

'Vanessa's approach to leadership through her five steps is immensely relevant and meaningful for leaders in our current business environment.

Do Less, BE More is a valuable toolkit for us all ... '

Brett Houldin, Chief Executive Officer, Craveable Brands

DO LESS, BE M^{ORE}ORE

The book cover features a vibrant green background with several overlapping, textured grey circles. The title 'DO LESS, BE MORE' is prominently displayed in the center. The word 'DO' is in black, 'LESS,' is in black, 'BE' is in white, and 'MORE' is in black. The second 'O' in 'MORE' is replaced by a black silhouette of three people, with a small black dot above it. The overall design is modern and professional.

A 5-step guide to
becoming a Leader of Substance

VANESSA PORTER

DO
LESS,
BE
MORE

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BE
M^{ORE}RE

A 5-step guide to
becoming a Leader of Substance

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‘Vanessa’s approach to leadership through her five steps is immensely relevant and meaningful for leaders in our current business environment. *Do Less, BE More* is a valuable toolkit for us all to reflect upon and focus on what really matters, our people. We need to empower ourselves so our teams think more, not just do. Vanessa’s insights support a framework of purpose for all stakeholders to be highly successful.’

Brett Houldin, Chief Executive Officer, Craveable Brands

For my mum Antoinette, who was
resilient, determined and strong,
coupled with huge stores of warmth
and grace. This one is for you.

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My dad Walter Broadbent was wise, a patient teacher and my first mentor. In his career, he was a true leader in the retail industry across three continents, and later, a psychotherapist/hypnotherapist with his own practice in the famous Harley Street, London. He showed me, at an early age, the power of tapping into your subconscious to achieve extraordinary results. I thank him for being my amazing example.

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Denis Bourke for being my mentor throughout my career in Australia. I am lucky to have learnt from the master by seeing you in action. You take complex theory and distil it into easy-to-digest bite-sized pieces. You give it a practical context, always relating it back to solving business challenges. You have a heck of a lot of fun at the same time.

Adeline Lane who is like a sister to me. Your command of the English language is like no other. Your vocabulary is beyond extensive. You have helped me to use writing as an expression in the toughest of times. Most notably in my parents' eulogies and the last two hundred and fifty-four words of this book.

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Kath Walters for saying "keep writing in the cracks". You are right; this really works. It boosted my writing momentum.

To the visionaries who share my belief in the future of Leadership, I thank you. Your courage to step boldly into the unknown and trust me to challenge you is truly appreciated.

From the seasoned professionals to the newbies, without your willingness to try something new, a book like this just wouldn't be possible.

Deep gratitude.

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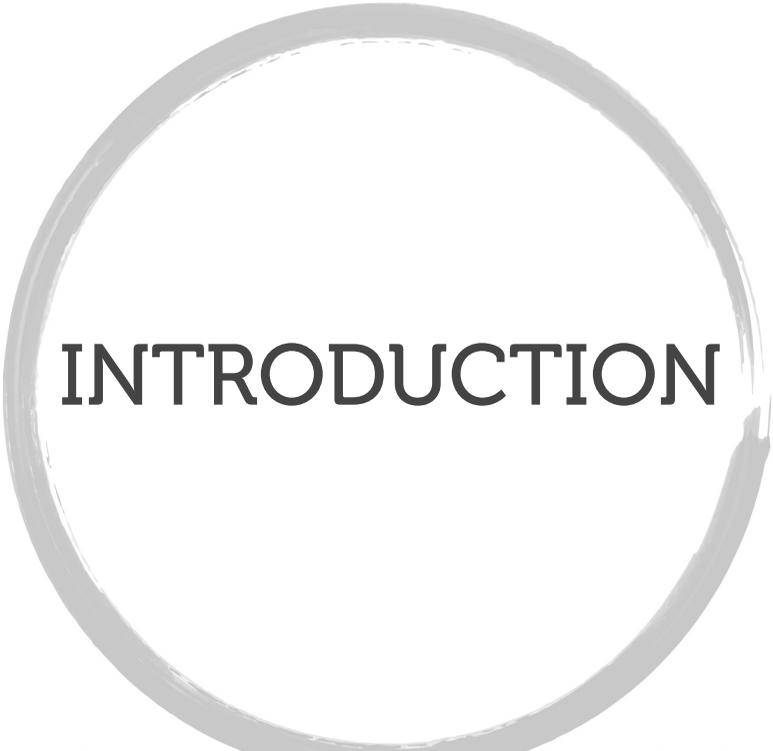
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INTRODUCTION

There comes a time when we need to step up and hold ourselves accountable for creating a thriving environment—for ourselves, our people and for our organisations.

Leaders tell me they feel constantly overwhelmed, out of control and disconnected from their people and their own lives. Their days are sabotaged by urgent emails from daybreak, their structured plans derailed by operational demands and the frequent escalation of internal issues in the ever-increasing reach and speed of the glare of public and media scrutiny. At the business day's end, a glass of wine and mind-numbing television wins out over creative contemplation time.

I am all too familiar with days as a leader under constant bombardment, reacting to the latest crisis. Within a short time, this became a growing frustration for me about being deprived of the

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chance to implement my carefully conceived strategic plans. My sense of personal achievement and happiness suffered, and my inner critic took hold of my self-confidence. None of this helped my workplace's productivity or success.

The option of escape seemed limited to checking out or walking out. I took the second road. But the reality is that option is not available to everyone. And you and your organisation may suffer with either choice.

Is there another way to tackle the leadership merry-go-round? My research identified the common woes leaders suffer as: working in the business rather than on it, not being as genuinely connected to people as needed to inspire discretionary effort and lacking a clear sense of what matters most.

Leaders of Substance are those who manage the demands of their role differently. They focus less on 'doing' and more on 'being', with transformational results.

The aim of this book is to make Leaders of Substance of those who are currently lost in the operational grind of the business, who feel the lack of robust relationships and who are ambushed by relentless disruptions. If that is you, take heart. This book is for you.

Thoughts and feelings are temporary; they come and go. However, sometimes they stick around for much longer than is helpful. Becoming aware of our thoughts and emotions, noticing them, recognising them and being mindful of them means we can make choices about them. By being an observer of our thoughts and emotions, we immediately create distance from them and gain

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perspective: ‘Oh look, I can feel myself getting tense and feeling irritated because she is using my special cup again’.

This skill of noticing requires you to be present, engaged and focused on what is going on right now, rather than being distracted about things that are going to happen later. In many cases, people are busy making mental lists of everything to be done later today or reviewing what happened in the past.

Being present is the key to managing your emotions and managing your stress levels. You feel calmer when you are just dealing with the present moment.

Regardless of what county, industry or sector, organisations are full of people whom respond to the five-step methodology I describe in this book. Many people have had great success from adopting just a single step in the methodology, and adopting all five has been even more profound.

Getting the most out of this book will be based upon your situation and needs. Read it from cover to cover or dip into it. There is a logical sequence. If you know your strengths then leverage them and start there. I don’t subscribe to the idea of expending all your energy to develop areas in which you need to grow; this is not the most productive use of your time.

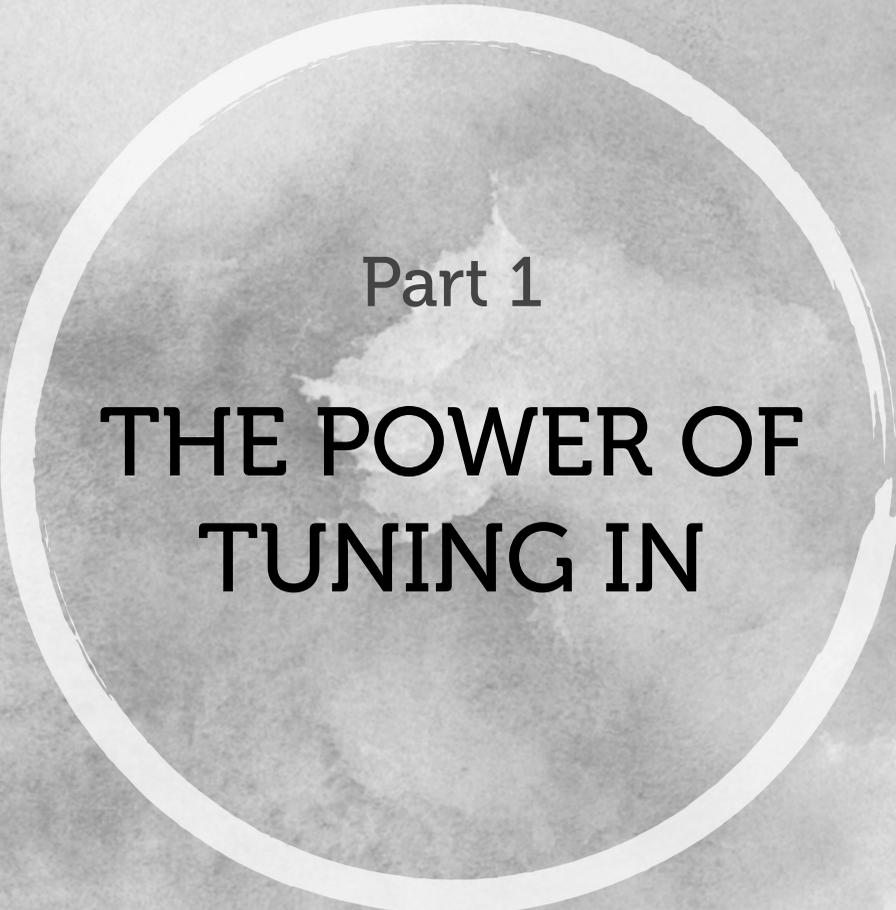
Certainly, read a step that you don’t feel as skilled in. You are not expected to have an incredible depth and breadth across all five steps. As a leader, you need to be self-aware and, therefore, clear on what your ‘towering strengths’ are and mitigate the risks in the ‘growth areas’ that you need to develop. A good strategy is to understand your strengths and weaknesses and then surround

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yourself with a person or people who are experienced or talented in the areas where you need to develop. This mitigates risk.

The steps to be followed are simple, but the implementation process may not be easy nor will changes be achieved overnight. Changing into a Leader of Substance will challenge you, but the investment will release you from the merry-go-round.

Drawing on a wealth of knowledge and experience, I share personal stories from time spent working in large corporate environments, and as a consultant. When you finish this book, I want you to feel a growing sense of excitement about the organisation, departments, or areas you can lead by being your best self.

A large white circle is centered on a textured, grey background. The circle is slightly irregular, with some white paint-like splatters at the top and bottom edges. Inside the circle, the text "Part 1" is centered at the top, and "THE POWER OF TUNING IN" is centered below it in a larger, bold font.

Part 1

**THE POWER OF
TUNING IN**





WHAT LEADERS LONG FOR

This book is based on qualitative research involving just over 150 senior leaders from a range of industries. When I set out to write it, I was confident that I knew the problems we all face. I'd faced them too; I was a senior leader in the corporate world for a long time. But I wanted to be sure. I wanted this book to be based on sound research. I selected participants from among my clients and balanced these with participants with whom I had never worked before. I approached them with a short survey of eight questions.

Perhaps one of the most astonishing results of my research was the completion rate: 100 percent. Despite the incredible time pressures they face, senior leaders want to share their problems and insights with people who might help them. They are always looking for solutions.

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I asked participants about their dominant problems. Specifically, what are your top three problems? What stresses you out? If you find yourself worrying, what is it about? What are your top three problems?

Time away from operations to think about strategy

Leaders told me that even though they are in a senior role and they know that they should be spending a good chunk of their time working strategically, it isn't happening. Some of the specific comments on the problem of strategy versus operations are:

'The strategy keeps changing. So, how do I devise it and then translate it into operations, capability and behaviour?'

'Balancing the day-to-day operations whilst adding value to the key focus areas.'

'Establishing the agenda amidst other highly competing and revenue raising activities.'

I delved further and asked leaders to put a percentage on the proportion of their time spent working strategically or operationally. On average, it was around 10/90 split. They wanted it to be 20/80. My view, based on observing the best executives, is that the percentage should be more like 40/60.

What leaders long for

The worry and sense of being out of control comes through strongly in their answers to my survey questions. Leaders feel anxious that they aren't contributing enough to the strategic direction of their companies or divisions. They feel frustrated by being bogged down in the operational, the tactical, and the minutia and not making the progress required is palpable.

But when they try to tip the balance, they encounter strong resistance. Some, who have made a conscious effort to change their way of being, report feeling guilty. They watch their peers and colleagues rushing around at a frantic pace. They worry about how their executive team will react. Will spending time on strategy be perceived as not putting in much of an effort?

Meaningful connections

The survey participants also felt that the sheer pace of their day restricted communication and connection. A consistent theme was a lack of open dialogue between the executives because they were 'resource poor'. By resource poor, leaders meant they lacked time, capability or capacity.

Q; What do you wish you had more of?

A: Open dialogue among my executive leadership team.

Participants expressed their communication issues in a variety of ways: 'negativity'; a 'lack of unity'; needing 'an engagement boost'. However, it was expressed, that the lack of open dialogue meant

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the leaders sensed a lack of clarity about roles, performance, and the company's vision.

Leaders reported that they could not have the necessary conversations and healthy debate that allowed them to prioritise their company's focus for the next three years. And they understood that without this focus, there could not be a united strategy or alignment around a tactical plan for the immediate future.

They understood that the chance of their team delivering on the strategy is very limited when communication is poor. This meant their executives struggled to prioritise or make the right decisions. They lamented the lack of initiative and focus on implementation among their teams.

Q: What do you wish you had more of?

A: Doers. People to execute what is a bigger strategy than resources and time allow but the organisation needs.

Q: What do you wish you had more of?

A: Staff with commercial acumen and initiative.

A clear sense of what matters most

The lack of communication led back to the cycle of busyness. Because their team did not know the key focus areas, they could

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not make informed decisions on the stuff that really mattered. They could not be a real ‘dial-turner’ for the business; they could not improve the company’s performance. And this cascaded through every level within the organisation. Every decision landed back in the leader’s lap.

WHY LEADERS STRUGGLE TO FIND SUBSTANCE

These problems impact the brain and its ability to function significantly. Leaders start to operate within limited assumptions. What would be possible if they changed these assumptions and replaced them with a more liberating one? Instead of feeling guilty about focusing on strategy, they might think, *my colleagues see me focusing on the things that matter and they are keen for me to share how I do that*. How would this shift their behaviour, and would it mean it was sustained?

Stakeholders demand more

In the corporate world, the CEO and the executive team have to satisfy and balance the increasing demands of stakeholders. Sometimes these demands seem in conflict and you have to make a decision as to what gets priority. This, at first, seems to be an impossible task. All stakeholders are important and all of them make demands that seem of the utmost importance to them. Some of the major stakeholders are your customers or clients, employees, shareholders, partners, suppliers, distributors, the wider community and, of course, the relevant government and regulatory authorities.

People are baffling

Yes, people are complex beings. We tend to categorise people to make it easier to know how to interact. I'm sure in your career you have completed at least one personality test, probably several. We often only see a small portion of a person's character at any one time. We know that there are multiple layers of complexity to all of us. I know that on the surface I come across as a real extrovert who loves talking to people. This is true. However, on several topics, I am also an extremely private person and it can take a while to really get to know me. We can't generalise human behaviour and personality. The fact is we are unique and want to be treated as individuals.

Technology won't stand still

Technology is progressing at an exponential rate. A prime example is the doubling of computer processing speed every 18 months, known as Moore's Law. If you consider the implications of such exponential growth in your organisation, the possibilities are mind blowing and not always intuitive. There is an exciting aspect of this for Leaders of Substance: we may achieve what we dare to imagine while we are leaders in our organisations, our communities and the world.

Honest feedback

It is hard to strike that elusive balance of positive accolades and criticism, especially as a leader. Most of you would have given or received a feedback sandwich or two. This is where you sandwich a criticism or negative comment between two positive ones. We are smart beings. When we are on the receiving end of a feedback

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sandwich, everything said before and after the criticism is negated as we wait for the punch.

Many leaders I meet are unskilled and dislike giving and receiving honest feedback. This is a huge problem for our organisations. The goal of giving and receiving honest feedback is to improve an individual's performance and, therefore, the businesses. For people to understand the feedback, we need to just say it and not try to sandwich or dilute it. A Leader of Substance works diligently on forming deep connections with their workplace relationships, which takes time and effort. This provides a terrific basis on which to give and receive feedback whether it is positive or negative.

Rewards are skewed to short-term goals

There seems to be a lack of interest among senior executives to take a risk that may pay off in the long term because their professional rewards (such as bonuses) are skewed to short-term goals. In my experience, even long-term incentives are usually only a three-year duration. They are not devoting their focus to thinking what they should do now that will set them up 10 years into the future, when they most probably won't be the leader. As a result, leaders seem to be risk adverse and conservative in thinking about what is possible. Leaders of Substance want to have a long and lasting impact with the work they do, not only looking at what they are doing in their current organisation but more broadly in the world. They are strategic visionaries. They find a way to structure rewards that have a long-term vision in mind while providing short-term recognition and rewards along the way to keep celebrating success and keep the momentum.

THE MYTHS THAT HOLD US BACK

Woo-woo

There are many myths about relaxing the mind. People sometimes believe they need super human, Buddhist-monk-like or hippy qualities to relax. Or they think their minds are too busy to ever relax because their thoughts keep on coming. Relaxing the mind is not woo-woo, or pseudo-scientific bunkum; it is a way of gaining access to the subconscious mind and its creativity.

Of course, we can't empty our minds totally, and thoughts do still arise but we can learn to manage these and still gain some benefits from the process. The goal is to focus on the present moment as much as possible instead of planning your future or worrying about the past. There is nothing to achieve. There is no need to set yourself a goal to empty your mind—that would be setting most of us up for total failure. It is the nature of our mind to think.

Thinking is the answer

The natural tendency of the mind is to think. It is constantly thinking. In corporate life, we have overdeveloped thinking to a point where we quite often overthink. This overthinking can distract our attention and focus from what really matters. It can also make us anxious or stressed out. Most people, including leaders, have not spent enough time developing a filter to sort through which thoughts they want to hang onto and cultivate and which ones to discard. We flit from one thought to another and this takes a lot of energy and attention. Many of these thoughts are inconsequential

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and don't make a difference to us or our organisations. Leaders of Substance are in control. They choose their thoughts and are able to relax their mind. When we calm the mind, we can draw upon our intuition, which is a valuable internal resource based on experience.

Do, do, do

Many leaders feel overwhelmed by the enormity of what they need to achieve so they just feverishly start doing. They feel appeased by a sense of accomplishment. They start writing long to-do lists for themselves and others. Then they work their way through an endless list-ticking exercise so they feel like they are progressing and making headway. Meetings consume their time and their already long days expand to encroach on their personal lives (even more).

In reality, many of these tasks are operational ones; they do not use a leader's strategic capability. When this occurs—and I've seen it in many organisations—everyone starts to operate at a level below their actual role. Then, the challenge to step back up and 'out of the weeds' seems almost insurmountable.

THE FIVE QUALITIES FOUND IN EVERY LEADER OF SUBSTANCE

Leaders of Substance 'rewire' their brains

A Leader of Substance is 'in the zone': everything flows effortlessly, and they achieve exceptional results. This idea of 'flow' was

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first named by Mihály Csíkszentmihályi in 1975, although this concept has existed for hundreds, if not thousands of years, most notably in Eastern religions. It is when there is absolute congruency between your subconscious and conscious mind. Today, we understand more about the brain science when ‘flow’ happens. Let me talk you through gaining access to your subconscious by relaxing the brain first.

Recent research into the brain has shown that it is ‘plastic’, meaning it can develop new neural pathways. Until recently, neuroscientists thought our brain’s pathways were fixed by the age of 25 years. In his book *The Brain that Changes Itself*, author Norman Doidge, describes many extraordinary examples of people who have overcome the impact of significant brain damage by ‘rewiring’ their brains. The term for our brain’s ability to reconfigure itself is neuroplasticity.

In addition, further research demonstrates a profound connection between the conscious and subconscious mind. If we find, for some subconscious reason, we are not doing something we want to do and can do, it is now possible to shift our conscious limitations and assumptions, according to teacher, author and researcher, Nancy Kline.

Through coaching dozens of clients over the years, I’ve noticed when you relax your brain to a certain state, you can shift limiting assumptions, suggesting that it is the subconscious mind that creates the resistance.

There are several ways to encourage the brain to move into this relaxed state. And when you do—when your brain is relaxed—you will unlock the vast body of wisdom that is stored in the

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subconscious, which most of us have barely tapped into. Why is this untapped? Because most of us don't know how to quickly, simply and consistently relax the brain. In this book, I will share the secrets of how I have unlocked this incredible resource. This is a game changer as you are now working with both parts of the brain (not just the conscious mind).

As leaders, we all feel overwhelmed or out of control from time to time. Then seeds of doubt creep in to our minds. Sometimes, we push aside conscious doubt, and get on with what needs to get done. But what if we had a series of simple steps that allowed us to—on demand—squash that doubt and put it aside once and for all. When we access the subconscious, we tune into our authentic selves without the judgement and criticism of the over-thinking conscious brain. Simply put, we can get out of the way of ourselves.

Non-negotiable time to think

One of the best pieces of advice I received in my career was from my mentor and dear friend, Denis Bourke. Denis is an experienced executive and renowned for his design and facilitation of leadership development programs and his coaching results. To be strategic, he said, I must block out time to think. And I must make it a non-negotiable appointment with myself. Start each week by blocking out thinking time. Start small and build up: an hour a week, then an hour a day. Ultimately, allocate three hours a day to thinking and working on the business.

When I reflect, this seemingly small routine—which seems so simple but is very hard to do—is the key to all that I have achieved. These days, I spend at least two days a week on the

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business. Apply this rhythm and stick to it, and you will reap the rewards. At the start, my biggest problem was getting over the guilt. That is right. I worried about how it appeared to others when I say I am thinking, without producing anything, while my colleagues ran around, busy, busy, busy. Participants in my survey reported those same feelings of guilt.

Leaders of Substance are not 'busy'. They do not wear busyness as a badge of honour. Today, everyone is so busy. For me, busy now sounds like a negative. It means I am doing 'stuff' that doesn't necessarily matter, usually at such a frenetic pace that I am almost out of control.

To start changing my guilt around not being busy, I changed my language around this whole idea. If someone asks me how I am, I say 'full' instead of busy. Full has a completely different connotation. I have a full agenda, but it is intentional. I choose what I do. I am in the driver's seat about what activities I choose. As for what others think, I made a liberating discovery: most people are too caught up in their own busyness to notice what I am doing or not doing. So, I got over it and reaped the rewards. I encourage you to do the same.

Focus on what matters

Have you ever wondered how some leaders can focus their minds and produce copious amounts of tangible output? What I have observed is that they have absolute clarity on what they need to focus on. A friend of mine, Paul Brotherson from south-west Sydney, started with nothing and ended up building a global enterprise producing yearly revenues in excess of \$138 million.

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Paul has a great definition of focus: the force that makes us act, coupled with the removal of distraction. When he refers to ‘the force’, he wants to convey the idea that the alternative—not acting—is simply not an option. For Leaders of Substance, focus is a superpower that allows them to push past their limitations and achieve more than their conscious mind wants to think is possible.

Last year, I decided to trek the Inca Trail. This was a challenge that I had always wanted to do, and finally, five friends and I booked the trip to Cusco in Peru and organised the trail permit including the entry to Machu Picchu. To trek the Inca Trail takes four days and begins at an altitude of 2,850m above sea level. The second day is without a doubt the toughest with the highest altitude of 4,200m. In preparing for this 82-kilometre walk, I used Paul’s definition of focus. It was not an option; to get there and not be physically fit enough to complete the trek, or to let my fears stop me from achieving this lifelong dream.

I was scared about two things: heights and being the slowest in our group of six. To overcome these fears, I set myself a series of goals to increase my chances of doing the trek well. I spoke to my coach. She suggested two courses of action. One was getting a specific fitness coach and, two was being prescriptive and realistic about what I could commit to. I followed her advice. To build up my fitness I started doing a Zumba class once a week. Zumba is a very energetic form of dancing and aerobic exercise to music. I also did a bush walk on the weekends. Over time, I built this up to the point where, each week, I did three Zumba classes, one three-hour street walk, and one bushwalk in rough terrain.

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The first time I walked the ten-kilometre Manly-to-Spit bush walk in Sydney's northern beaches, I found it challenging. But I walked it so often in the six months before the trek that I was eventually able to run sections of it. I enjoyed finding my footing as I ran rather than being frightened of stumbling. To address my fear of heights, I chose specific activities such as climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge with two friends.

It all paid off. When I finally got to do the trek, I was so familiar with my fears that I found them boring. I was over them. I had learnt to walk alongside them rather than let them control me. Sometimes, I would have a conversation with them. For example, I'd say: 'Thank you so much for trying to protect me and warn me of danger, but now you can move aside. My legs are strong, and I trust my feet. They will stop me from slipping and falling out from under me.' I still chat to my fears today whenever they arise.

Tune in to what works

Remove distractions. I switch off my phone and all notifications on my laptop, such as messages and calendar alarms and, of course, email. I make sure my family and dear friends know that I am going to be uncontactable for an amount of time. I ask them not to disturb me unless it is an emergency. In other words, I create an environment with no interruptions. Then I can do my best work. My output is of the highest quality, and I become consumed in what I am doing. I am 'in flow'.

What I find particularly useful is to use a timer. I block out time slots, usually one hour per session. I put a timer on and say to myself: 'Okay. Keep on going until that timer goes off. Then you

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can have a 10-minute break, get a drink, or a snack or a bathroom stop. I am always astonished in what I can achieve in an hour.

This is how I wrote this book. I wanted to write at least 30,000 words in six weeks. I went through my calendar and blocked out 30 one-hour slots. I know that I can pump out 1,000 words of draft content in an hour. If you want to be better than average, do a bit more than the average person is prepared to do. You will build energy and momentum forward.

To tune in fully, you need to totally disconnect and have plans in place in case of an emergency. Let me give you an example of an emergency. My mum passed away on my parents' 49th wedding anniversary on 6 June 2013. Less than eight weeks from my mum passing, my dad moved into a nursing home. He went from being a strapping, solid man who lived independently to suffering with the debilitating loss of memory caused by Alzheimer's Disease and severe frontal lobe damage to his brain.

His normal emotional responses didn't have the usual filters. The impact of his kind of brain damage can go in two directions: towards a very affectionate demeanour, or a very aggressive one. Thank God, my dad went to the very affectionate side. Even this has a confronting side. For example, he mistook the care of a newly qualified nurse as a sign she liked him. One night after she put him into bed, he leaned over to kiss her goodnight. She became nervous and understandably upset, and refused to work with him. The nursing home was short staffed. Before I knew it, they moved Dad to a mental institution. It was meant to be for a long weekend, but he was there for a few weeks. It was horrendous. After that experience, I needed to get away for a while.

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I decided to go off the grid for five days and booked into a health retreat, Golden Door, in northern New South Wales' Hunter Valley. I told the people taking care of Dad that I was away and would only turn on my phone each night at 8pm for an hour. However, if there were an emergency, they could call the reception at Golder Door at any time, day or night. I found this hard to do. I felt so worried about Dad. But I knew I needed to unwind properly. I hadn't even had time to deal with the grief of my mum passing. I needed to turn my mind to Mum. And guess what? Nothing happened. There was no emergency. I called my dad each night at 8pm, and we had a good chat.

I share this story because it was a turning point for me. For two years before my mum died, I had kept my phone by my side and on full ringer because I wanted to be available to help her. Without thinking, I fell into the same routine with my dad. I made it my priority. As a result, my phone rang day and night. I became exhausted. I finally realised that I needed to recharge and take care of myself. I could not take care of my dad properly while I was exhausted and not functioning at normal levels. Even though I felt Dad's was a life-and-death situation, I realised I had to turn off and tune in.

And for most leaders in corporate Australia, although theirs is an important role, taking some time to think is not a life-and-death situation.

When I first stepped into a training role for the organisation that was then called the Retail Traders Association, I heard a great story about how to keep cool under pressure. A human resources director of a beauty products chain of stores once told me that everyone working there got stressed in the lead up to a big sales

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event. They tried to make sure that everything was perfect and in place before the front doors opened and the customers started to enter. There was a lot of work involved. This one time, a store manager saw that the staff had let the pressure get to them. Suddenly, he turned to them and calmly said. ‘At the end of the day, remember we are only selling bars of soap. It really doesn’t matter if it’s perfect or not in the big scheme of things. No one will die if you have too much or too little stock out or it doesn’t look as nice as you would like it to.’

We all want to do our best. But let’s keep it in perspective.

On-demand light-bulb moments

This idea of on-demand, light-bulb moments is inspired by the author Tom Evans and a short visualisation from his book, *The Authority Guide to Practical Mindfulness*. He describes a light-bulb moment as a flash of inspiration where you can clearly see a whole image or picture. I always thought that light-bulb moments occurred only for the most talented and creative people. In reality, these moments are a lot more common than you may think. Tom Evans shows how you can tap into light-bulb moments whenever you want to. These flashes of ‘enlightenment’ or ‘inspiration’ come in to our minds, but also run through our ‘three brains’: the thinking brain, the gut brain and the heart brain. Let me summarise his explanation of what happens.

Firstly, an idea occurs in the pineal gland, which is located deep in the centre of the brain and was once referred to as the ‘third eye’. This gland acts as a gate keeper. Be aware that if you are running internal chatter, this blocks your ability to access these inspirational moments. The idea gets grounded through your

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spinal column all the way down to your feet. This means that you feel a sense of connection to the earth that allows you to feel centred or balanced. Your mind checks whether this idea is safe for you and, more broadly, the world. The idea then flows back up to the gut brain. Your gut gives the idea a big tick or cross. The idea proceeds to the heart brain. The heart brain is an intricate network the same as those of the brain in the head. In fact, the heart sends more information to the brain than the other way around. If it receives the heart's seal of approval, the idea travels back to your thinking brain with confirmation that you are in love with the idea.

Now, the idea goes back up to the pineal gland and is filtered into the right side of the brain. The right brain 'sees' the whole image or picture and then passes the idea over to the left-brain. Here, we use our analytical mind do some final checking at more of a micro level. Then, it's back to the pineal gland. On occasions, the idea can move to the throat and the person then exclaims, 'Wow, this is a real aha moment.' Remarkably, this entire process occurs in a mere second.

Once you understand this process, you can cultivate these moments on demand. A daily 10-minute visualisation practice is ideal. Here's how:

Sit in a comfortable chair. I have my grandmother's old chair in my bedroom. It is slightly smaller and lower to the ground than my other chairs. When I sit in it my feet are firmly placed on the ground. I place my hands in my lap with the palms facing upwards. This assists to move into a meditative state. It encourages your mind to be more open and receptive to these ideas coming in. Decide what it is that you would like some inspiration

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on. Then start focusing on your breath until you feel that you have reached a relaxed state, both in your mind and your body. Let all the stress and tension melt away. Then start to visualise ideas coming into your mind and following the path exactly as described previously. With practice, any time you want to access a light-bulb moment, follow this short visualisation powered by your breath.

To make sure your ideas don't disappear from your mind, use a voice recorder app. As you think of an idea, say it aloud. Then listen back to them later and prioritise them. This way, you don't forget them. They are captured. Keep a list. One light bulb and you're on. There are numerous ways to tap into the power of the subconscious mind, and I use and have used meditation, hypnosis and visualisation. Each of these three ways allow you to relax the brain so that your brainwaves slow as the everyday distractions move to the distance.

Many people have asked me about hypnosis and what it is like to enter a trance-like state. There are of course many misconceptions about hypnotherapy due to the association with stage hypnosis. It is nothing like that at all. For me, it is very easy to describe; it is just like when you first wake up in the morning and you are still in that twilight dreaming state. You are aware of what is going on but are not disturbed or distracted by it. You may hear the dog coming up the stairs wanting his or her brekky or the kids stirring from their sleep, but you continue to drift in that relaxed state for a bit longer; it's like when you hit the snooze on your alarm. (An important side note though if you were to hear the smoke detector go off or an alarm you react and deal with that emergency.)

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As we go through our normal working day, our brainwaves are operating in the 'beta' pattern. Beta pattern is where you are fully awake and alert and sometimes in the emotional states of being stressed or anxious. When you relax the brain, you slow down the brainwaves to move through to alpha, and in a deep trance or meditative state, to theta. These slower brain wave patterns naturally relieve stress and allow us to access and influence our subconscious minds.

This state is where your capacity to think deeply and clearly will occur because you can access your intuitive or gut brain when stress and anxiety is moved to the side. Bill Bennett made a documentary to understand intuition called *PGS: Intuition is Your Personal Guidance System*. This is where you will intuitively know what the right choice is to make. Normally it is a sense, or a feeling and you need to trust these instincts as this wisdom is based on a vast amount of knowledge and experience gained over years in your life. Also, where those wonderful light-bulb moments will happen on demand. Bennett interviewed 75 people: research scientists, quantum physicists, psychiatrists and religious and spiritual authorities. This and other research clearly showed that you cannot move from your thinking brain into your intuitive or gut brain when stress or anxiety is present.

Our conscious brain talks to us through words, and in that beta state, our brain can be over-stimulated. The inner critic can go into overload especially for those of us who are perfectionists. The self-doubt, fears and emotions can really impact the quality of our thinking. The subconscious differs and prefers visual or auditory ways of communicating. Quite often I will see clear images, pictures or colours in this subconscious state.

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Another way that you can access your subconscious is to tune in to your creative side as a form of self-expression—this could be through photography, cooking or, in my case, Zumba. Or do something that is sensation-based because it allows your mind to switch off quickly and concentrate on feeling. It could be a sauna or a massage.

As you practice accessing your subconscious mind daily, you will find break-through ideas and solutions to the challenges you are dealing with. Always remember that accessing it is simple, easy and quick and it is always available.

HOW TO BECOME A LEADER OF SUBSTANCE

A summary of the five steps

The five steps are:

1. **Clarity**
Know where you are going and articulate how everyone contributes.
2. **Connection**
Create an environment to enjoy the ride with the people around you.
3. **Capability**
Skill up to realise your vision and get maximum results.
4. **Capacity**
Balance organisational needs with the available resources.
And look after yourself.
5. **Check in**
Stay on top of progress with your people and the measurements.

A relaxed mind is a prerequisite for this journey

It's simple to relax

How did we manage to complicate relaxing so thoroughly? There is no right or wrong way, but here is a simple method. Go to a place that has no distractions (technology, people) where you won't be disturbed. Sit comfortably. Place your hands on your lap, palms up or place your right hand over your heart to feel more connected to your spirit. Let the legs and ankles naturally fall open. Close your eyes or relax your gaze.

Breath and awareness

You may want to record this short mediation practice and then play it to yourself.

Find a comfortable way of sitting (as above) upright and well-supported. Gently close your eyes or keep them downcast. Bring a sense of appreciation to yourself. Thank yourself for dedicating some precious time to this moment. Turn your attention inwards and pay attention to your body in this moment. Become aware of your body and the mind as you sit here. Notice the flow of feelings or thoughts from the day's events so far. Simply allow and acknowledge whatever is here. Give yourself time to arrive.

<Pause for several seconds>

When you are ready, become aware of the fact that you are breathing. Notice how you can tell that you are breathing; where do you feel it in the body? You may feel the sensations of the breath passing through your nostrils: a slight coolness or tingling in your nose on the in-breath and the warmer air leaving the nostrils on

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the out-breath. Or you may become aware of the rise and fall of your chest as you breathe. Feel the belly expanding with each in breath. Just notice where the sensations of breathing are the strongest for you and allow your attention to rest there.

<Pause for several seconds>

If your mind is wandering away from your breath, acknowledge where it went, and simply bring it back to the breath. Let your attention rest with the flow of the breath. Let your breath come and go in its own rhythm. No need to force or control it in any way.

<Pause for several seconds>

Feel the sensations of each breath as best you can. Not looking for anything, simply notice what arises in each moment.

<Pause for several seconds>

Allow the mind to settle into the experience of breath. Experience the sensations as the body takes in air and lets it go.

<Pause for several seconds>

Notice your tendency to want to control the breath, to make it different to what it is.

<Pause for several seconds>

Follow each breath as best you can. Follow each inhalation all the way up to the small pause as the breath turns and becomes the exhalation and then follow all the moments of the exhalation. Notice the gap in between the exhalation and the inhalation.

<Long pause>

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Allow the breath to be as it is, deep or shallow, long or short, constricted or smooth. See if it's possible to receive the breath, exactly as it is, without needing to change or alter anything. Simply accept what is.

<Pause for several seconds>

Now take a few fuller breaths, down into the belly. Become aware of your body in the chair, your feet on the floor. And when you are ready, gently open your eyes.

How was that? How do you feel? It lasted just a few minutes. It doesn't take much time to bring about a state of calmness and relaxation, does it?

Instantly calmer

Need to calm your mind in an instant? Take six long, deep, slow breaths. At first, try to take the same amount of time with both the in- and out-breath. Pause at the top of the inhalation and the bottom of the exhalation and notice if there is a difference in temperature between the in- and out-breath. The more you focus on the breath, the more you'll relax the brain. After you have practiced for a week or two, try to let the outbreath be longer. (It might take a while to master. That's perfectly okay.)

There's an app

Heaps of apps will help you relax and grow calmer. I love one called '*Insight Timer*', which is free, and has over 3,400,000 users for over 8,000 guided meditations and hypnotherapy, music, and talks from many different teachers.

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Consistency creates calm

When you relax and mediate consistently, even for a few minutes a day, you will notice how much calmer you become.

When I worked at the National Rugby League, I managed just three minutes before I left the house to drive to work. Some days that three minutes seemed impossible; a crisis demanded that I get to work quickly. Then instead, I would make the time at lunch. When you feel ready, increase your time to five, ten or 15 minutes. You'll notice the benefits.

Relaxation and meditation are the best tools in your toolkit. No equipment needed; you can do it anywhere, even if it's only taking a few full breaths as you sit in the car at the traffic lights or while waiting for your kids after school or sport. Make this a regular habit.

Moving meditation

The years I continue to spend studying martial arts, means I find it easier to go into a meditative state through movement. I often start the day with a series of five or ten movements that I don't have to think about and can just focus on my breath.

My first experience with my own subconscious state was in a guided hypnotic trance with my amazing dad. I was almost 16 years old and about to be tested for my black belt grading in Zen Do Kai, which is a freestyle form of karate. I got anxious and nervous before a grading, despite training consistently and doing the preparation. This meant that on grading day, I never performed at my best. I wanted this to be different. Mum and Dad were coming; I wanted them to burst with pride.

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Dad guided me through. I remember the tears of joy that rolled down my face as I visualised the master instructor Gary MacRae (he was the founder of the Golden Knights club I belonged to) presenting me with my black belt, my certificate and grading sheet. I visualised the weeks ahead and felt the great sense of personal achievement that I could share with my family and friends.

Dad guided me through this several times. On grading day, these pictures, feelings and emotions came to mind, and I got my black belt. Not only that, but I achieved my ambitious goal of attaining this within two years, when on average it takes students five years (if they train twice a week).

At this moment, my thirst for accessing my subconscious and my whole brain began. I am so grateful my dad helped me overcome my fears. He also taught me self-hypnosis so that I could access my subconscious whenever I wanted with transformational results.

Mind training for failure

Hey, you know what? Even our best preparation doesn't always work. Failure sucks, let's be clear about that, but it is going to happen. Stuff goes wrong all the time. Most people don't prepare for this; they only prepare for the success. Leaders of Substance prepare mentally for this—it's called mind training. My friend Derek Leddie is an expert in this. He trained the South Sydney Rabbitohs who participate in the National Rugby League (who went on, by the way, to win the premiership in 2014 after 43 years). Train your mind like you do the other muscles in your body.

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I suggest you read Derek's book that he co-authored with Amon Woulfe *Missing in Action*, to find out more about mind-training. But here is a quick summary of one moment in their training. They asked the players, *what parts of the 80-minute game don't you like*. Bad referee calls—they hated them. They reported getting so frustrated, annoyed, and upset that it cost them the game at times.

They asked what players did to prepare for bad calls. The short answer? Nothing. They spent hours training on ball-kicking techniques, but not a second on things that didn't go to plan. So, they were then asked, *what happens when there is a bad call?*

What tends to go wrong in your day-to-day work life? How can you mentally prepare so you can respond calmly under such pressure?

Ok, so now let's move calmly forward with the five-step method.

The five-step method

There is an irony implicit in this book. If you want to become a Leader of Substance, you need to do these five steps. At first, this is going to look like Doing MORE and not what the title promises: Do LESS and Be More.

How can I justify such an apparent contradiction? Let me simply say that once you have taken these steps, you will see and experience the positive difference. You will change, your team will change, and your organisation will change. Purposeful and agile, not merely busy. Focused and supportive, not toxic. Moving towards your goals, not running around in circles.

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Why the five-step method works

For each step, there is a purpose and an outcome. One builds towards the next, but each provides huge immediate benefits. Start anywhere. Do anything that moves you towards becoming a Leader of Substance. Set your sites on a single goal: to do less and be more.