

BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

From the Boston Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/boston/news/2018/11/20/executive-pursuits-holiday-food-family-friends-and.html>

Executive Pursuits

Executive Pursuits: Holiday food, family, friends, and common ground

Nov 20, 2018, 6:50am EST

Fall is the most beautiful season in New England and with it comes vibrant colors, football tailgates, and of course, the promise of more gatherings with family and friends. For even the most hard-charging executive, this upcoming holiday season can be a welcome relief.

Yet with all the political and economic anxiety in the world this year, conversations around the Thanksgiving table and at other holiday get-togethers are bound to be a bit more intense. Indeed, according to recent data from the Pew Research Center, 53 percent of Americans say talking about politics with people with whom they disagree is generally stressful and frustrating.

Yikes! What can the thoughtful entrepreneur or innovator do now to navigate that potential awkward silence over dinner? Or the angry, finger-wagging lecture from that relative with an unwavering point of view? Maybe not much ... but you might at least prepare by reading a few business and economy books in the coming weeks.

Start by taking a deep breath and putting yourself in the other person's shoes. That's timeless advice you'll get from Harvard negotiators Samuel Dinnar and Lawrence Suskind in their terrific new book:

"Entrepreneurial Negotiation." I loved the eight very real negotiating "use cases" set out in the various chapters, especially the introspective observations from those involved who talk about what went wrong, right or sideways in their deals. I do a LOT of negotiating in my M&A transactions practice and found this book to be incredibly useful and insightful. Hint for Thanksgiving: listening is critical and you do NOT have to win every single point to make meaningful progress.

For the more specific topics and arguments across the dinner table, you should read Harvard Business School Professor William Kerr's new book: "The Gift of Global Talent: How Migration Shapes Business, Economy and Society," a quick and engaging read that walks the reader through the history of recent global immigration flows and lays out a case for exactly why every business decision maker needs to care about the ongoing immigration policy debate.

I laughed out loud at Kerr's metaphor about Moore's Law and the Tooth Fairy in describing the unstoppable advance of technology. You'll also benefit from the keen insights set out in University of North Carolina Professor David Goldfield's latest engrossing book: "The Gifted Generation: When Government Was Good," which traces how political leaders worked together in the aftermath of World War II to pass federal legislation designed to level the playing field for future generations of innovators, working women, immigrants and people of color. Yes, government can work - even if so many politicians have feet of clay.

Finally, if all else fails in reaching common ground while you are breaking bread, seek consolation by sharing a reading or two from "Devotions," a recent and powerful collection from my very favorite poet, Mary Oliver, who would tell you to find the great good in every small interaction. After all, at Thanksgiving and in life, Oliver might say: "Joy is not made to be a crumb."

Lawrence Gennari is a business lawyer, law professor, and chief curator for Authors & Innovators, an annual business book and ideas festival.



COURTESY PHOTO

Larry Gennari is a lawyer and chief curator for Authors & Innovators, an annual business book and ideas festival.