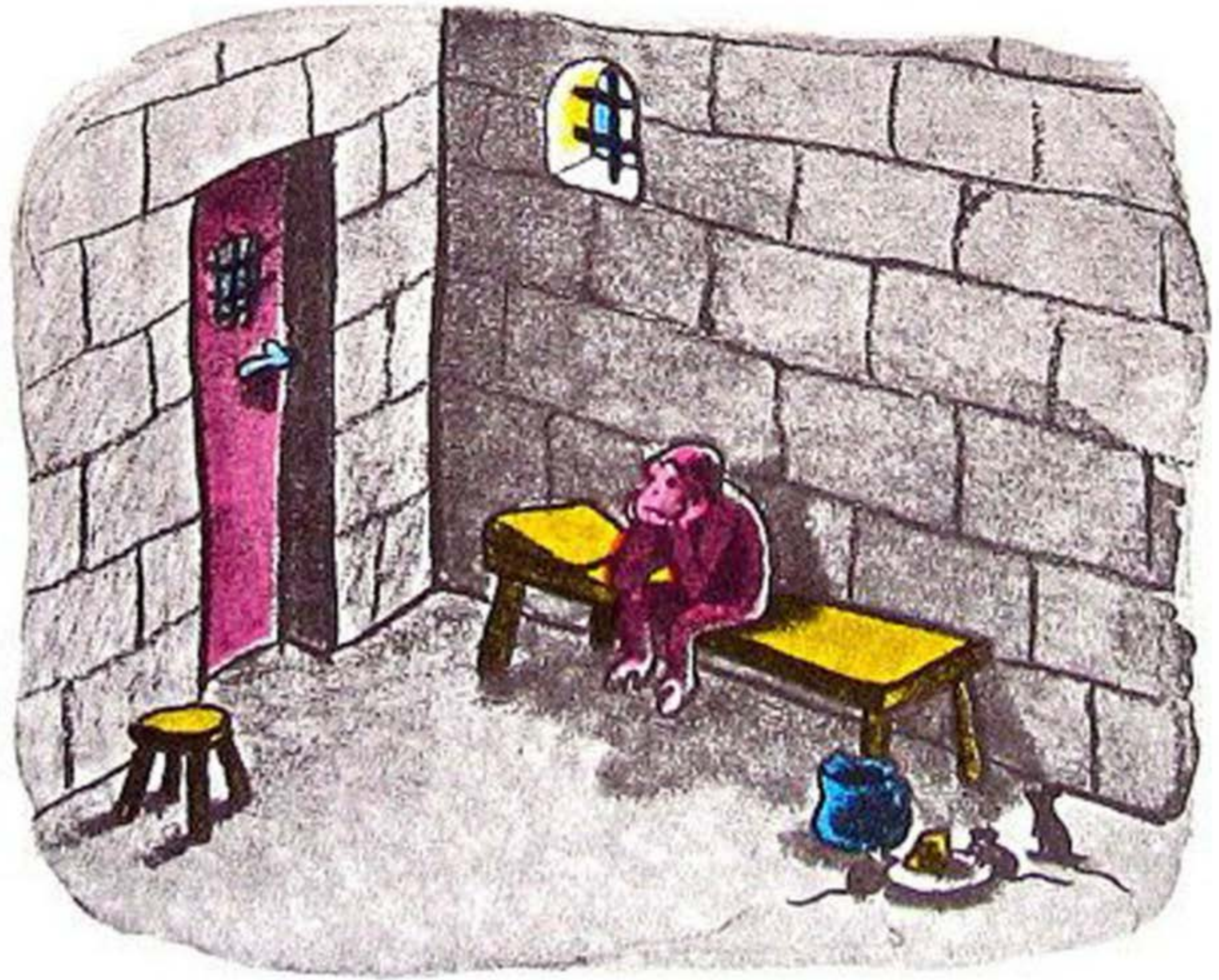


He destroys kitchens  
and trashes toy stores.





He smokes a pipe...



...and gets thrown in jail.  
But, George's curiosity doesn't end there.







He also has an flair for fashion...



...a taste for fine food...



...and a love for design.







He might even be one of them Madison Avenue ad monkeys.







# ***CURIOSITY IS FUEL FOR CREATIVITY***

Like George, we were all born curious, so hopefully most of us can relate. Our curiosities lead us to try our hand at baking, juggling, soccer, painting, math, politics. Diving into different interests fuels our creativity.

In advertising, curiosity has inspired the most creative work since the day Bill Bernbach decided to pair Art Directors and Writers. It compels us to learn new technology like whatever new GenAI model came out THIS week. Curiosity compels us to read books on new ideas in management and leadership, to explore new remuneration models.







Chef Mossimo Bottura, who's restaurant in Italy has 3 Michelin stars, lets his curiosity fuel creativity in his restaurant and with his employees.

He challenges his team to make dishes inspired by punk rock songs. When a kitchen staff dropped the last lemon tart, Bottura plated it and created his most popular dessert, the *Oops, I Dropped the Lemon Tart*.







# ***CURIOSITY DRIVES INNOVATION***

**If curiosity is the impulse to seek out new ideas and experiences, it is crucial to innovation.** It moves us to look at the world from different perspectives. It drives us to rethink how things have always been done... to constantly ask why, what if, how might we. Innovation isn't just about technology platforms and processes.







In the early 1970s Steve Martin was beginning to question the very essence of stand up comedy. Drawing inspiration from philosophers like Descartes, poets like e.e. cummings and authors like Lewis Carrol, Steve began asking himself why can't he do what they're doing, but for comedy.

He tossed the traditional comedian's template — setup, punch line, laugh — scrapped his act and started from scratch.

In an interview he said, "I thought, 'Where does that laugh come from? If the audience's laughter was formed by a building of tension, leading to an expected release, what happens if there were no punch lines? What if I created tension and never released it? What would the audience do with all that tension?'"

"What about the comedy that you experience with friends? There's no setup, there's no punch line, and you often can't explain what it is that made you laugh," he said. "You had to be there."







# ***CURIOSITY ACCELERATES GROWTH***

**Cultivating curiosity at all levels of a company is vital.**

It not only breeds creativity, innovation and empathy for your customers and clients, it helps you as leaders and employees to adapt to uncertainty and external pressures, which there is no shortage of these days.

When our curiosity is triggered, we think more deeply and more rationally about decisions and come up with more creative solutions to the challenges we face.





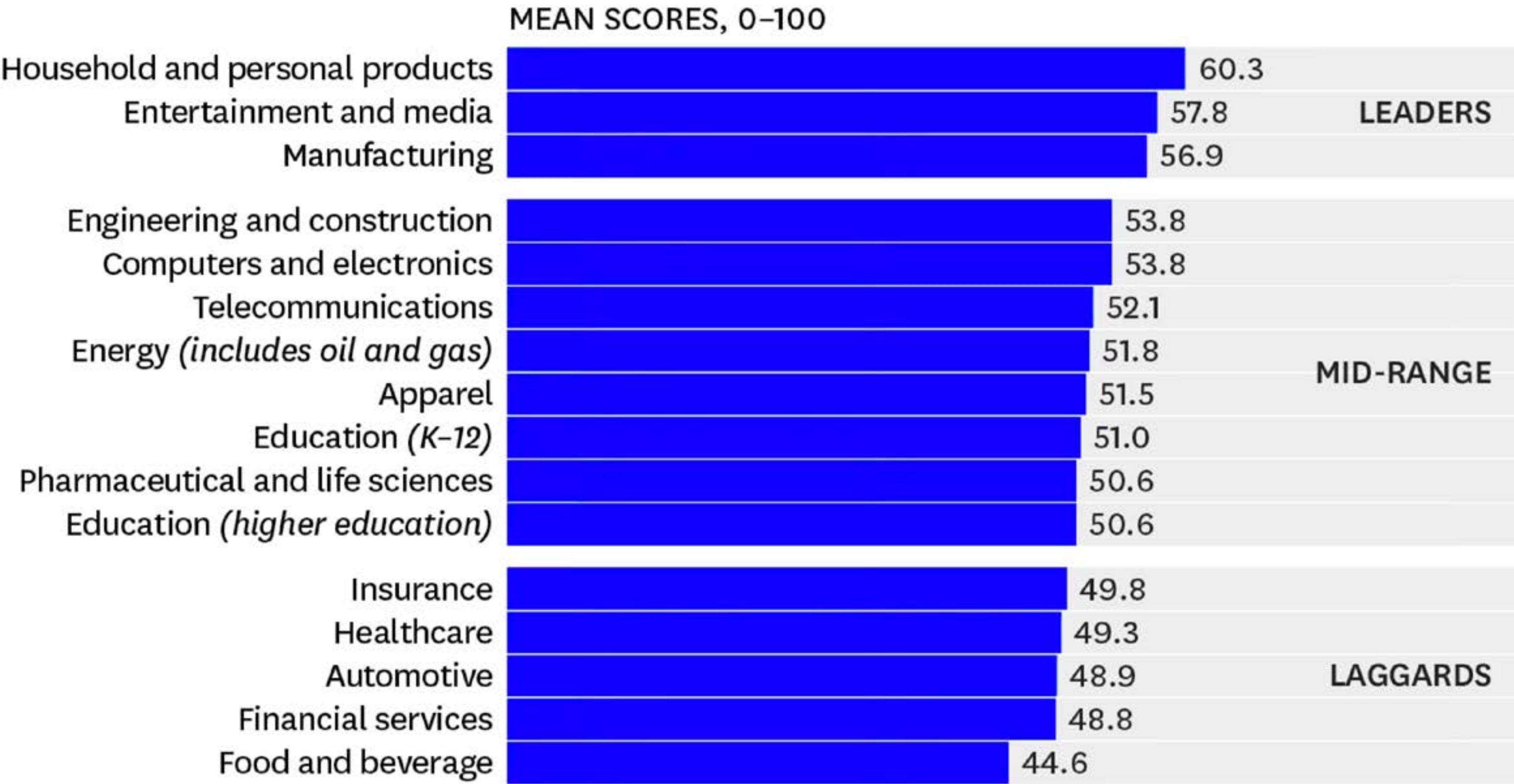
But here’s the deal.

According to a *Harvard Business Review* study cited in the article *The Business Case for Curiosity*, only about 24% of the 3,000 people surveyed reported feeling curious in their jobs on a regular basis, and about 70% said they face barriers to asking more questions at work.

Where does your business fall on the chart to the right?

Curiosity Across Industries

Rankings based on the inquisitiveness, creativity, distress tolerance, and openness employees report in their organizations.







# ***TIPS FOR IGNITING CURIOSITY***





## ***PRACTICE IMMERSIVE EMPATHY***

Deep empathy is critical to understanding the people who buy your brands' products and services. If step one is having the courage to acknowledge what we don't know, step two is taking action to explore it.

As highlighted by IDEO in their blog post *Ways to Grow Your Team's Curiosity*, when they partnered with Los Angeles County to improve the voting experience for visually impaired voters, they spent time with a man who had lost his vision later in life. He helped them see objects, materials, and spaces in a totally different way. In one exercise the team tried buying train tickets while blindfolded, as well as withdrawing money from an ATM. Without the benefit of sight, how do these machines work?

For your projects, can you find a way to put yourself in the customer's shoes. Pay keen attention to details and patterns. Closely monitor YOUR emotional experience. How do you feel? What are you thinking? What do you know differently than from your own experiences?





## CHALLENGE ASSUMPTIONS

Have you heard of ghost rules, the rules that we follow, but no one actually knows why they were created in the first place? They likely served a purpose at one point, but there's no longer a valid reason. Yet we still follow. This happens a lot with client work. One client hates red and five brand managers later we still think we cannot use red.

In his book *Think Like a Rocket Scientist*, Ozan Varol tells the tale of a Nepalese village where this particularly mischievous cat would wander through the temple as monks were meditating. The cat would distract them from the ritual. One day someone decide to tie up the cat outside the temple before the meditation began. For several years, they would tie up the cat then meditate. One day the cat passed on, and the monks had a crisis. How do they perform their ritual if there is no cat?

Not much gets under my skin like “we’ve always done it this way.” Ghost rules can be serious blocks to great work. When you’re stuck, start asking “why,” “what if,” and “how might we.”







## ***SEEK OUT PERSONAL GROWTH & LEARNING***

Encouraging and providing opportunities for personal growth and learning is an essential way to promote curiosity and constructive nonconformity.

In her *Harvard Business Review* article *The Business Case for Curiosity*, Francesca Gino shares her research on how curiosity impacts business innovation and team performance. She found that Disney Imagineers are encouraged to join to professional societies, attend conferences, and publish in academic and professional journals. Chef Mossimo Bottura lets his chefs join him at events in other countries to expose them to different cuisines, traditions, arts, and culture.

In a field study, Professor Gino found that when onboarding didn't just focus on performance, but also spotlighted opportunities for learning and growth, engagement and innovative behaviors were higher six months later. So be sure to share all of these things with new teammates too!







If you're trying to lead a Creative team through change,

***CURIOSITY ISN'T  
OPTIONAL.  
IT'S ESSENTIAL***







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**How can I help you and your team foster a culture of curiosity that spurs creativity, innovation, and growth?**

**David Motter | Creative Leader & Fractional CCO**

Helping brands and agencies unlock performance through creative leadership.

Let's talk. [david@norasound.com](mailto:david@norasound.com)

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