'Dr Jason Fox is in search of curiosity, courage and humanity at work. In this deep, personal and thoughtful book, he challenges each of us to dig a little deeper on our way to making a difference.'
— **Seth Godin,** author of *What To Do When It's Your Turn*

How to Lead a Quest

a handbook for pioneering executives

Dr Jason Fox

best-selling author of *The Game Changer*

WILEY

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About the Author

Dr Jason Fox is a motivation design specialist who shows forward-thinking leaders around the world how to unlock new progress and build for the future of work.

His clients include *Fortune* 500 companies such as Microsoft, PepsiCo, McDonalds and Beam Suntory, and other multinationals such as Toyota, Sony Playstation, Gartner, Telstra, Macquarie Group, Commonwealth Bank, Red Cross, Suncorp Group, Singtel Optus, Origin Energy, AMP, Xero, Bellroy and the International Institute of Research (along with a bunch of universities and other research institutions).

Some of Jason's best work has seen him partner with senior leadership teams to navigate through unprecedented and wickedly complex enterprise challenges. Such adventures typically span beyond a year, and involve deep strategic immersions and a refreshed approach to leadership development and culture change.

In addition to his work as an adviser and mentor, Jason is an in-demand conference speaker (frequently booked over a year in advance) who works particularly well with sceptical audiences who have 'seen it all before'. Jason delivers fresh and relevant thinking to instil new curiosity for meaningful progress and future growth.

And when he's not speaking at events, he's creating them. Jason is the director of The Cleverness conference, Clever Happenings think tanks,

a director of The Future of Leadership, and an ambassador for the idea execution conference 99U.

Jason is also the best-selling author of *The Game Changer*—a book that unpacks the science of motivation and game design to drive progress and change at work.

When not liberating the world from default thinking and the curse of efficiency, Jason enjoys partaking in the fine art of coffee snobbery, sun avoidance and beard maintenance.

Learn more at www.drjasonfox.com

PS: About the Illustrator | Dr Kim Lam is the much more delightful counterpart to Dr Jason Fox. Kim loves drawing. Drawing stories, drawing diagnoses, drawing in rock-paper-scissors, but most of all—drawing illustrations. At the quarter-life mark, Kim decided to swap her veterinarian-day-job and moonlighting-illustrator combination. She now operates with a pen, running projects as Dangerlam, and saves little furry lives as a rather specialised side-hobby. She loves the thrill of chasing complex ideas and capturing them in simple and compelling ways through illustration and animation.

You can see more of her work at www.dangerlam.com

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Gratitudes

Here are a heap of hat tips, hugs and endearingly misplaced/mistimed high-fives to the many fine folk who made this book possible. Without their support, I couldn't have written this book for you.

Firstly, I'm grateful for all of the authors and thought leaders that have gone before me. Writing a book requires a degree of dedication that borders upon ridiculousness. But by venturing through doubt, uncertainty and paradox, these past adventurers have captured the knowledge we build upon today. They're the pioneers, and I doff my hat to them.

I'm also grateful for the folks at Wiley. Thank you Kristen for seeing the merit in this book right away, and for your trust in me. Thanks also to Ingrid for your support at every stage, and to Chris and Alice for pulling it all together at the end. Without your support, I'm not sure this book could have ever been published —I'd still be writing and exploring.

Big hugs to Charlotte, my supercool editor. I was worried that all of the jolly quirks in my writing would be ironed out into something bland —but quite the opposite happened. Thanks to the thorough, clever and effective editing of Charlotte, this book actually makes a bit of sense and has become even more of a delight to read. Huge thanks also to Jack and Mel for your editing support.

There have been a few mates that have been quite influential in my own thinking. Sweeping feathered hat tips (in no particular order) to Matt Church, Peter Cook, Darren and Alison Hill, Jennifer and Dougal

Jackson, Amantha Imber, Sean Fabri, Will Dayble, Dan Gregory, Kieran Flanagan... plus a bunch of folk who I will no doubt regret having forgotten to mention here. They're all thought leaders and champions in their own right.

I'm lucky to work with some pretty ace clients. Thanks especially to the University of Melbourne's Centre for Workplace Leadership. Peter, Sarah and the gang—you guys are legendary, and your support has contributed much richness to this book. Love you guys.

Cheers also to the folks who manage and contribute to 99u.com (a world of insight in making ideas happen). You're part of my daily feed.

I need to thank my friends and family—they have all been incredibly patient and kind to me as I write this book. I've been that guy who ghosts on weddings and birthdays, and who brings book writing to dinner. Thanks for still liking me and wanting to hang out.

Thanks to all the folks at Industry Beans, Everyday Cafe, Hammer & Tong and all of the good cafes in Melbourne. You provided the magic to fuel my writing. Thanks also to my catpanion 'π' who reminds me to be present (by sitting on my laptop).

I'm so grateful for everyone who purchased my first book *The Game Changer* and made it a best-seller. It gave me the confidence to write the slightly more daring book you hold in your hands right now. I'm also especially grateful those who left a kind review online—this feedback kept me buoyed when the doubt got heavy. Thanks also to all the savvy folk who subscribe to my museletter, and who attend our events. I love you all.

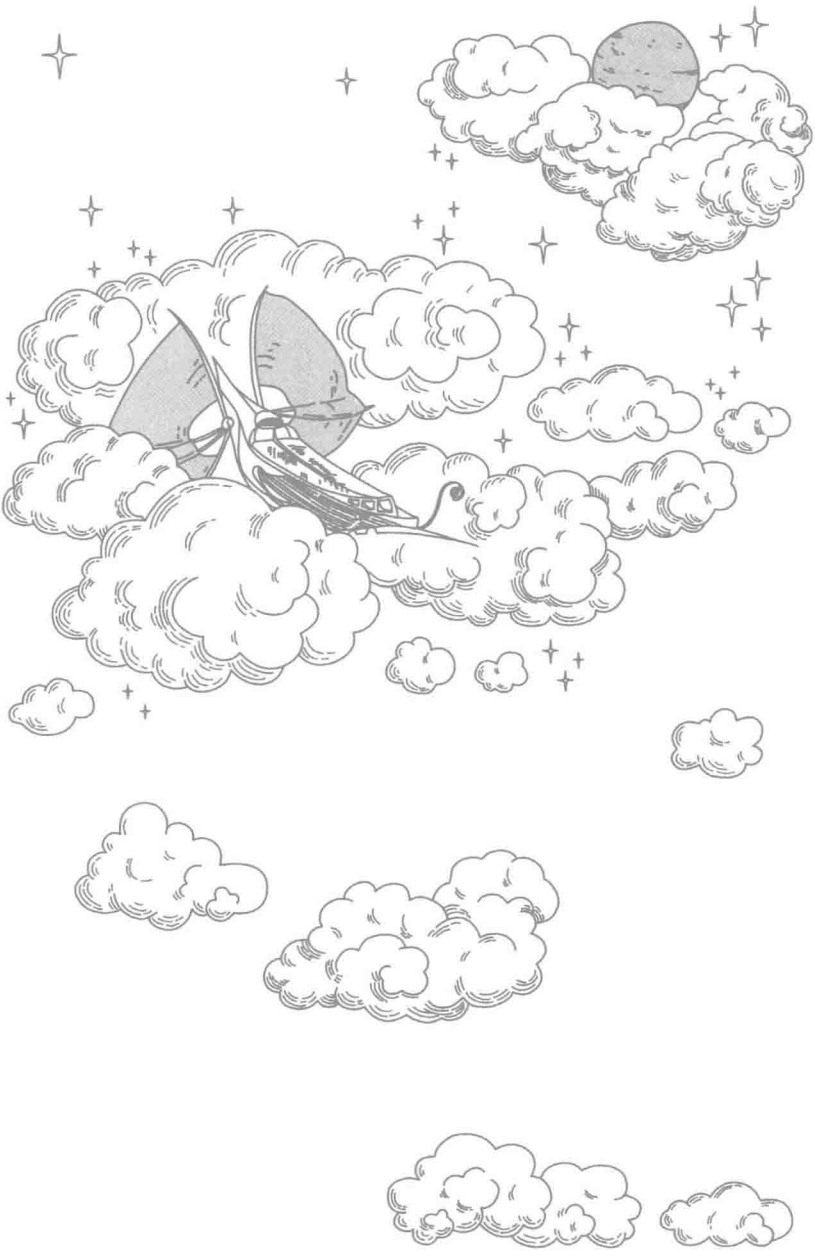
But yes, I've been building up to the two most special people I am most grateful for.

First, to my business manager Bianka. Ah B, you are such a blessing. Not only do you curtail all the entropy that comes with a dynamic business like ours—you keep all of our clients thoroughly nurtured and happy too. I love your proactive empathy, strategy and intuition, and your ability to make good things flourish. Thank you for everything!

And finally, my wonderful darling Kim (aka the 'dangerlam'). You have been the most supportive of all. You've been the light in the dark, and you've kept me aloft throughout—even when things became stupidly busy. I literally couldn't have done this without you. I'm so grateful to

share life with you, and to have your illustrations in this book. You are pure wonder, insight and delight!

Oh and thank *you,* dear reader, for being the type of person curious enough to read these acknowledgements. I love people like you. People like you are the best.



Introduction

Almost every leadership, strategy and motivation book on the planet advocates the importance of having a crystal-clear goal or vision for the future.

But, intuitively, we know this is an incredibly flawed position to take.

Sure, this outlook may serve in the short term. And, of course, an enterprise *needs* goals. If you want to galvanise a group of people towards achieving a particular outcome, a clear goal or vision is essential. People like goals—they remove the angst of uncertainty, and give us something to focus our efforts towards. Clear goals can also be reverse-engineered and broken down to create a roadmap, with clear milestones and executable steps. Past experience can be leveraged to improve performance, and systems can be optimised to improve efficiencies. Goals are easy to implement and incentivise, and a raft of precedents prove their efficacy.

But what happens if you don't know what the future has in store for your enterprise? What if you don't have a clear goal? What if you only have a vague hunch, or a fuzzy sense that something needs to change? What then? Do you simply wait for clarity? Or do you manufacture a goal and a forced sense of certainty?

Or worse: *What happens if you wake up after a long 'winning streak' only to discover that your enterprise is no longer relevant?*

This is the major challenge many enterprise leaders face, and the fundamental flaw with leadership focused on clear goals and operational wins.

Naturally, this is quite a predicament. We cannot afford to simply *wait* for clarity. But at the same time, we cannot set forth a single, clear vision for the future while knowing that the future is infinitely complex and uncertain. What to do?

LEAD A QUEST

This book presents a different approach to enterprise strategy and leadership. I wouldn't go as far as to say it is an 'alternative' approach; rather, it is something much more complementary: *pioneering* leadership.

Rather than simply work within existing parameters of operational excellence (incrementally optimising your business model to meet customer needs), pioneering leadership sees you embarking upon quests. Such quests allow us to systematically explore complex and uncertain futures. We don't set goals in the hopes that a particular future will manifest—rather, we explore multiple possible futures, and prepare proactive stratagems to capitalise on each.

The result of this continuous and dynamic approach is that enterprise strategy and leadership is enriched with viable, alternative options to pursue. Such options allow enterprise leaders to mitigate risk, obtain strategic advantage and ensure meaningful progress as the world changes.

If this sounds too good to be true, don't worry—it quickly won't.

Pioneering leadership is challenging to initiate and maintain—especially when compared to the established approach that favours fast results with a bias toward prudence and predictability. But! If we can crack through our default thinking, pioneering leadership offers enterprise leaders the chance to obtain the most important thing of all—*enduring relevance.*

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USING THIS BOOK

The biggest paradox about writing a somewhat practical book about the dynamic and non-linear nature of leading a quest is that a book is static and linear. Because we don't have the benefit of exploring this concept together over a dynamic conversation with coffee and expansive gesticulation (at least, not right now), the inescapably static and linear nature of a book requires that I arrange relevant concepts into a seemingly logical sequence.

And so, I have attempted to do this. The result is okay—but it's not perfect. In fact, you may find yourself jumping back and forth between chapters.[1] To assist you with this dance, here's a nifty overview of the parts that make up this book:

Part I: Default Thinking and the Kraken of Doom frames the *why* behind this book. Yes, I used that classic approach of framing the problem

1 | Think of this book as a *Choose Your Own Adventure*, rather than simply a 'follow the instructions' book.

and context first. Call it constructive discontent. In part I, we explore default thinking, the Curse of Efficiency and the Delusion of Progress. We also review the default growth arc of an enterprise, and discover how great businesses can one day wake up to discover they are no longer relevant.

If you want to get into the meat of the book, you could skip part I—but I don't advise it. You see, I have this terrible tendency to weave metaphors through my stories (rather than use bland corporate speak). A key metaphor in this story—the Inevitable Kraken of Doom—is introduced in part I, and you don't want to miss this beast.

Part II: A Quest Beckons unpacks the *what*—Quest-Augmented Strategy. This is a framework for meaningful progress and enduring relevance, and is the main proposition of this book: providing a means to augment enterprise strategy with pioneering leadership. The model presented in chapter 5 summarises this framework, so, hot tip: if you find yourself getting lost, return to chapter 5.

Part III: Cultivating Options includes the first of our more focused *how* chapters. This may be the most challenging and paradoxical part of the book. Here, we explore infinitely complex and uncertain future contexts. Your existing business rationale is then contrasted against these possible futures, to identify any incoherencies.[2] Such incoherencies may harbour alternative options—new pathways that may be of strategic merit to your enterprise. We harvest these.

Part IV: Crafting Experiments then switches our focus from pioneering thinking to pioneering *doing*. Here we explore how you can support experiments that enhance learning and yield strategic insight. It's through this focus that our alternative strategic options are validated.

Part V: Augmenting Strategy sees us switch back into more familiar operational territory. Here, we focus on how you can augment existing enterprise strategy with the viable alternative options generated through pioneering work. This is how we secure enduring relevance.

Part VI: Making Progress is what happens when we don't succumb to The Delusion of Progress—that is, our tendency to get caught up in the busy work. This section offers some practical insight for enterprise leaders looking to make meaningful progress 'the new normal'.

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2 | Don't rush this chapter.

Part VII: Pioneering Culture is a whole heap of fun. Having progressed through each quadrant of Quest-Augmented Strategy, we then cast our focus on new rituals you can integrate—personally and with your team—to lead meaningful progress. Through this, you begin to integrate pioneering leadership into workplace culture.

And then it all wraps up with a short **conclusion**. You may find that you are left with more questions than answers. If so, marvellous. This is my gift to you.

Righto, shall we? Let's get into it.

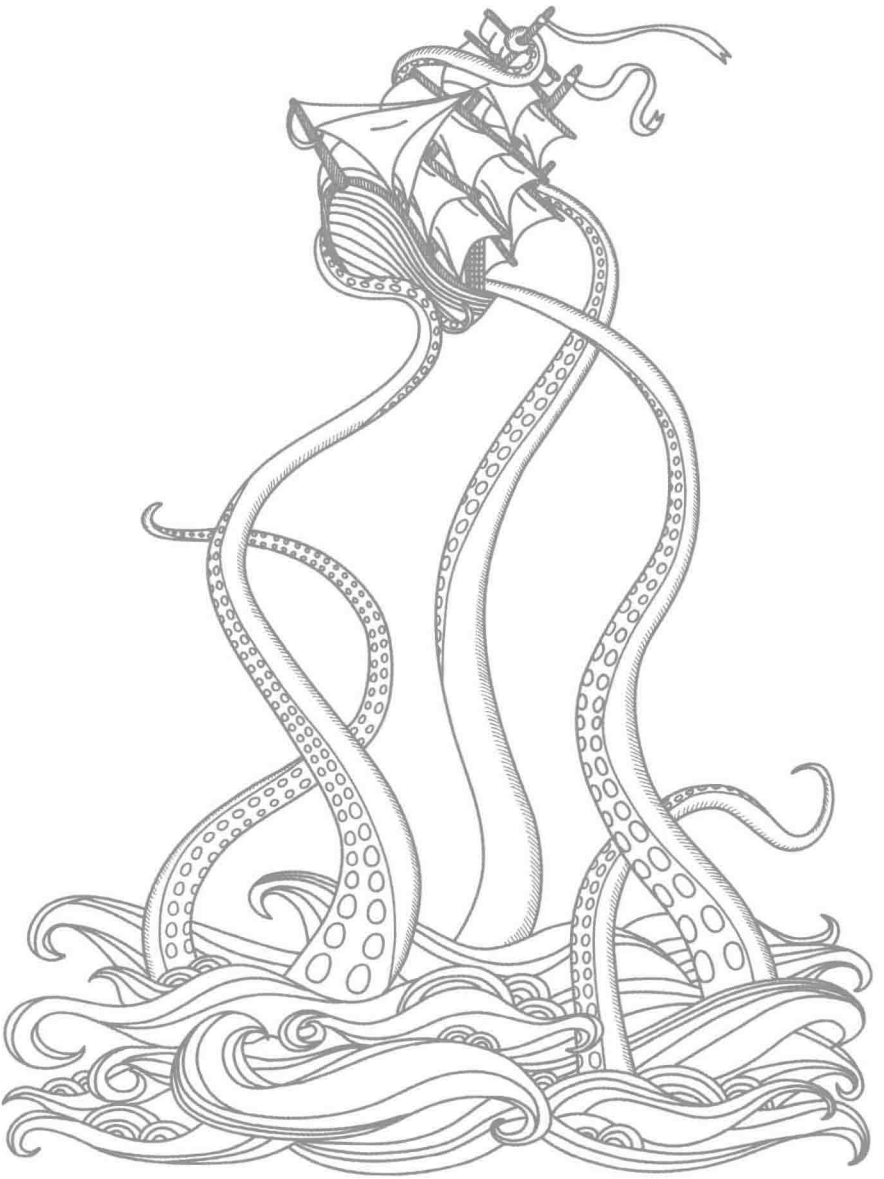

Table of Contents

About the Author | ix
Gratitudes | xi
Introduction | xv

Part I
Default Thinking and the Kraken of Doom
Why lead a quest?

1. The Anatomy of Default Thinking | 3
Cognitive shortcuts & the virtues of laziness

2. The Curse of Efficiency | 15
A Delusion of Progress & the bane of strategy

3. A Rainbow of Growth and Despair | 23
A default growth arc & the Inevitable Kraken of Doom

Δ Summary | 35

Part II
A Quest Beckons
What makes up a quest?

4. An Alternative Option | 41
A call to adventure & the hidden benefits of doubt

5. Quest-Augmented Strategy | 59
A framework for meaningful progress & enduring relevance

6. Here be Dragons | 69
Dissociated metacognition & the siren call of self-sabotage

Δ Summary | 79

Part III
Cultivating Options
How do we find alternative pathways?

7. An Intuitive Reckoning | 85
A nagging hunch & the hint of strategic advantage

8. Intriguing Incoherence | 93
Pioneering through uncertainty, complexity & paradox

9. Pathways of Possibility | 113
A quiver of options & the anticipation of chooks

Δ Summary | 119

Part IV
Crafting Experiments
How do we validate alternative pathways?

10. It's Not About Ideas | 125
The many virtues of a science-based approach

11. Planning to Fail | 141
Navigating the nine layers of Fell

12. Viable Alternative Options | 155
Packaged intelligence & a path to follow

Δ Summary | 163

Part V
Augmenting Strategy
How do we lead better strategy?

13. Back to the Future | 169
Getting strategic about strategy

14. Choosing to Choose | 177
Mapping options & dodging cognitive bias

15. Strategy for Breakfast | 191
The networked enterprise & a responsive hydra

Δ Summary | 201

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