

'A great book for wise and effective leadership. Dynamic, insightful, practical and visionary.'

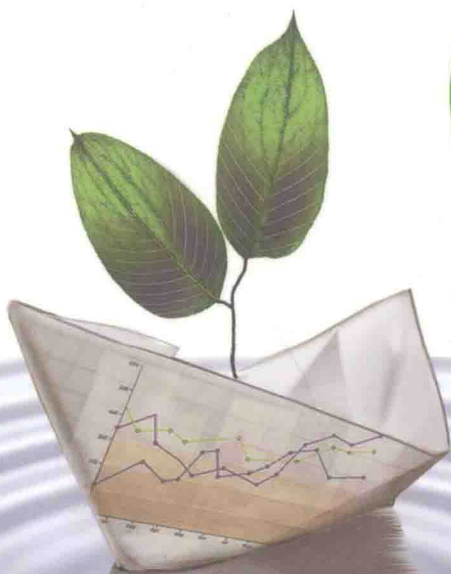
—Jack Kornfield PhD, author of *The Wise Heart*

THE Mindful LEADER

7 Practices for Transforming
Your Leadership, Your Organisation
and Your Life

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& COMPANION
WORKBOOK



MICHAEL BUNTING

WILEY

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This book shows us that it truly is possible to be a successful business leader and an aware, compassionate human being. If you are wanting to find a way to authentic happiness and leadership effectiveness this is a great resource.

—**Gordon Cairns, chairman, Woolworths Limited and
Origin Energy**

The Mindful Leader is a not-to-be-missed read. Michael Bunting breaks new ground, adding an important dimension to our understanding of leadership and the practice of leading. He offers insights about mindfulness that clearly illustrate how leadership development begins within, and he brings science to mindfulness in a way that offers practical applications for meeting today's leadership challenges—and for making an extraordinary difference in the world.

—**Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, co-authors of the
award-winning book, *The Leadership Challenge***

We know self-aware leaders consistently achieve the best long term results for themselves and for others. This practical and insightful book is an excellent guide to developing extraordinary levels of self-awareness. Read it, apply its lessons and your leadership and life will be so much better for it.

—**Shaun McCarthy, chairman, Human Synergistics,
Australia & New Zealand**

What I greatly appreciate about Michael Bunting's new book is that it reveals the value of honesty, truthfulness and integrity, not as a matter of right or wrong, but as an essential aspect of highly effective leadership. If all those in leadership positions around the globe took *The Mindful Leader* as a guide for their work, the results would be impressive.

—**Sharon Salzberg, author of *Lovingkindness* and
*Real Happiness at Work***

Our world needs a new kind of leader. The old paradigms of power, fear and control just don't work in our modern economy anymore. We need leaders who know how to inspire through vision, integrity, sustainability and compassion. If you are interested in finding out how to become a leader for the new economy this is a great read.

—**Jostein Solheim, CEO, Ben & Jerry's**

I have worked with Michael specifically in the area of Mindful Leadership and can say with confidence that Michael is the real deal. His deep understanding of the subject is second to none, and his methodology is disciplined and impactful. This book is an extraordinary resource for all leaders aiming to realise their true potential.

—**Brian Gladsden, Country President and Managing Director, Novartis Australia and New Zealand**

Michael Bunting is at the cutting edge of a new wave of business leadership that is developing more conscious, responsible, and dynamic organizations. His brilliant book shows us that outward success and a life of integrity and compassion are completely compatible, and that a deeper integration of our outer and inner lives is necessary for the future of our planet. This is a book for all those who truly wish to find a way to live and lead more consciously in the business world.

—**Russ Hudson, co-author of *The Wisdom of the Enneagram* and collaborator for *The Awakened Company***

Leading in a way that leaves a positive legacy for generations to come should be the benchmark by which we measure great leadership. Conscious leadership is a requisite characteristic of any person who wishes to harness the potential of a millennial team. This book is a beautiful reminder of what that kind of leadership looks like and how to practice it.

—**John Replege, CEO, Seventh Generation**

I have worked with Michael Bunting for several years. The message in this book reflects the way he lives and teaches—mindfully and insightfully. This book is a wonderful guide on exactly how to fully integrate mindfulness into your life and leadership. Science now tells us that mindfulness has a great impact on personal effectiveness, which in turn is not only good for you, but also for those you lead.

—**Jan Pacas, MD, Hilti Australia,
2015 AHRI CEO of the Year**

The Mindful Leader outlines the practices and disciplines that we see in the most effective and successful leaders. A really insightful and useful read for those wanting a practical guide for truly constructive leadership.

—**Andrew Reeves, CEO, George Weston
Foods Australasia**

The world, more than ever, needs mindful leaders. What are the leadership qualities and attributes that are fostered by mindfulness? How can they be brought about? This outstanding book by Michael Bunting, based on his deep understanding of leadership development as well as the science and practice of mindfulness, provides the answers to those and many other related questions. Read it or give it to people who need to read it.

—**Dr Craig Hassed, author of *Mindfulness for Life***

I believe that being a great leader and a great human being are inseparable. This book beautifully shows us how to do both; to be not only the best leader in the world, but to be the best leader for the world. Reading *The Mindful Leader* and applying its lessons will enrich your life, your leadership, and the lives of all those you influence.

—**Rachel Argaman, CEO, TFE Hotels, Telstra National
Corporate Businesswoman of the Year**

Michael Bunting does a fantastic job of helping us not only learn how to practice mindfulness, but how to practice it in the pressurised and rapidly changing context of business leadership. If you apply the practices in this book it will not only make you a better person, it will transform your leadership and your business.

—**Angus Kennard, Kennards Hire Group**

As business is waking up to the sustainability revolution, so too must leaders embrace a new, deeply mindful kind of leadership. This book will guide you on how to be the kind of leader that this planet needs now more than ever. The kind of leader and human being your children would be proud of.

—**Ryan Honeyman, author of *The B Corp Handbook***

Free Bonus Resources

To get the most out of this book, make sure you download your free resources and companion workbook at www.mindfulleaderbook.com/bonus

THE Mindful
LEADER

To my three children.

My deepest hope is that this book will make the world a better place, so your generation's future is filled with consciousness, kindness, connection and sustainability.

About the author

Michael Bunting is the founder of the leadership consultancy WorkSmart Australia, a certified B Corp. He has trained and coached thousands of leaders, from CEOs to front-line leaders. WorkSmart consults to organisations ranging from global multinationals through to medium-sized businesses in the area of leadership, engagement, alignment, values and culture. He is the author of *A Practical Guide to Mindful Meditation* and co-authored *Extraordinary Leadership in Australia & New Zealand* with Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, the world's premier researchers and authors in the field of leadership. He also teaches Mindful Leadership for Sydney University's award-winning Global Executive MBA.

Michael regularly contributes articles for industry magazines including *CEO Magazine*, *BRW*, *SmartCompany* and *Inside HR*. He has also appeared on Sky Business News and several radio stations. He delivers large-scale keynote presentations at industry events, trade shows and company off-sites.

Michael has run a disciplined personal mindfulness practice for more than 23 years and has taught mindful leadership to businesses and government for more than 16 years. Michael holds two business degrees and a postgraduate diploma in mindfulness-based psychotherapy.

He lives with his family in Sydney, Australia.

Introduction

How mindfulness impacts leadership

One can have no smaller or greater mastery than mastery of oneself.

Leonardo da Vinci

When I started my personal transformation journey at the age of 22, fresh out of studying business at university, I had no idea what I was signing up for. I was starting what seemed like a cool process of gathering knowledge by taking evening classes in practical philosophy, depth psychology and mindfulness meditation. I thought this would somehow make me special.

What I did not realise at the time was how delightfully humbling the process would be—that it would bring me into direct, truthful contact with my confusion, my deep conditioning, my self-obsession, my painful insecurity, my need to feel validated by always being ‘right’... and so much more. Rather than making me special it exposed a wonderful ordinariness in me.

Now, as I look back on years of disciplined mindfulness practice, the inquiry processes, the failures and successes, the laughter and the tears, I see that mastery of oneself is more about removal than addition. It’s about stripping off the masks and pretences that keep us feeling isolated. It’s about letting go of beliefs and ideas that keep us locked in self-defeating habits. It’s about dissolving the inner judge,

surrendering the burden of a busy mind, and rediscovering the innate love and wisdom that have been with us all along. It's a mastery that clears the conditioned patterns that confine us.

And as we let go, we begin to connect with our deepest, truest selves. In a sense, we take Pinocchio's journey. We become real and authentic, and our artificial selves fade away. As the parts of us that we want to hide from ourselves and the world are revealed, we are empowered to fully embrace our whole selves. This is how we find authentic joy and meaning in our lives.

What is mindfulness?

I define mindfulness as *maintaining an open hearted awareness of our thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations and environment in the present moment*. It is paying attention in the present moment purposefully, warmly and non-judgementally. It is experiencing and accepting the present moment as it really is—not how we want it to be, think it should be or perceive it to be, but as it really is.

Kevin Pickhardt, the CEO of Pharos, a print management solutions company headquartered in New York, gave me his beautiful definition of mindfulness: 'Being mindful is our ability to pay attention and respond to every situation in the healthiest way possible—to accept whatever happens and respond with kindness, compassion and understanding.'

Through meditation and other practices we become more aware of our habitual reactions, expand the gap between stimulus and response and make wiser choices. We learn to see the innermost motivations for our actions and become more honest with ourselves. We learn to be the observer of our thoughts, rather than identifying with them and getting caught up in the mental stories we create. In short, we become profoundly self-aware.

The extensive research I will share with you in this book shows that mindfulness is not a new age, intangible abstraction for lofty-minded seekers of spiritual enlightenment. It is a concrete discipline proven to provide real, *measurable* benefits for your behaviour,

performance, health and happiness. It is a well-developed, thoroughly substantiated, evidence-based process for gaining clarity and accessing and developing your greatest potential. As my friend and colleague Charlotte Thaarup-Owen, founder of the Mindfulness Clinic, puts it, ‘Mindfulness practice enables us to gradually learn to use the mind just as a tool, rather than as a tool and an obstacle. Our past conditioning embedded in our mind often gets in our way and causes us to make poor decisions. Mindfulness trains the mind to become present so that we can greet every experience with wisdom and freshness and start responding instead of reacting.’

The integration of mindfulness and leadership

Within a few years of starting my journey with mindfulness I was fortunate to meet two wonderful mentors who taught me the connections between mindfulness and leadership. As mindfulness became my deepest passion, they invited me to teach and make a living from the work. This was at a time when very few organisations offered transformational leadership development programs, let alone mindfulness training. Back in the late nineties mindfulness was a radical idea, even stigmatised. I took a great risk when I left my own thriving paper merchant business and joined them in the trailblazing venture of teaching mindfulness and leadership to business and government.

But it worked, and far exceeded my expectations. The programs were radically successful. Before any research on mindfulness was available, people connected with the elegant common sense of mindfulness in a leadership and transformational context, and the results were usually life changing.

The key is the integration of mindfulness and leadership. Just being mindful is not enough. Even with serious mindfulness training we can still be poor leaders. But when mindfulness is fully integrated into leadership, exponential progress can be made. This book marries research-based mindfulness practices and leadership behaviours to

provide a practical model for improving your leadership and your life. For me, that has been the greatest reward of this work—supporting leaders to *truly* transform themselves and their teams.

I don't think the leaders I've worked with had much idea what they were taking on when they said yes to authentic, mindful leadership and personal development. They did not realise that the familiar ground they were standing on would be shaken. We like the word *transformation*, but the process is a whole lot grittier than the advertising. As one of my favourite awareness teachers once put it, 'Most of us are not prepared to sign up for transformation, we just want to become a caterpillar with wings. But that is not a butterfly.' The caterpillar does not survive the process of becoming a butterfly.

Transformation is the territory of true leadership. The process of reinvention calls for a spirit of adventure. A transformational leader is willing to stay young, a beginner, an adventurer inside and out. They are also ordinary people. The work of true transformation is just that: work. It takes no special talent or skill. But it does take an uncommon determination to face our fears, reactivity, avoidance patterns and insecurities and to keep going. It takes strength.

Developing as a leader is about cultivating our inner strength to stay true under fire, to ask questions we don't know the answer to, to stay balanced when our world is turning upside down, to stay kind and respectful when the heat of anger and frustration is coursing through our veins, to courageously hold ourselves and others accountable when we want to slip into avoidance and self-justification. It is about enabling ourselves to connect with others with authentic compassion, to truly understand them, to see their struggles and aspirations, the deepest desires of their hearts, their greatest potential. And, perhaps above all, it is to stay real, to keep coming back to honesty and humility.

My friend Barry Keesan, Senior Vice President for General Code, a municipal codification service company in the US, explained to me how feedback is critical to this process. People are reluctant to give leaders feedback because they fear the consequences. This can create a skewed view of reality in the leader—it's easy to start believing

you are perfect and everyone is engaged. That's a dangerous way to lead, especially if you are the last to know when your people are not truly aligned. So you have to really work at getting honest feedback.

Barry said, 'You have to make yourself vulnerable, admit your fears, mistakes and uncertainties, and communicate to people that you welcome honest feedback. And that sends a message that you value them, that their opinion matters and that you are humble enough to look at your own actions. For me, it's actually a validation that I am doing something right when my team gives me honest feedback. It's paradoxical, but true. It means I have a good relationship with my team when they tell me when I did something that was out of line.'

When I expressed my surprise at Barry's attitude, given how rare it is, he explained that what has enabled him to stay open is years of mindfulness practice. Mindful, inspiring leaders like Barry are authentic and courageous enough to put down their mask. They have found a deeper place of self-acceptance in themselves, an acceptance of their humanity. They know all too well their faults and failures. They rarely excuse them or rationalise them. When they go off track (as they inevitably will) they are willing to really listen to the feedback they receive. They are people we can trust and relate to. We warm to them because they have cultivated an awareness we are drawn to.

But don't misinterpret their kindness and authenticity for complacency or softness. They can be tough when they need to be. Their compassion can be fierce. They will hold you accountable for commitments and will not avoid the tough conversations. They will stretch you beyond your capacity.

Jeff Weiner, the CEO of LinkedIn, a strong advocate of mindful leadership and judged by one rating service to be the best CEO in the US, is a great example of this. When asked in an interview how he handles poor performance he replied, 'You do it in the most compassionate and most constructive way you know how.' Jeff then goes all in with those people to help them close their performance gap, and if it does not work out they are invited to leave, but with the support to find something better. As he put, 'And if it doesn't work