



IGNITE

REAL **LEADERSHIP**

REAL **TALK**

REAL **RESULTS**

GABRIELLE DOLAN



WILEY



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Leadership is a privilege. I am humbled by it every day. As leaders we have the opportunity to have a huge effect on an organisation's culture just through creating more genuine connections with our people. Connecting people to a vision takes heart, it takes guts, and is driven by passion. Telling stories that resonate and drive an organisation's purpose is a powerful and important part of a leader's ability to truly engage. Read this book, listen, learn, practise, put yourself out there and practise some more—the people you are leading deserve nothing less.

**—Andrew Thorburn, Managing Director and Group
Chief Executive Officer of the National Australia
Bank Group**

An insightful read about the human dimension of leadership. Gabrielle has provided a timely exploration of what it is to be a leader in today's complex world with information overload and the expectations of Generation Y. She peels back the layers of what it is to be an effective leader and provides a practical guide to her readers as to how we can better connect, communicate and engage as leaders.

**—Janine Kirk, Chief Executive at
The Prince's Charities Australia**

Gabrielle Dolan provides brilliant hands-on advice for achieving success in any of the various roles you play, and models that advice in the writing of the book itself: it is a full dose of her authenticity, vulnerability and energy. She makes it real to help us make ourselves more real.

**—Marty Linsky, Co-Founder and Principal at
Cambridge Leadership Associates**

Gabrielle Dolan lays bare the myth that traditional approaches to leadership and antiquated management by hierarchy will survive in the era of Gen Y and Millennial workforces. Authentic leadership and emotional maturity are key success criteria for today's leaders as we confront

information challenges and disruptive competitors far greater than anything we could have imagined. In *Ignite*, Gabrielle successfully threads humour and personal perspectives, making this a very accessible and enjoyable guide for any evolving leader.

—**Kate Hughes, Chief Risk Officer,
Finance and Strategy, Telstra**

What I love about Gabrielle is that she keeps it real. Sure she's direct, honest and straight, but she also generates real results with her clients and those she mentors. If you're after another self-help tome that blows smoke up your backside, this book is not for you, but if you're ready to take a look at who you are and what you achieve, Gabrielle has the goods.

—**Dan Gregory, CEO at The Impossible Institute,
co-author of *Selfish, Scared and Stupid***

Gabrielle's book offers a refreshing and humorous approach to thinking about leadership impact. It is quite literally bursting at the seams with practical information, ideas, stories (of course) and stimulating questions. I hope it 'Ignites' you as it has me!

—**Hilary Crowe, Vice President,
Group Human Resources, Amcor Ltd, Zurich**

Leadership is about self-awareness and having the confidence to be you. If you want to know if you are leading authentically, read this book!

—**Layne Beachley, seven-time ASP Women's World
Champion Surfer, motivational speaker,
entrepreneur and philanthropist**

If knowledge is power and wisdom is knowledge applied then *Ignite* is that rare book that helps leaders take an idea and run with it. Packed full of practical truths you can use.

—**Matt Church, Founder of Thought Leaders Global,
author of *Amplifiers***

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gabrielle Dolan launched her own practice in 2013 after successfully co-founding and then building One Thousand & One into Australia's leading storytelling company.

Over the last decade, Gabrielle has worked with thousands of high-profile leaders from around Australia and the world, helping them become more real leaders and communicators. She is a highly sought after international mentor and keynote speaker on storytelling and leadership.

Before running her own company, Gabrielle held various senior leadership roles at the National Australia Bank and was responsible for leading major organisational change.

Gabrielle is the co-author of *Hooked: How Leaders Connect, Engage and Inspire with Storytelling* and co-author of *Eliminate Death by PowerPoint*.

She is a graduate from the Harvard Kennedy School of Executive Education in the Art and Practice of Leadership Development program. Her other academic qualifications

include a master's degree in Management and Leadership from Swinburne University and an associate diploma in Education and Training from the University of Melbourne.

In 2015 Gabrielle became an Australian and New Zealand Partner at Thought Leaders Global, where she works with organisations to help them gain a competitive edge through thought leadership. She was also nominated in Telstra's Business Woman of the Year awards.

When she is not working in her practice, she can be found working in her vegetable garden at her 25-acre rural property located on the southern coast of New South Wales. She believes that if there were less manure in business and more manure in vegie gardens, the world would be a better place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A book is very rarely a solo effort and this is no exception.

I would firstly like to thank my friend of over 30 years Gail Holstock, who undertook the vast majority of the research for *Ignite*. Her research and suggestions gave weight to my thoughts and concepts and was the catalyst for many inclusions in this book.

A huge thanks to graphic designer extraordinaire Jodie Brennan, who takes my scrappy drawings of models and designs them so they look cool and sleek.

The book was brought up a notch or three by Jo Stewart, who undertook the initial editing process. Her work has helped turn this book into something I am very proud of and I thank her for her tough love.

I would also like to thank Lucy Raymond from Wiley for her ongoing support for my writing and initial guidance when the book was still in its conceptual stage. Thanks also

to Ingrid, Alice, Pete and the rest of the Wiley team who provided valuable insights throughout the process.

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The book would not be the same if it were not for the people who allowed me to share their stories. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for being part of this. I would also like to thank the many people that took the time to read the manuscript and provide testimonials.

I also thank the clients who continue to grow with me and support me. Particularly Cindy Batchelor, Natalie Mina, Fiona Robertson, Georgia Russell, Sonia Aplin, Mark LeBusque and Jac Phillips. I love working with you.

A special thanks to Elise Turner, who is firstly my friend and secondly my executive manager. Elise has undertaken, and will continue to undertake, a lot of the marketing and logistics for *Ignite*—and just makes my life easier and work a hell of a lot more fun. Thanks mate!

Finally, a very special thanks to my husband, Steve, and daughters, Alex and Jess. They continue to support and

believe in me and always let me blog about them ... granted, they don't normally find out until after it has been published. They allow me to live the dream and they make everything worthwhile. Love you.

And, of course, thank you for reading this book. I hope after reading *Ignite* you will join me in the challenge to get real. The people you lead crave it and deserve it.

INTRODUCTION

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The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.

— **Socrates, Greek philosopher**

I entered the workforce in 1985, smack-bang in the middle of the eighties. The eighties were good times. They were fun times. For many reasons, but maybe especially because of the music. I mean, it's pretty hard not to enjoy yourself when your soundtrack includes 'Walking on Sunshine' and 'We Built this City'.

Business was also a good place to be during the eighties because leaders were more real. Long lunches were the norm. Being in the office on Friday afternoon was for 'try-hards'. Life was good. Then something happened in the late eighties...we had a recession. Demand for jobs far outweighed the supply. All of a sudden, the fun stopped.

Everyone was so scared of losing their job they started to work harder and longer. They tried to blend in so they would not get noticed.

As leaders, we enrolled in MBAs, hoping this extra qualification would help us find our next job or secure our current job. In our MBAs, we were taught about SWOT analysis and TOWS analysis, balance sheets and Porter's Five Forces model. We were shown how to measure and capture data, and use data to make business decisions. And we came out the other end a little bit... well, quite frankly—a little bit boring and full of crap.

'If you can't measure it, you can't manage it,' became the mantra in businesses, and a strong focus on data, stats and analysis emerged. This reliance on data was not only how employees and managers alike were measured, but also how we were motivated. The common trajectory went something like this: 'Here is the target, you can do it, this is how we are tracking, try harder, this is the result ... oh, and you failed'.

All the data everyone was gathering, combined with the explosion of the internet and search engines such as Google, meant we had more information than we could ever possibly need or want.

At the same time, PowerPoint came along and with it the promise that how we presented would change forever—our presentations would now be interesting and engaging. We could choose how slides transitioned and which sound effects to use—and don't forget how exciting clipart was. With these tools, you could transform any presentation into a masterpiece. And PowerPoint did change the way we presented, but just not as we expected. What PowerPoint (or should I say the poor use of PowerPoint) accomplished was to condemn us to a sort of presentation hell of bullet-point infinity.

Then during 2007 and 2008, the global financial crisis (GFC) hit and job security again became an issue. Considered by

some economists to be the worst depression since the Great Depression of the 1930s, the GFC meant we were all scared of what would happen. So we again bunkered down and didn't do too much to attract attention. We certainly didn't do anything to rock the boat—that would be too risky.

But in the business world today, something is happening that means that assumed safe place is actually a risky place to be.

We have a generation of employees who are expecting a lot more from the companies they work for and the leaders they follow. Within five years, generation Y (or the Millennials) will make up the vast majority of the workforce, and they will be the most educated generation in history. The focus of this generation's loyalties has changed, and the expectations they have of their employers and leaders are significantly higher. They want leaders who excite them and ignite them. They want leaders who are real.

The possibility of more money or a promotion does not motivate employees as it once did. This generation wants purpose in their job, and they expect it to be interesting and fun. These expectations are also rippling through the rest of the workforce.

Businesses today are struggling with how to manage this new generation and workforce. But the solutions are available. More than ever, we are looking for leaders who can engage, inspire and ignite this new wave of employees.

The growing expectations of employees are also combined with the exponential growth in technology, social media and access to information. This has resulted in further information overload, making it even harder to get cut-through with your messages.

Organisations invest vast amounts of time and resources into developing strategy and defining corporate culture and values, only to see these efforts fail due to leaders being

unable to communicate values in a way that connects and engages with their employees—in a way that is real.

This book is about helping you find the real you. Knowing what you stand for, what you believe in and what you value will help you be your real self and the most authentic leader you can. It will help you to lead with courage and confidence.

Becoming real will not only ignite you but also ignite the people around you.

Read on if you believe in real leadership and real talk for real results.

KNOWING WHAT YOU STAND FOR,
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The game has changed

The game we are playing has changed. The way we operated in business twenty years ago, even ten years ago, is different from how we operate today. Significant factors have driven a change in the way leaders communicate and inspire, with the ability to engage and influence now being one of the most important skills someone in a position of leadership needs to possess.

Every day, leaders need to communicate. They need to talk about everything from organisational strategy and values to messages of change. They have to deliver tough and unpopular decisions and they have to communicate triumphs and successes. They have to motivate, engage and excite. They have to ignite.

The reality is that this is becoming increasingly difficult, and skills used in the past are fast becoming redundant. Leaders need to not only be aware of this but also understand why this is happening—so they can then do something about it.

This chapter looks at some of the recent shifts that leaders need to comprehend in order to flourish and grow as leaders.