

spun! shift

brian

solis

Foreword by **Bill McDermott**,
Chairman and CEO, ServiceNow

Transform Leadership,
Drive Innovation, and Reshape the Future

brian solis spontaneous shift

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Chairman and CEO, ServiceNow

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Drive Innovation, and Reshape the Future

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This book is dedicated to everyone who believes in something bigger than themselves. If there were ever a time, it's right now.



Ask yourself, how many life-changing events do we need to experience in our lives, before we decide to change ahead of the next event? How many disruptions that introduce uncertainty or even anguish in our lives do we react to or put up with until we decide to become the disruptor? How many people do we give unfettered power to in our lives, those who make decisions that we don't fully support or believe in, those whose actions do not reflect our best interests or aspirations?

You may not have the answers right now. You may not have the solutions figured out. You may not even know or understand the problems before you. But you do believe, deep down, that something better is out there.

Trust me, you will figure this out. That's exactly what these times of uncertainty and ambiguity calls for...a new type of leader. Committing to figuring things out is the first step to figuring it out, one step at a time. This is how you change the future and make things better for you and those around you.

You don't have to set out to change the world. Even the smallest contributions add up to something that matters. That's leadership. Even without having the answers, leaders figure it out. And the role of a true leader is to create a future that would not have otherwise happened. It's all a matter of perspective.

A better tomorrow starts with a mindshift. You unleash a butterfly effect when a mindshift becomes a gift you give to someone else.

This book is dedicated to you.

Table of Contents

vi

Foreword

02

Introduction

Mindshift: Your
Ctrl+Alt+Delete
Opportunity

18

Chapter 1

Executives Don't Know What
They Don't Know

38

Chapter 2

You Are the Leader
Who's Needed

52

Chapter 3

A Self-Aware Mind Is a
Shiftable Mind: Get to Know
Your Mind

68

Chapter 4

The Beginner's Mind

84

Chapter 5

The Growth Mindmap: It's
All in Your Mind...Set

102

Chapter 6

The Wonder of Awe

118

Chapter 7

Receive

142

Chapter 8

Perceive

164

Chapter 9

Weave

186

Chapter 10

Conceive

212

Chapter 11

Believe

234

Chapter 12

Achieve

258

Conclusion

If Not You, Who?

264

Endnotes

284

Credits

286

Index

Foreword

Hidden in Our Dreams Is Our Destiny

—Bill McDermott

I dedicated my book, *Winners Dream*, to my mother, Kathleen McDermott. I wrote that everything I was, am, or ever will be, I owe it all to her.

My mother was a fighter. She was a relentless optimist. She was the rock in our family and the inspiration in my life. She instilled the spirit of grit and humility deep in who I became as a human being, as a husband and father, and as a leader.

My father taught me about hard work, loyalty, and the dedication required when caring for others. As my basketball coach, he also taught me the importance of winning and teamwork. He believed that “none of us was as talented as all of us.” And to him, winning mattered only if it was a *team* win.

People always ask me, “Bill, where did you learn your ethos to Dream Big?” My parents gave me that gift. And it was always up to me to do something with the values they engrained in me.

From my experience as a teenage entrepreneur to the global stage leading great companies, tenacity, audacity, and courage are the very things that helped me rise up at every turn, always with the relentless will of an underdog. Today, I have the honor of working with an incredible team of people at ServiceNow. Because all Winners need a Big Dream, ours is to be the defining enterprise software company of the 21st century.

We all have the Winners Dream burning inside us. If ever there was a moment to bring it to life, the time is now. Embracing that journey is not a question of “if,” only a question of “how.”

Here are a few humble suggestions from what I learned on my own journey.

For starters, there are many great role models out there. I have always tried to look for those who not only won but went beyond winning, leaving footprints for others to follow. Vince Lombardi was a champion in this mold. He said, “The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary.”

We all need to embrace his perspective. If we want to succeed, there’s no getting around hard work. In fact, we must learn to love the hard work. We need that inspiration to push forward, to define what success looks like every single day, and to chase it relentlessly. People count on leaders to know the way, go the way, and show the way. When they see real leadership, they’ll pour themselves into following it. Always remember this: TEAM stands for together, everyone, achieves, more. We all do our part. We embrace the commitment to being lifelong learners, ever in pursuit of the best versions of who we are. That’s when our unique magic goes to the next level in service to common goals and shared values.

When we are grounded in the love of work, we can expand our thinking about what’s possible. Awareness of the world around us, and empathy for people, is the best foundation for human curiosity.

Let’s acknowledge there has never been a time like we’re witnessing right now. We survived a global pandemic. We are experiencing the rise of mainstream artificial intelligence and spatial computing. Disruptive technologies are accelerating and expanding faster and bigger with every wave. The world is changing in other ways that are unrecognizable, even unimaginable. No matter how much things evolve or change, we have something in our corner that will always help us thrive. . .the will to win, against any odds.

This is fundamentally a mindset conversation. Any way you frame it, there are certain essential elements that govern our capacity to shape the future.

One of those is vision. I have learned that vision is not only about what you can see. It’s about how you feel and how you make other people feel. I have always treasured this in the context of leadership in times of change. People tend to overestimate what they can accomplish in the short-term, and they underestimate what they can accomplish in the long-term. A leader can open people’s minds to the art of the possible. A leader can show people that the world isn’t just

changing; it's inviting us to reshape it. A leader can change the mood from uncertainty to positivity. And when the mood goes positive, anything is possible.

This leads me to the very practical reality of where we are today. This is no longer the time for business as usual. AI alone is a catalyst for the complete transformation of organizations, industries, and value chains that transcend traditional boundaries. This is a moment to rethink everything, from work to education to entertainment to healthcare—every job function, every role.

When confronted with such a moment, it's normal for people to shy away from Dreaming Big. I'm often asked, do I think we should concentrate on taking small steps and getting quick results? Let's be clear that we need to do a couple things at the same time.

We need a bold, comprehensive vision for what this world can achieve in our lifetimes. We need a compelling, exciting, and inspiring vision for why people's lives will be better in the generations to come because of the vision we set in place today. And yes, we need to have a solid grasp of the exact steps we can take to begin making this vision into the ultimate masterpiece.

Those who choose not to see a new way forward, who choose not to embrace the art of the possible, will find that business as usual leads down the road to irrelevance. For some, that may well come to be. For the majority, I see a brighter future. There are too many of us who believe in a better way. There are too many of us who have grown tired of accepting limitations or excuses.

That's the power of a mindshift.

This is about the fundamental change in the way we think and approach our challenges *and* opportunities. It's a transformation in our mindsets that leads to new insights and innovative solutions and outcomes. It shapes our ability to navigate uncertainty. A mindshift becomes the foundation for developing new strategies, for adopting new behaviors, and for fostering a culture of openness and continuous improvement.

I always remind people that what got us from there to here won't get us from here to where we need to go.

We need to open our minds and keep them open. We need to dig deeper, recognizing that the world's greatest challenges are our biggest opportunities. We should always follow the principles of design thinking and innovation: desirability, feasibility, and viability. This will help us harness the nexus of secular forces, all of which can be headwinds or tailwinds, depending almost entirely on how we choose to look at them.

I choose to embrace this moment. I choose to see it as the beginning of the next renaissance of human passion and creativity.

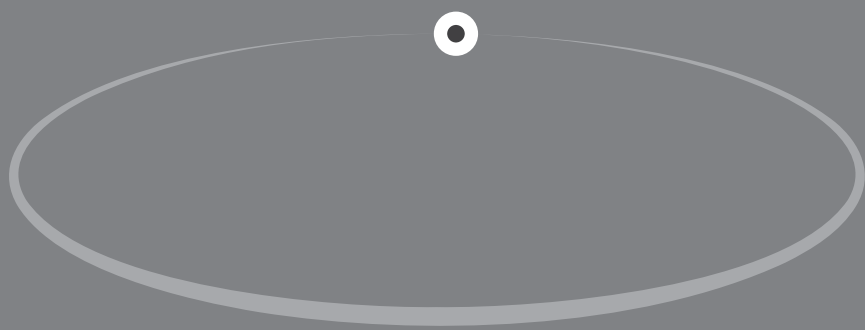
If we use this moment to catalyze our big dreams and begin to chase them with everything that's in our heart and soul, the world's best days are ahead. A mindshift isn't just a gift we give ourselves. It's a life-changing gift we give others to inspire and unite people. We help people become the best version of themselves. That's how we win as team. That's how we make the world work better for everyone.

So, dream big! It's a *Mindshift* moment! Let's do this together!

02

Introduction

Mindshift: Your Ctrl+Alt+Delete Opportunity



•

Your calling in life
is not a goal
to be achieved,
but a gift to be
received.
This is your time.

We are living through volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) times. While disruption has been constant throughout history, it's arguably accelerating today, driven by a confluence of new technologies, political and social upheaval, and a series of black swan events that keep piling up.

Thriving through this disruption, and all future disruptions, all comes down to your mindset: how quickly you're able to shift and get ahead of the next disruption event.

Your mindset shapes how you see the world—how you perceive the things that happen to and around you and the stories you tell yourself to help make sense of them. Your mindset determines how you process information and events, accept things to be true or false, and react to situations. How you visualize tomorrow is also

part of your mindset, and your mindset very much defines the role you play in reinforcing the status quo or shaping the future.

According to psychologist Shawn Achor, “It’s not necessarily the reality that shapes us, but the lens through which your brain views the world that shapes your reality.”¹ How you react to challenges is really a matter of perspective. “We don’t see the world as it is, we see the world as we are,” Anaïs Nin wrote in her 1961 work *Seduction of a Minotaur*.² Our mindset can prevent us from seeing the world for what it could truly be, because it’s human nature to see the world, the course of events, and the potential of disruptions as defined by our own life experiences. In times of great change, we tend to yearn for what we’ve become familiar with, and we lean on our survival instincts, often trying to beat back the transformations underway. But we can choose to embrace the change by changing our minds.

If we want to seize the day with disruption, to capitalize on a wealth of opportunities it offers, we need to change our mindset.

We need a *mindshift*.

What does mindshift mean? It’s the opening of your mind and heart. It’s your ability to see something new or differently; to learn and unlearn; to react creatively in times of change.

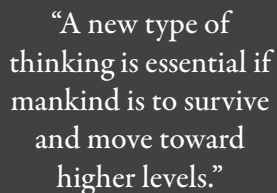
It’s rewiring your inputs, expanding your horizons, rekindling your purpose, abandoning your comfort zone, and reimagining outcomes. It’s exploring the art of the possible.

Over time, mindshifting becomes a discipline, a way of life. Mindshifting isn’t a matter of just having a big aha realization. It takes intention and a set of practices for opening our minds and stretching our vision. The good news is, those practices are a lot of fun, and the results you’ll see will be more than worth the effort. We are in a period of great opportunity.

Welcome to the Novel Economy: If There Ever Was a Time for a Mindshift...

During times of disruption, we often don't see how profoundly our world is being shaken up. What lies underneath appears like life as usual, but is actually an altered slate of human expectations, behaviors, and aspirations.

I began using the term the Novel Economy in 2020, as a way to jolt people's awareness about the degree of disruption and transformation we were seeing at the time. Through my work tracking disruptive technology trends, I had detected that we were reaching a tipping point of some kind, with so much roiling our lives: wars, disinformation and psyops, societal division, a global pandemic, climate change.



“A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move toward higher levels.”

—Albert Einstein

This new economy necessitates invention, innovation, and imagination. And it's a time when leaning on past assumptions, processes, and playbooks will only impede our ability to rise to the unique opportunities presented.

This Is Our Ctrl+Alt+Delete Moment

It's understandable that during times of disruption, many desire a return to normal. But we shouldn't be looking for normal or even a "new normal" or the future "next normal." Normal was the problem to begin with. Normal is striving for mediocrity, settling for the status quo. It's preserving the sacred cows.

Option A
Old
Normal

Option B
New
Normal

Option C
Next
Normal

Option D
No
Normal

If we instead embrace the new, we can achieve the extraordinary. We don't have to settle for the same old ways of living and working. Instead, we can seize this Ctrl+Alt+Del moment and reboot for a better future. This requires new leaders who can light our way through these uncharted paths.

If Not You, Then Who?

Have you ever hoped for, visualized, or even prayed for a desired outcome?

Have you helped loved ones, friends, or colleagues, not just because you felt sympathetic but because you genuinely believed that you could?

Have you ever read, seen, or heard something that made you think differently or choose another course of action?

If so, you have what it takes to be a leader in creating a better future, maybe much more so than you may think.

“Leaders are fascinated by the future, restless for change, and deeply dissatisfied with the status quo. They are never satisfied with the present, because in their head they can see a better future, and the friction between what is and what could be burns them, propels them forward.”

—Steve Jobs

Now ask yourself: have you ever not pursued an idea because you felt like an imposter or that you weren't creative enough? If this is also true, congratulations; you're human. You're also still a leader and still very much the person who is needed for this moment.

Since 2020, disruption has left a deep mark on all of our lives—permanently linking our memories to visceral, emotional experiences. So many of us lost loved ones due to COVID-19. All of us have stories of struggle, learning, and triumph to tell. As we find our way forward, there is a unique opportunity to draw on these experiences to help shape a better future. The past is undoubtedly eroding. Many are looking around and saying, rightfully, “WTF!?” Some are fighting back; others are not paying attention or are doing their best to ignore the disruption. What about you?

You can either wait for someone to tell you what to do or believe in something and decide to go make it happen. It’s up to you.



There are so many roles to play in reimagining the world. It may seem daunting, but the great thing is you don’t need all the answers; curiosity is more than enough to get started. Every mindshift begins with a spark of curiosity. It could be as small as a “what if...?” or a “why haven’t we...?” or a “why couldn’t we...?” As the saying goes, “If you want a better answer, ask a better question.”

The spark ignites when you accept that you are not a victim of circumstances but are instead in control of what you do about them. You become convinced that you can help, that you can contribute, in some way, to an outcome you believe in. Of course, some things

you can control, and others you can't. You can't control a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. You can't control climate change. You can't control exponential technologies. You can, however, control how you attach meaning to these things and how you feel about and react to them. You can control what matters to you. You can control the intentional steps you take toward something different, better.

Your Destiny Isn't a Matter of Chance, but a Matter of Choice

I love the movie *Mr. Destiny*. Released in 1990, it stars Michael Caine and Jim Belushi. Its tagline asks the audience, "Would you give up everything you have for everything you've ever wanted?"

Belushi's character, Larry Burrows, lives what looks to be a normal, happy life. He married his childhood sweetheart and holds a seemingly good job as a sporting goods executive. At the same time, he's consumed by a painful memory: striking out in the last at-bat of his high school baseball championships. "What if I just hit that ball?" he constantly asks himself. He thinks his life might have been so much better.

On the eve of his 35th birthday, Larry's battered old station wagon breaks down in a dark alley, for which, of course, he blames not having hit that ball. He heads to a bar around the corner, where he chats with the bartender, Mike, played by Caine. Larry unloads about all of the problems in his life and how they're due to that infamous strikeout. Leaving the bar, Larry sees that his car has been towed, and he has to walk home. Shockingly, he sees that people other than his family are living in his house. Just then bartender Mike arrives—this time as a cab driver—and offers to take Larry to his new home. Mike is Mr. Destiny, and he's decided to turn back the tape on Larry's life.

The new house is a mansion. Larry also learns he's now president of his company, he owns a collection of classic automobiles, and he is married to Cindy Jo, the beauty queen of his high school. In this new version of his life, Larry not only connected with that baseball, but he hit it so hard that it shattered part of the scoreboard on its way out of the stadium, sending sparks flying over the field. He became a hero, and the rest magically fell into place.


I won't give away the ending, but as you've probably surmised, Larry comes to see that this new life is not really the life he wanted. This wasn't meant to be his destiny. Not hitting that baseball really had nothing to do with how his life unfolded. The key message of the movie is that we make our destinies; they don't just happen to us. They aren't preordained. We have the choice to build the life we want. Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and founder of analytical psychology, famously observed, "I am not what has happened to me. I am what I choose to become."³

A mindshift begins with "what if I...?" instead of "if only I..."

From Wishful Thinking to Willful Thinking

Sometimes the hero you need is you.

Viktor Frankl was an Austrian neurologist, psychologist, and author of the incredibly popular book *Man's Search for Meaning*. Perhaps lesser known, he also wrote *The Will to Meaning*, which explored the question of why humans seek meaning in the first place.



"The fault
is not in the stars,
but in ourselves."

—Shakespeare,
Julius Caesar

Frankl believed that the primary motivational force of an individual is to find meaning in life, or what he called the “will to meaning.”⁴ Here, we adapt Frankl’s work not to unlock the meaning of life but to unlock change: the will to change one’s thinking, learn and unlearn, and act differently. This is willful thinking.

If you don’t like how things are, change them.

If you think things can be better, change them.

If you don’t know what to do, don’t wait for the universe to give you a sign. Figure it out.

Question everything, even (and especially) your own center of reference. Change of any kind always stems from questioning the way things are done or not done. Tell yourself, “Change begins with me.”

In John Keating’s stirring speech at the end of the movie *Dead Poets Society*, his farewell to the class of teenage boys he’s taught to open their minds to new vistas, he says, “We must constantly look at things in a different way. Just when you think you know something, you must look at it in a different way. Even though it may seem silly or wrong, you must try. Dare to strike out and find new ground.”⁵

Facing the Strange: Escaping Your Comfort Zone

Listed as one of *Rolling Stone’s* 500 greatest songs of all time, David Bowie’s “Changes” is more than just a catchy tune. Today, the name is synonymous with an eclectic and gifted artist who changed so often that it was his norm. He encouraged others to embrace change, to, in the words of the song, face the strange; to get outside of our comfort zones and become beacons of change.

In a 1997 interview, Bowie was asked if he had any advice for young artists.

“If you feel safe in the area that you are working in, you’re not working in the right area,” he said. “Always go a little further into the water than you think you are capable of being in. Go a little bit out of your depth, and when you don’t feel like your feet are quite touching the bottom, you are just about in the right place to do something exciting.”⁶

It’s only when you decide staying the same isn’t an option that you discover the power you have to make change. But part of the challenge of rising up to lead is the ability to recognize that you are indeed worthy of the task. Feeling some fear about the road ahead in no way disqualifies you. It doesn’t mean you don’t have the self-confidence, or the bravery, to embrace the risk to venture into the unknown.

You can be afraid and brave at the same time. Just don’t let fear overcome you. You can be a visionary and still doubt yourself. Just don’t let doubt overcome you. You can be an optimist and still worry about the future. Just don’t let anxiety eclipse hope and aspiration. You can be magnetic and still question if you deserve to be the one that others listen to and follow.⁷

If it were easy to take a stand, we wouldn’t be stuck in so many places where change is desperately needed. Trust your deep-rooted belief within that, without you, the future will continue to be the same as it was yesterday. Without the bravery to embrace your inner champion, you are destined to wonder about what the future would have been had you stood up to say or do something. Pondering “if I only....”

“I am afraid, yet fearless. For fearlessness is not the absence of fear, but the bravery to do it anyway.”⁹

—Runner
Natalie Labir

In September 1947 the influential magazine *Reader's Digest* published the following freestanding quotation attributed to Henry Ford: "Whether you believe you can do a thing or not, you are right."⁸

If you're waiting for someone to tell you what to do next, then you might be on the wrong side of change. If you're waiting for someone else to do what you feel is best for the future, not making your own case for what you envision and why, you will find yourself on the wrong side of destiny. Don't talk yourself out of doing something great. And don't listen to those who tell you that maybe you shouldn't see your dreams through.

When you don't know what to do next, take solace in the fact that not knowing what to do is exactly the spot where learning, creativity, and knowledge begin. The act of courage isn't just about taking risks; it's unleashing curiosity toward the unknown. It's where you find answers to the questions you didn't know to ask or didn't know the world needed you to ask.

Ask yourself: are you eager to discover new ways of doing things? Do you want to plunge yourself into the future and let go of the past, at least the things that aren't working?

Yes? Then you are ready to be a mindshifter.

A Set of Mindshift Practices: Developing Your Vision and Leading Others

Becoming a leader of change isn't just about having the strength or audacity or pure courage to take control. It requires having a compelling vision of the possibilities and the threats. This vision should motivate others to work together, bring those possibilities to life, and proactively get ahead of the threats. Mobilizing them also requires persuasively communicating that vision so that others experience the same mindshift that's driving you.

Helping others share in visions for positive change has become my life's work. Over the course of many years now, I've developed a set of practices for mindshifting, which I will share with you in the chapters ahead.

You don't mindshift in the way that your car automatically moves from first gear to second to third and so on. You mindshift because you learn to pay attention, to be mindful, to observe. That's where you recognize the problems to solve, the jobs to be done, and the opportunities to capture. You don't just mindshift. You *learn* to mindshift.

I wish I'd learned how to do it earlier (oops...engaging in a little "if only" there...). Throughout elementary school, my teachers repeatedly told me to stop daydreaming, to "snap out of it." I don't know if it was something in my eyes or mannerisms or if it was just obvious to everyone but me that I would tune out. My parents were told repeatedly, "He's often not paying attention. He's too consumed by other things." Those other things were dreams, dreams of becoming someone important, someone meaningful, someone who would make Mom and Dad proud. But I had no idea how to pursue them.

I guess I always felt out of place in my youth and early adulthood. Though I always imagined a better future, in vivid detail, those dreams were all over the place. I didn't believe that the cards that I was dealt represented the hand I was supposed to play in life. I felt this in my bones. But I didn't know how to break free from conventional expectations, and I didn't put two and two together to add up to an action plan that would move me closer toward those daydreams. So, I put them to rest and did my very best to follow the recipe for life that was supposed to bring success. I achieved success that made my parents proud and provided security, but I didn't feel joy in my work.

It wasn't until I was almost 30 years old that I learned what it meant to break free from the status quo, to see through the mainstream standards of happiness and success, and to begin thinking more creatively—more disruptively. I had begun reading about how the human mind works, learning about foibles in our

thinking, like cognitive biases. I learned how they blind us to the potential of emerging innovations and close our minds to new ways of thinking and doing. I dove into the literature about cultivating a beginner's mind and a growth mindset. I also learned the joy of rekindling our childhood sense of curiosity and wonder and how that helps open our minds to receive signals of exciting new possibilities. It was a fascinating journey of discovery, and in the chapters ahead, I will share the insights from it that allowed me to experience my first mindshift. They'll help you mindshift too.

This was when I found my calling, becoming what I've referred to as a *digital anthropologist*. I realized that I loved studying how disruptive technologies impact people's behaviors and how those changes in behaviors can result in massive market shifts. I began honing my ability to search for early signals, identifying emerging trends, of all sorts, and forecasting how they might change our lives.

Ever since, my work has been to continuously identify emergent trends that represent the potential to impact our lives, for better or worse. I then take those trends and break them down into a series of "what ifs" or "what abouts" to explore what each trend might lead to. That involves piecing together potential scenarios to explore how trends might impact a business, or the larger markets, and shift our trajectories. I then share these insights with executives, helping them to open their minds to the disruptions underway and the possibilities they present.

To keep my mind limber and open to nascent trends and to ensure I am making persuasive arguments to business leaders about them, I developed the set of practices I will share. They've allowed me to keep mindshifting as disruptions have just kept coming.

Making a mindshift shouldn't be a one-and-done thing. Once we learn how to open our minds to make a shift, we can apply the same tools to keep staying alert about changes on the horizon and seeing the new opportunities we can pounce on. There is never going to be a time when disruptions stop. There is also never going to be a time when mindshifters aren't needed to awaken the naysayers, the doubters, the deniers, and the outright resisters.

So, please join me, and many great thinkers and doers I've learned from, on a mindshifting journey.

One of those great thinkers and doers I've found inspiration from is Steve Jobs. In a stirring interview, he spoke about the power we all have to be the leaders the world needs:

When you grow up, you get told that the world is the way it is, and your life is just to live your life inside the world...but that's a very limited life. Life can be much broader once you discover one simple fact...everything around you that you call life was made up by people who were no smarter than you.

You can change it. You can influence it.

The minute you realize you can poke life...you can change it. You can mold it.

That's maybe the most important thing.

Shake off this erroneous notion that life is there and you're just going to live it versus embrace it.

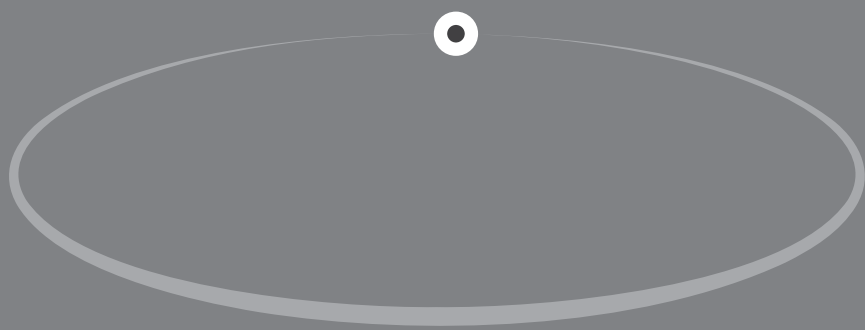
Change it. Improve it. Make your mark upon it. However you learn it, you'll want to change life and make it better because it's kind of messed up in a lot of ways. Once you learn that [you can change the present], you'll never want to be the same way again.

So, let's go! Your courage is calling.

18

Chapter 1

Executives Don't Know What They Don't Know



“The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

—Alvin Toffler

Alvin

Toffler introduced the term *future shock* in his influential bestselling book of that title, and he described it as a form of cultural anxiety, with both psychological and physiological effects.¹ Put simply, it’s the inability to cope with the rapid and myriad social and technological changes of modern society.²

Future shock has run rampant within companies during in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic.

I had a very special opportunity to speak at the Hawaii Medical Services Association (HMSA) Employer Well-Being Forum in Honolulu about the future of work and employee well-being. Even though I was visiting paradise, the local companies were facing the same challenges being confronted all around the world. Particular issues were the Great Resignation, with so many of their employees preferring to leave their jobs rather than return to the office, and the phenomenon dubbed *quiet quitting*, with people staying in their jobs but said to be working less diligently.

As the world opened up, employers were surprised to learn that people weren’t overjoyed to return to their traditional jobs. Nearly 57 million Americans quit between January 2021 and February 2022.³ An average of 4.2 million workers quit in each month spanning from May to September 2022.⁴ At the same time, nearly