

# Katherine Fulton: What Brings You Alive?

Our featured [superhero](#) this week is our friend, [Katherine Fulton](#), president of [Monitor Institute](#). If you've heard her speak or read any of her writings, you already know how smart she is. But Katherine has a quality that sets her apart from many in this field. Whenever I try to describe this quality, I always think of something very small and very powerful I saw her do in 2009.

At the time, I was working with a [client](#) that was grappling with public policy "challenges" using both face-to-face and digital collaborative technologies. The first challenge was on clean energy.

We kicked off the process with a big gathering in San Francisco with a few hundred smart, thoughtful leaders in the space. The day was filled with intense, brain-expanding conversations, and Katherine had been asked to close the day by synthesizing what she had heard throughout the day.

Katherine decided to do something a little bit different. As she got up on stage, she declared that the time wasn't right for synthesis. Instead, she asked the audience, "Raise your hand if you feel scared."

Most of the participants raised their hands.

She then asked, "Raise your hand if you feel hopeful."

Most of the participants raised their hands.

She then said, "I think that's the essence of human condition. I don't think we're going to fix this with just rational argument or all the great innovative ideas in the world. We have to have those. But the energy to do it and the will to do

it is actually also going to have to come from another part of the human spirit, from our resilience.”

It was a visceral, spine-tingling moment, where we all got out of our heads and into our hearts. She had broken from the script, because she had sensed that the group needed something different. And she was exactly right.

Katherine’s superhero power is that she is deeply in touch with her own humanness and the humanness of others, and she brings that humanness into everything she does. It is a rare and badly needed quality, and it’s one that all of us here at Groupaya aspire to bring into our own lives and work.

Here’s the speech she gave at the 2009 gathering: