

Sneak Peek

“A generous book with a breakthrough approach to thinking about how and why we lead. Marc Pitman will help you realize that leadership is a choice, it’s a skill, and it’s open to each of us.”

SETH GODIN, author of *This Is Marketing*

THE SURPRISING GIFT

OF

DOUBT



Use Uncertainty to Become the
Exceptional Leader You Are Meant to Be

MARC A. PITMAN

Praise for *The Surprising Gift of Doubt*

“Lots of people like to talk about leadership, but to actually lead is a different matter. This book cuts through the clutter of fads and catchphrases and shows you the way of a true leader, the way of integrity. If you want to be better, don’t miss this important message.”

JEFF GOINS bestselling author of *The Art of Work*

“In *The Surprising Gift of Doubt*, Marc Pitman offers a must-read road map for leadership that focuses on embracing doubt as a catalyst for change and building confidence. Marc shows us how to move beyond traditional leadership practices and unlock our organizations’ full potential by bringing emotional intelligence to the forefront.”

ALISON STRATTEN coauthor of several bestsellers including *Unmarketing* and *The Jackass Whisperer*

“When we explore great leaders, we focus on the hard skills (the tactics and strategies) that led to some kind of victory. In *The Surprising Gift of Doubt*, Marc Pitman delivers the real truth behind leadership and success. It lies in the soft skills. This book enables all leaders to look within, assess their truth, and turn their fears and uncertainty into confidence and clarity. In a world so desperate for leaders with integrity, we now have *The Surprising Gift of Doubt* as a road map forward.”

MITCH JOEL author of *Six Pixels of Separation* and *Ctrl Alt Delete*

“A massively effective framework for self-awareness and leadership development that is practical, approachable, and actually doable. Bravo!”

JAY BAER founder, Convince & Convert and author of *Hug Your Haters*

“In a world promising magic formulas and three steps to success, in *The Surprising Gift of Doubt*, Marc Pitman delivers what leaders actually need: a process and tools to discover your inner truth, allowing you to lead with sincerity, confidence, and effectiveness. Rather than running from doubt, you will see it for what it is: the key to your own strength and point of view as a leader.”

PAMELA SLIM author of *Body of Work*

“Every achiever and leader will experience a setback at some point in their success journey. In this book, Marc Pitman gives a step-by-step plan for getting past your doubts and getting on to your success. This book will help both experienced leaders in a rough patch and new leaders hitting their first setback. Read it, then reread it, and you will see why you should get it for your entire leadership team.”

DR. WILLIE JOLLEY hall of fame speaker, nationally syndicated radio host, and bestselling author of *A Setback Is a Setup for a Comeback*

“We naturally see doubt as something that holds us back in leadership, but Marc Pitman rewires our brains into seeing it as a gateway to greater achievement. He shows how the uncomfortable process of truly engaging with doubt can open up new doors few people will get a chance to walk through. Marc provides a guide to help you discover the unique leader you are meant to be.”

PREET BANERJEE author of *Stop Over-Thinking Your Money!*

“Marc Pitman articulates the power and value of the journey from doubt to confidence, and offers clear actions to jump-start your personal growth toward confident leadership. This book fills the gap between being named a leader and truly performing like one.”

CARA BROOKINS author of *Rise: How a House Built a Family*

“Conventional leadership practices miss the mark because they lack nuance, and many times remove what makes us human. Magic occurs when we play in the beautiful gray between uncertainty, and our goals, values, and talents. *The Surprising Gift of Doubt* shows how uncertainty is an opportunity to uncover your unique strengths and talents with simple, effective frameworks to bring your full self to your work.”

CHRISTINA BLACKEN founder and chief narrative strategist, TheNewQuo.com

“I have benefited from Marc Pitman’s training; it helped me to recognize what style of leadership works best for me. If we can find what quadrant works best for us, it can transform us and our organizations’ work.”

ANWAR A. KHAN president, Islamic Relief USA

“Give a growth gift to yourself. *The Surprising Gift of Doubt* helps bring clarity to our leadership mindset. Marc Pitman’s engaging speaking comes through in this leadership tome.”

JEREMIAH OWYANG tech analyst

“A rare find among business books. Marc Pitman cultivates a sense of empathy as he tells stories of how it’s been done by those who have doubted much more than you, with more reason to—and how you can solve that problem yourself, too.”

JULIEN SMITH cofounder and chairman, Breather

“Engaging and thought-provoking, *The Surprising Gift of Doubt* shows you firsthand that leadership is not merely a genetic trait, but something we can learn. Highly recommended!”

AMANDA RUSSELL strategist, speaker, and professor of marketing

“In *The Surprising Gift of Doubt*, Marc Pitman takes readers on a journey to become better and more effective leaders. He challenges readers to engage in self-reflection to learn more about the stories we believe and the ways in which our life impacts our leadership style. This book should be on the shelf of anyone who aspires to be an effective leader, wants to take their leadership to the next level, or wants to coach others to be stronger leaders.”

JESSICA SHARP founder and CEO, Sharp Brain Consulting

“Success in life isn’t just what you do, it’s how you think. Whether you are re-culturing your corporation or wanting to grow your emerging leaders, *The Surprising Gift of Doubt* gives you a system that makes both the way to think and the actions to take clear and achievable. This book is a must-read for corporate development programs and anyone aspiring to lead a life of significance.”

DR. NIDO QUBEIN president, High Point University

“Leadership books are a dime a dozen . . . then this book came along. I identified with all of the barriers and worked through each of the activities to approach my own leadership development strategies from my strengths while also identifying who else I need on my team to succeed in my vision. This is the book that I will mark making the difference in my business.”

JESS PETTITT speaker/consultant/cheese lover and author of *Good Enough Now*, JessPettitt.com

“Are you feeling broken as a leader? Marc Pitman has been guiding, coaching, and helping leaders for decades, and in this book, he dives deep into why we feel this way and how we will emerge confident in our abilities to lead. You will see yourself in these pages, and you’ll learn how to become the leader you want to be.”

CHERIAN KOSHY director of development, Des Moines Performing Arts

“*The Surprising Gift of Doubt* is a timely and refreshing contribution to the leadership development space. For those willing to embrace the discomfort of turning inward to find their own inner strengths, Marc Pitman’s practice and advice will be life-changing. Go ahead—lean in and enjoy the many gifts that come your way!”

STACI LYNCH philanthropy consultant

“In *The Surprising Gift of Doubt*, executive leadership coach Marc Pitman gives us a map for our own leadership journeys, helping us to understand we are not alone as we evolve our own work and lasting stories of success.”

RACHEL HUTCHISSON VP, corporate citizenship and philanthropy, Blackbaud

“Marc Pitman’s book *The Surprising Gift of Doubt* guides you through a thoughtful and well-informed journey to exceptional leadership. It challenges antiquated perspectives of leadership, from institutions to internalized doubt. You will finish with confidence and clarity.”

ANTIONETTE KERR CEO, Bold and Bright Media; codirector, Women AdvaNce

“It’s ironic—or perhaps fitting—that this book is nominally about doubt as a leader. Because it’s rare to find Marc Pitman’s level of humility and competence in one package. Marc’s perspective is so singular, clear, and helpful, it’s possible to imagine entire cohorts of emerging leaders reading this book and learning to comprehend and thrive in their own leadership style and to bring forward a more balanced approach to decision-making and likewise cultivating the next generation of young leaders.”

KATE O’NEILL CEO, KO Insights; author of *Tech Humanist*; and host of *The Tech Humanist Show*

“*The Surprising Gift of Doubt* is a journey of self-discovery to gain profound and lasting satisfaction in acknowledging your unique leadership style. Learn to lead from the inside out through the four stages of development for a whole-person approach to transform your leadership anxieties into leadership confidence.”

KIM MUMOLA CEO, The Highlands Company

“Marc Pitman’s ability to guide you from being a ‘cover song’ leader to discovering your own original voice, battling the crippling self-doubt and developing the confidence to become a focused rock star leader is extraordinary! It’s no surprise *this book* is a gift.”

BRANT MENSWAR author of *Black Sheep*

“Based on over thirty years of studying leadership and helping people to become more effective leaders, Marc Pitman’s *The Surprising Gift of Doubt* pushes you to think about how you can understand your hardwiring and begin charting a course to realizing your leadership potential. It offers a compelling system that is accessible to all of us that are looking to be intentional and more at ease about the future. It’s never too early to begin or jump-start your own leadership journey!”

GEOFFREY BROWN CEO, National Association of Personal Financial Planners

“Now, more than ever, you must conquer uncertainty and lead with confidence. Marc Pitman skillfully teaches you how to build up and bolster your interpersonal strengths and innate leadership skills. Invest in yourself and enjoy learning new and relevant insights.”

TYCELY WILLIAMS CFRE, chief development officer, America’s Promise Alliance

“The Surprising Gift of Doubt shows leaders that there is great power in being in a period of uncertainty. In this book, Marc Pitman guides leaders through a process to be authentically themselves, discover their own personal leadership style, and to lead in the way that is best for them.”

DENISE JACOBS author of *Banish Your Inner Critic*

THE SURPRISING
GIFT
OF
DOUBT

**THE SURPRISING
GIFT
OF
DOUBT**

**Use Uncertainty to Become the
Exceptional Leader You Are Meant to Be**

MARC A. PITMAN

••
PAGE TWO
BOOKS

Copyright © 2021 by Marc A. Pitman

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior written consent of the publisher or a licence from The Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency (Access Copyright). For a copyright licence, visit www.accesscopyright.ca or call toll free to 1-800-893-5777.

Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

Cataloguing in publication information is available from Library and Archives Canada.

ISBN 978-1-989603-99-4 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-77458-038-7 (ebook)

Page Two

www.pagetwo.com

Edited by Kendra Ward

Copyedited by Rebecca Andersen

Proofread by Alison Strobel

Cover design by Fiona Lee

Interior design by Setareh Ashrafologhalai

Interior illustrations by Michelle Clement

Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens

Distributed in Canada by Raincoast Books

Distributed in the US and internationally by Publishers

Group West, a division of Ingram

21 22 23 24 25 5 4 3 2 1

concordleadershipgroup.com

surprisinggiftofdoubt.com

To all my mentors—those who knew they were
mentoring me and those who didn't—
thank you for showing me both sides of the map.
And to all the leaders and emerging leaders
who are putting themselves on the line every day.
The world needs you. More than it knows.
And to Emily, without you I wouldn't be half
the leader I am.

“Becoming a leader is synonymous with
becoming yourself. It's precisely
that simple, and it's also that difficult.”

WARREN BENNIS¹

“Human freedom involves our capacity to pause
between stimulus and response and, in
that pause, to choose the one response toward
which we wish to throw our weight.”

ROLLO MAY²

CONTENTS

- A Note on Privilege 1
- Introduction 5
- 1 Listening to the Inner Nudge 13**
- 2 Taking the Leader's Journey 19**
- 3 Accepting Your Gifts 29**
- 4 Realizing the Benefits
of Your Ability 49**
- 5 Knowing the Strengths
of Your Motivation 61**
- 6 Learning the Stories
That Serve You 79**
- 7 Organizing around Your Goals 95**
- 8 Relating with Your Time 109**
- 9 Energizing Your Confidence
and Clarity 117**
- 10 Honoring Your Integrity 127**
- Acknowledgments 133
- Resources 135
- Notes 137

A NOTE ON PRIVILEGE

IN WRITING this book, I am profoundly aware that as a white man who identifies with the gender I was assigned at birth, I benefit from centuries of undeserved privilege.

A few years ago, I attended a seminar where the speaker challenged the audience with the question, “Who in your organization doesn’t have to earn the right to be heard?”

I realized that, for most of my life, that person was me. Even as a kid in classrooms, teachers would stop what they were saying to hear me speak. Others in the room, usually girls and students of color, had to fight to be heard. Or they had just stopped trying.

Sitting in the audience that day, I realized that I have a responsibility to partner with those who are not being heard. Their having to “earn the right” to be heard was a loss for everyone.

As I’ve read more about the obstacles experienced by others—including those who are typically unheard, such as women, people with visible or invisible disabilities, people who don’t align with traditional gender roles, and people of

color—I have tried to reorganize my business to better represent the diversity of the world we live in, and to be more inclusive of a plurality of voices. For example, four years ago I decided that the majority of presenters in my online training academy would be women and people of color.

We are all better if everyone has a chance to speak and be heard.

If one gender or ethnicity dominates, it hurts us all.

On this journey of discovery, one of the biggest irritations I hear about leadership books is that most are written by white men who are completely unaware of the systems that have been created and protected to keep them in power.³ I remember a long Twitter thread started by a female leader about traditional time-management books. She was frustrated that systems developed by male authors completely neglect things like family interruptions, meal planning, and dishes. I recall so many replies in agreement. Commenters were disheartened that male authors did not even attempt to create systems that addressed the reality of people who do most of the child-rearing, elder care, and household management in addition to having full-time careers—namely women. These authors' systems reflected their own realities, which one assumes were insulated from such time-consuming tasks. The implication is that the authors didn't take care of these responsibilities, so they didn't factor them into their planning systems. Oversights like this are part of the reason the leadership teams of many organizations around the world continue to lack diversity.

Although the depth of my ignorance in matters of race and gender continues to astound me, I am honored to be

surrounded by clients and colleagues who “call me in” to this greater awareness. In writing this book, I strived to make it helpful and accessible to *all* leaders, even while recognizing that there is much more to be done to make the top leadership of our organizations truly representative of the diversity of our communities. I have included multiple voices and done my best not to reinforce a patriarchal, white-privileged concept of leadership. I also invited people from diverse backgrounds to comment on drafts of this book and point out anything that prevented the text from being accessible to a diverse audience. These individuals represented diversity in race, gender, and sexual orientation and included both paid diversity, equity, and inclusion experts and leaders who volunteered their perspectives. Their conversations, insights, and observations have helped make this book much stronger.

The leadership system I share in this book is for *you*. It is to help serve you, not to make you serve it. I would love to know how it can be further adjusted to better fit your life as you pursue your goals. Feel free to email me at marc@concordleadershipgroup.com with your ideas and insights.

INTRODUCTION

LIKE MOST PEOPLE, throughout life you were probably trained to look to others to explain the rules to you. Growing up, your parents described what was right and what was wrong. You might have learned to seek rules in your faith community. Nearly every day for twelve to twenty years, teachers set the agenda and graded your work. In your job, your supervisors or bosses told you how they wanted the work done.

Until they didn't. At some point, you stopped getting directions.

You might have had an ineffective boss.

Or it could be that you became the top boss.

Leading can be so disorienting. Whether you've taken a long, winding trek to the summit or rapidly risen up the ranks, you now have people looking to *you* for direction. Now *you* have to determine the right and wrong path, the way you want the work done. But the higher up you go in an organization, the more you see: Options that you were not aware of before, problems that had never occurred to you, and a much broader spectrum of competing demands—many of which are legitimate—present unresolvable conflicts.

It is hardly surprising that so many CEOs and other top executives feel like lost children looking for a teacher to explain the rules. And in our information-saturated world, no shortage of volunteers will explain the rules. Bossy board members, mostly well meaning, will dictate tasks to the CEO. Staff irritated by a lack of direction will impose their views on the boss. Opinionated customers will tell leaders all the ways they're wrong and how they should fix the problems.

Tony, a CEO of a start-up, told me, "When I teach a course, I follow a syllabus—a manual that tells me what to do and when to do it. I want a manual like that for my work."

I get it. I understand his desire. But it is completely unrealistic. Tony oversaw three huge areas of responsibility—with radically different clients, demands, and schedules in each—and any one of which was enough to occupy a normal leader in his field on a full-time basis. He would have needed three manuals to help him, if manuals were even a viable option.

I told Tony he had two alternatives: The first was that he could latch onto a system that directed him just like a curriculum would. It would dictate exactly what to do at every hour of his day. Mondays from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. would be for writing notes to follow up with appointments from the previous week. Only Mondays. Only from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. After 9:00 a.m. any other follow-up notes would wait until the following Monday.

If you have ever tried a time-management program like this, you know how great it feels—like a weight has been lifted from your shoulders. Your schedule looks like it includes time for every area of your responsibilities. But as soon as you start to apply the system, it falls apart. A sick

employee calls at 7:30 a.m. on Monday and you need to cover a client meeting for her. An urgent deadline means you have to push your 8:00 a.m. note-writing to 9:00 a.m., and then to 10:00 a.m. And then to Tuesday. No, Thursday. Until you finally decide to just wait until the following Monday at 8:00 a.m. and hope for the best.

Guess what? Your schedule is the same mess it was before you tried the time-management program.

The first alternative sees you choosing leadership systems that are invariably temporary. And your inability to follow the simple steps that you commit to leaves you feeling worse than before you started.

But there is a second choice. You can create your own “curriculum.” As I explained to Tony, you can write the rules yourself, determining your own way of measuring success. This can be messy at first, involving some trial and error. But the strategies that result are based on who you are and how you operate. Tony found that with this process and a little intentional scheduling of his week in light of his tasks and goals, he could juggle all the competing demands and include time for writing follow-up notes. In other words, sustainable habits are exactly tailored for you.

This book is about choosing the second alternative.

And, before you say, “No, thank you, Marc,” and go off in search of the formulaic, quick-fix control manual that you think might solve your problems, I’ll admit, the second choice is scary. It takes time. It feels like you’re just “making it up.” And to an extent, you are. But, which would you prefer: Keep seeking outside yourself for someone else’s system to solve your problems or *finally* discover what will work for you?

Because, although there are many successful leaders, there is only one *you*.

Here is what I have seen in Tony and so many leaders like him across sectors. Perhaps I might even see this in you: *You seek out concrete systems like the first because you doubt yourself.*

You second-guess yourself. But you can't let your staff know because it will only worry them. Or worse, they will attack you. So, you stuff that doubt down, trying to project confidence. And trying to ignore the stress that doubt brings—the feeling that maybe you're just not cut out for this leadership position. Maybe the organization would be better off without you. You wonder if you should get out now before people realize that you are not cut out for the job.

Does this sound familiar?

Here is the twist: *That doubt you are trying to suppress is a precious gift.* It is an invitation to become a better, more integrated, and effective leader than you ever imagined possible.

How do I know this? Because as a consultant and coach, I've helped struggling leaders and emerging leaders in multinational organizations, tech companies, small businesses, consultancies, and nonprofits use this surprising gift of doubt as a catalyst to learn their unique leadership styles and transform the ways they lead. With the tested and refined strategies in this book, I have supported leaders to grow in confidence and become the leaders they were always meant to be.

A System Built around You

The seeds of this book were planted when I wrote an article to answer the question, “Marc, what do you *do*?” For years, I

answered that question with statements like “I’m a leadership coach,” and people would nod their heads. “Leadership coach” sounded legitimate. But those same people would ask again, “But what do you *actually* do?”

This was especially the case when the people asking were exploring coaching. They wanted to know my *system*. They were looking for the formulaic steps they would take if they worked with me. They were used to other coaches who followed this kind of approach.

But I don’t like shoving people into a box. Not every leader that comes to me needs to start in the same place. After all, like you, the leaders I work with have experienced success. They are just stuck. They need help getting unstuck. They don’t need to be forced into another system.

Now, I *do* have a system, but it is not a neat, sequential series of steps. It is organic and flexible. Because leadership isn’t orderly and sequential. *Life* isn’t that way!

The article I wrote was so well received, I turned it into a keynote that I presented around the country. I have rarely been privileged to see a talk move people so deeply. Realizing that your uniqueness may be the very gift your department or organization needs is powerful. It can get you unstuck.

Here is the gist of my teaching and coaching: Leadership is a journey that includes four stages of development, and most people only make it as far as the first two. The first stage (what I call Quadrant 1) involves copying what you see others doing. In the second stage (Quadrant 2) you seek out the experts. When you observe leaders who seem to do things effortlessly, naturally you want to behave the way they do. But after a point, their techniques don’t make you a better

leader, and your confidence starts to slip. So, you look to teachers or gurus to fix your problems. Their systems seem to give some relief, but not for long. They work when you remember to apply them, but they never seem to become a habit. So, you start to doubt yourself even more. And you look for another system.

Most leaders spend their entire careers moving back and forth between those two stages, Quadrant 1 and Quadrant 2, experiencing success, but always wondering what's missing. Because those quadrants represent only half of the leader's journey.

However, the rare, exceptional leader moves on to third stage, Quadrant 3. Here, you let your doubt remind you to turn your focus inward. You start listening to some of your hunches and gifts. This becomes trust in your own style, and *that* rebuilds your confidence—this time from the inside out. That confidence leads you into the fourth stage of leadership, Quadrant 4, where you become the focused leader—the whole person—you long to be. You learn from both external *and* internal sources. You masterfully use what others model and teach *and* what you know to be true about yourself to lead. You have earned the peace of mind of knowing that the strategies you create will work because they are built on your unique way of being in the world. And you have the confidence to help others on their journey.

The tools of Quadrant 3, which are explained in this book, help you use the experience of doubt as a signal to find sure footing. As you approach this book, you may be feeling shaky, uncertain, or even broken. In the following pages, I hope to convince you that those feelings are a gift, and I will show

you how you can use them to strengthen your understanding of yourself, as a leader and as a whole person.

The processes you will find in these pages will help you move from feeling “broken” as a leader to seeing the wonderful gift you are to your organization and community. And they will give you the hope you need to keep pursuing that journey.

Thank you for inviting me to be part of that process.

1

LISTENING TO THE INNER NUDGE



DALIA QUICKLY ROSE through the ranks of her company. At first, she just loved solving challenges and helping her team succeed. Soon after, she was overseeing several departments. Then, she was helping her entire organization as the CEO. Life was invigorating. People appreciated her work. But the success created pressure on her. The more she succeeded, the more she was expected to keep producing results. And as she rose in leadership, the demands on her increased while the supervision of her decreased. As supervision disappeared, so did clear expectations of her, aside from ambiguous direction like “do more” and “do better.”

When I met her, she’d grown her company from \$1 million in gross revenue to \$4 million.

And she was completely burnt out.

Her successful leadership had lulled her company’s board into passivity. Whatever she wanted to do was fine with them. However, she thrived on pushback. As surprised as she was, she missed the disagreements they used to have. These sharpened her and made the company’s plans stronger. Now she felt that she was on her own. Exposed. No one had her back, and she knew she was making mistakes. So, she was

looking for a solution, for a system that would help her. But each one she tried fell short—as most systems will.

Most plans or formulas force you to fit into their molds, imposing their structures on you. They fail to build upon who you are, so they fail when your enthusiasm for them wanes or when the fear that you will not succeed diminishes.

The Motivation Is within You

Leadership is stressful. And at times, the stress is hard to locate. The Center for Creative Leadership recently conducted a study to discover the top source of leadership stress. They were looking for one area that all leaders could work on. However, researchers were surprised to discover that no fewer than four areas tied as the top sources of stress: customers, direct reports, peers, and bosses.⁴

For leaders, stress comes from all sides.

John, a small business owner, recently called asking me whether my coaching could help him stay motivated under such pressure, to do what needed to be done, particularly to increase sales. I mentioned a few of the rewards more revenue would bring, the peace of mind he might feel with a few months of operating capital in cash, the flexibility of not having to stress about paying payroll. He quickly stopped me. “Oh, I know the ‘carrot’ reasons,” he said, “but I’m asking about the ‘stick.’ What stick have you found that makes leaders take action?” When, admittedly a bit befuddled, I suggested bill collectors, John cut me off. “That’s not a stick,” he said. “That’s a crisis. I’m looking for the consequences of inaction, long before you get to a crisis.”

John was not looking for a coach (or a carrot or a stick, I might add). He was looking for a boss. He wanted someone to tell him what to do. Someone he'd be embarrassed to let down. However, he was the boss. He liked being in charge, calling the shots, the freedom to shape his days. But he resisted doing the work: managing staff, developing prospects, and creating proposals knowing not all were going to be successful. He wanted to be a leader, but he balked at leading.

Maybe, like John, you think you would prefer having someone to motivate you, someone to be a drill sergeant and “make” you do what you should already be doing.

But I'm willing to wager that, as with all the leaders I coach, the motivation is already inside you, and it has been trying to get your attention for a long time. You might experience this motivation as feeling like “nudges” or “a sensation in the gut” or “intuition.” You have likely been tuning it out; you may even have become skilled at neglecting it. You have been taught to base decisions on hard data and evidence-based solutions, not to trust “soft” things like feelings or inexplicable gut senses. So, you have intentionally learned strategies to ignore them, and the growing uneasiness inside you.

You've been told leaders are people of conviction and decisiveness. They aren't filled with doubt, especially not misgivings about their own leadership abilities. Annoyingly, this inner unease seems to come right when you're feeling the least confident. So, you train yourself to ignore it and “fake it 'til you make it.”

The secret to growing as a leader is that you have to do some inner work, none of which can be done *for* you. And there are no guarantees. In the coming pages, you will be

introduced to the journey all leaders go on, along with assessments, strategies, and exercises to help you jump-start the next phase of your own journey. But your personal work is what will ultimately transform your leadership.

The best part of this is that, once you learn the tools that help you listen to and trust your inner nudges, you'll be able to use these tools for the rest of your life. And you'll be able to help your staff and your entire organization use them too. So, if you are like Dalia and have experienced success in the past—perhaps so much so that everyone seems convinced you'll keep pulling a rabbit out of a hat despite the fact that you have no earthly clue how you'll do it—you're in the right place.

You can do it. You can become the confident, exceptional leader you want to be. You'll have to do the work, but I'll be here with you. You don't have to walk this path alone.

2

TAKING THE LEADER'S JOURNEY



REMEMBER JOHN, the small business owner who wanted a boss? His request makes sense. Most of our learning early in life involves looking to other people for direction and approval. Those habits translate to work. Typically, you are promoted to leadership because either you start a project or you learn to be really good at doing something. You impress people in charge, so they promote you. As Jamie Smith, former executive director of Young Nonprofit Professionals Network (YNPN) says, you get good at a skill, so others suggest you manage people. As a manager, you quickly realize that proficiency with technical skills is not enough for you to be a good manager. You need people skills as well. So, you look to people you can learn from. Once you grow in people skills, you get promoted to a higher level of leadership. At that level, you realize that technical skills are even more problematic. Now when you use those skills, people see you as a micromanager. And your people skills are no longer enough. You also need leadership skills: the ability to communicate vision and motivate a team.⁵

Leadership is a journey that can be divided into four stages, or what I call quadrants. At a glance, the four quadrants of leadership look like this:

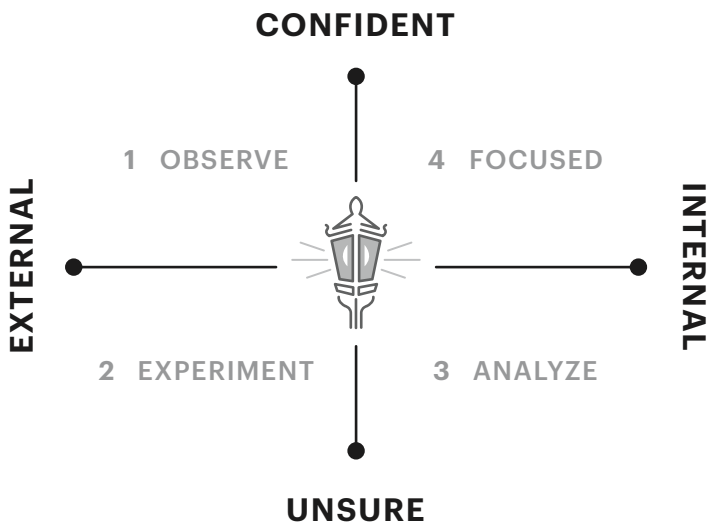


FIGURE 1 The Leader's Journey

You begin in Quadrant 1, where you are full of confidence because you have been promoted to a level of leadership. If this is not confidence in your own ability, then it is confidence in the fact that others say you can lead. Quadrant 1 is where you “observe.” You look for leaders you can emulate, and you lead the way you’ve seen others lead. You know people responded to the leading of your parents and coaches and teachers and bosses. So, it stands to reason that if you copy them, people will follow you too.

But after a while, you notice that people don’t respond to you like you expect. The approaches that worked so well for your parents and coaches and teachers and bosses aren’t working for you. Leadership experts say that if you’re a leader and you turn around to find no one is following you . . . you’re

just out for a walk. Are you just out for a walk? No wonder your confidence starts to drop!

This is where you enter the second stage of the leadership journey, Quadrant 2, the stage where you “experiment.”

When your confidence falls, you find yourself worrying that something about you must be broken. So, you look for ways to fix yourself. With all the available books, blogs, webinars, podcasts, seminars, and courses, you think surely one of those will fix you. With great hope, you choose one that gets terrific reviews. People say it helped them with the same problem you have. Knowing you’re not alone is a relief, just as it is to have so quickly found a system that fixes exactly what is broken with your leadership.

But having read the book or taken the course, you notice that it doesn’t quite work the way the reviewers said it would. You worry that you might be more broken than you thought. Struggling with imposter syndrome, you keep “faking it ’til you make it” and press on, looking for another system to learn from before your colleagues discover that you don’t know what you’re doing.

Each new system seems to be “the” answer for your leadership woes. Each promises to fix what is broken. Yet each system falls short of its promise. And as each system fails to work for you, the worry that you might be irreparably broken deepens. You can experience levels of success in Quadrant 2, but the feeling that you are making it up as you go dogs you. You completed the last project successfully, but you have no idea how you will pull off the next. Your confidence takes hits as you regularly try to suppress the feeling that you are faking and fumbling. You work harder, hoping that will drown out the discomfort always lurking just below the surface.

Do you see yourself in this phase? Amal, the CEO of an automotive company in Lebanon, did. When I described the leader's journey and Quadrant 2 to him, he exclaimed, "This sounds like my life!" In fact, every leader I've worked with has been there. So, allow me to pause and say that if you are in Quadrant 2 now, take courage. The fascinating thing about the leader's journey is that, although the particulars of it are individual, everyone goes through these two quadrants. But many leaders, even highly functioning CEOs, never go beyond Quadrant 2.

And yet, lacking confidence, feeling this doubt, could mean that you're on the verge of greatness.

It is interesting that doubt has a central role in the leadership journey. Leading often involves being put in places where you have to make educated guesses. Inevitably, some of those do not work out. So, you do what you have been conditioned to do since you were a child: Look to others for help. You follow people you admire, and you look for systems or curriculums others have created. You know that you do not have the answers for your challenges, so you look outside yourself for them. But looking only to other people and systems is a real limitation. No external system will be a perfect fit with your style. Other people or systems give you *a* perspective on leadership but not the *complete* perspective. When you realize this, you are ready for the third stage of leadership, or Quadrant 3. Entering this stage is an extraordinary and courageous step.

In Quadrant 3, tentatively at first but with increasing awareness, you begin to "analyze" what you have learned from watching people and studying systems. You get in touch

with your strengths and your limitations, with your values, and with your own goals. You stop assuming that you are irreparably broken if systems don't work for you. With growing confidence, you figure out what *does* work and put those techniques into practice. Rather than constantly trying to fit into someone else's leadership suit, you create a suit that is custom fit for you. In Quadrant 3, you feel like you are charting your own path. In many ways, you are. It is not always comfortable, but the journey is yours.

That growing confidence leads you on to Quadrant 4, a stage of "focus" and quiet confidence. In Quadrant 4, you have learned how to listen to both external suggestions and internal cues. And you are leading in a way that comes from within. You are humbly confident in your ability and free to lead with grace and flexibility as well as bring others along the path of the four quadrants.

Every Quadrant Holds Potential

Each quadrant offers development potential for leaders. In Quadrant 1, you learn which leaders are trustworthy to copy. You find that some of the coaches, teachers, or bosses you looked to turned out to be untrustworthy. Some had hidden motives. Others had deep character flaws that you didn't see before becoming a leader yourself. But some of the leaders you looked up to were who they said they were. These leaders are safe to follow.

In Quadrant 2, you discover which learning style works best for you. You read books, listen to podcasts, take courses, and go to seminars. You may even get an MBA. As you identify how you learn, you may realize that you prefer lectures

because you are an auditory learner and hearing something helps you remember it. Or that it's easier to remember something after you've read it. When you know how you take in information, you can focus on tools that match your learning strengths. And knowing that there are multiple ways to learn helps you communicate more effectively with your team.

In Quadrant 3 you learn to appreciate your uniqueness and to define your personal leadership style. Perhaps you have been trying to be highly energetic, with lots of unplanned touch points with your team. But all that face time drains you. In this quadrant, you learn that instead of fighting your introversion, you can still build a team that is as highly motivated as those of other leaders you've known, but the way you'll do that will look quite different. You develop your own leadership style, a mode of operating that fits you, allowing you to thrive. In this quadrant, you learn how to explain your differences to others. And to make room for their differences too.

By the time you move into Quadrant 4, you have gained a level of mastery and can approach the struggles of leadership with a steady confidence, knowing that you can use traits from each quadrant to help you tackle the next challenge. When you face uncertainty, you don't get stuck because you know you have access to all the tools—other people, other systems, and your own inner awareness to chart your path.

Leaders brave enough to take the journey beyond Quadrant 2 acknowledge their self-doubt and then do the work to grow. They combine the power of all they've learned from others and all they've learned about themselves to become the focused leaders that they thought they were going to be when they were first given a leadership title.

Quadrant 3's Three Areas of Growth

There is something special about being on the cusp of Quadrant 3 Leadership. Questioning your leadership abilities is uncomfortable. So is feeling like you're fooling others, or worse, that you're fooling yourself. But in the classic stories of heroes, real growth comes only after the dark night of the soul, when they feel they don't have what it takes and choose to persist, to reflect on themselves, learn from their mistakes, and struggle to apply what they've learned.

After all the self-assured, evidence-based, scientific-sounding books you read in Quadrant 2, the inner work of Quadrant 3 may seem scary, emotional, or “woo-woo.” But the good news is that Quadrant 3 is very practical. You can do specific tasks to get the most benefit from this phase of leadership. Leaders who focus on three areas of growth—hardwiring, identity, and goals, as shown in Figure 2: The Integrity Model—experience the biggest impact from this work.

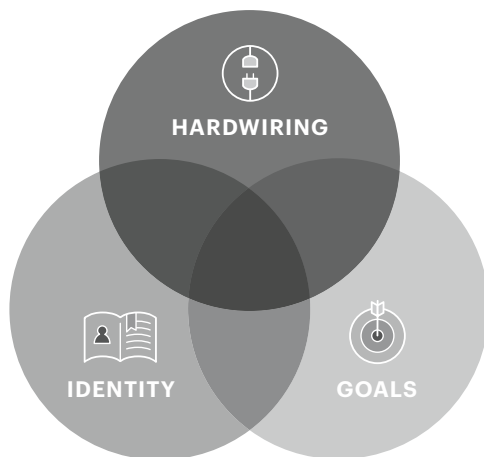


FIGURE 2 The Integrity Model

In the following chapters, I will show you how to identify your hardwiring, explore your personal identity, and clarify your goals. As with much inner work, you can start from any number of places. We will start with hardwiring, because many people are drawn into the process after taking a personality or strengths assessment. Then we will move on to identity and finish up with an approach to goals you have likely never considered. Do not let this diagram nor the order of the chapters fool you. They look orderly and even possibly mechanistic. But like real life, this process isn't mechanistic or orderly. It's more three-dimensional and organic. I recommend that you read through the entire book, then jump back to the chapters or sections that seem most helpful to you, just as you would with a recipe book.

Leaders have to go through Quadrant 3 before emerging as confident, focused leaders. On this journey, sometimes you'll find yourself on shaky ground, uncertain as you stretch into the unknown to discover something new about yourself. That's a good thing. Trust that as you learn how to learn about yourself, you're developing skills that will catapult your leadership and make you invaluable to your organization and those you lead. Let's start by looking at your hardwiring.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CONCORD LEADERSHIP GROUP founder Marc A. Pitman, CSP®, has been leading organizations and teams for decades. He has studied leadership for more than thirty years, including earning a master's degree in organizational leadership and certification as a FranklinCovey coach. Combining his ongoing education with his lived experience, Marc helps people lead their teams with more effectiveness and less stress. He is the author of *Ask Without Fear!*®, which has been translated into Dutch, Polish, Spanish, and Mandarin. He's also the executive director of TheNonprofitAcademy.com and a former advisory panel member of Rogare, a prestigious international fundraising think tank.

Marc's expertise and enthusiasm engages audiences around the world both in person and virtually. It has caught the attention of media organizations, including the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, *Real Simple*, *SUCCESS* magazine, NBC, Al Jazeera, and Fox News. Marc tweets regularly at [@marcapitman](https://twitter.com/marcapitman).



Over the past eighteen years, Marc's organizational and leadership coaching and trainings have helped tens of thousands of organizations advance their missions, meet revenue goals, and improve the lives of their staff and supporters.

He is the husband to his best friend and the father of three amazing kids. And if you drive by him on the road, he'll be singing '80s tunes loud enough to embarrass his family!

He'd love to hear how your leadership journey is going. Let him know by emailing him at marc@concordleadershipgroup.com.

YOUR JOURNEY IS ONLY JUST BEGINNING

Leadership is a process, not an end goal. Here are some ways to keep doing the work:

Subscribe to the *Concord Leaders* podcast on your favorite podcast platform.

Join me as I chat about leadership with top executives and CEOs. These short (ten- to fifteen-minute) conversations will inspire you and give you fresh ideas for leading. Subscribe to *Concord Leaders* in your favorite podcast app or find episodes at concordleadershipgroup.com/podcasts.

Share *The Surprising Gift of Doubt* with your team or organization.

Order bulk copies of the book at surprisinggiftofdoubt.com for your whole team or organization, and you'll receive a special discount rate. Available in either print or ebook!

Connect with me.

- Find me on Twitter at [@marcapitman](https://twitter.com/marcapitman)
- Connect with me on LinkedIn at linkedin.com/in/marcapitman
- Watch me on YouTube at youtube.com/user/sbsmarc
- Write to me at marc@concordleadershipgroup.com

And don't forget to give this book a review on your favorite online book retailer!

“It’s doubt that cracks open the seed and allows in humility and compassion, curiosity and possibilities. But don’t doubt that this book will help you become a far better leader.”

MICHAEL BUNGAY STANIER,
author of *The Coaching Habit* and *The Advice Trap*

You’re a high-performing leader. It’s time to shed the doubt.

ARE you the type of leader who’s hit milestone after milestone in your career? People look to you for direction. They see you as a model of success. But you don’t. You’re nagged by a voice accusing you of just making it up as you go along. Where does this doubt come from? And is it even possible to shake this uncertainty?

In *The Surprising Gift of Doubt*, leadership expert Marc A. Pitman shows you how imposter syndrome is actually a signal that you are on the verge of greatness. Here you’ll find the same assessments, exercises, and self-management tools he uses to help his high-powered clients achieve their dreams. He shows you how to harness those uncomfortable feelings to develop a rare level of leadership mastery.

You will emerge from this leader’s journey of self-discovery more sure-footed, courageous, and self-assured. The challenges of leadership will remain, but you’ll be able to meet them with an unshakable inner confidence. An inner confidence that matches the image others have had of you all along.

“Marc Pitman deftly and confidently leads readers through the hard, necessary work of understanding themselves and the unique contributions they can make both in their organizations and their personal lives.”

KRISTEN HADEED, author of *Permission to Screw Up*

“A powerful operating manual that will help you tap into the greatness inside of you and truly empower others.”

DORIE CLARK, executive education faculty, Duke University’s Fuqua School of Business and author of *Reinventing You*

concordleadershipgroup.com

● **PAGE TWO** BOOKS

www.pagetwo.com

Cover design: Fiona Lee

\$15.95 USD

\$19.95 CDN

ISBN 978-1-989603-99-4



5 1595



9 781989 603994