

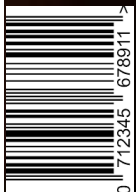
more to the game



DESIGN
CEO

WHAT LEADERS CAN LEARN FROM FOOTBALL

CAMERON SCHWAB



from success to significance #01

Cover:
Hawthorn's Jarryd Roughead retired in 2019 as one
of the game's most admired players



With my mate Mick Brownlie in suburban Melbourne.
I spent my childhood in a Richmond jumper with a footy under my arm.
I fell in love with the Tigers before I fell in love with the game.

“A true vocation calls us out beyond ourselves; breaks our heart in the process and then humbles, simplifies and enlightens us about the hidden, core nature of the work that enticed us in the first place.”

David Whyte
Poet



Cameron Schwab is a CEO, leadership mentor, artist and writer.

He works with CEOs and emerging leaders to achieve high levels of trust – personally, culturally, strategically and organisationally – as the basis of high performance.

After cutting his teeth as a recruiter at the Melbourne Football Club when the Demons made the finals for the first time in 23 years, Cameron was appointed CEO of the famous Richmond Football Club at age 24, the youngest in the history of the game.

For most of the next 25 years, he was CEO of Richmond, Melbourne and Fremantle, when those clubs were at their lowest ebb, both on and off the field. He is the second longest serving CEO in the modern game.

Having taken on some of the sport's most difficult and daunting challenges, Cameron established a track record of building teams and organisations, unifying groups while navigating periods of genuine adversity and complexity.

He is a legacy-focused leader who has bounced back from setbacks, taking on the sport's most challenging leadership roles.

Cameron holds an MBA and Master of Marketing from the Melbourne Business School. He has also completed the Advanced Management Program (AMP) at the Harvard Business School and is a Vincent Fairfax Fellow of the Centre of Ethical Leadership at University of Melbourne. He received his Coaching Certification from the Columbia Business School in New York.

His articles on sport and leadership have been published in The Age newspaper.

Cameron is also an artist and illustrator, studying Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA).



My drawing of my brother Brendan and I, part of a series on mid-life men. We were Batman and Robin.



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Michael Willson is AFL Media's Senior Staff Photographer.

He has a remarkable talent, an innate ability to see the game as it unfolds and the capacity to capture it.

Since the 2005 AFL season he has earned the respect and trust of players and clubs alike, creatively photographing all the action, triumph, heartbreak, blood, sweat and tears - often capturing moments otherwise unseen - from a unique perspective that can only come from an intimate knowledge and love for photography and Australian Football.

In 2016 Michael teamed with Geoff Slattery to publish UP CLOSE - a remarkable photographic journal of the 2016 AFL season.

In 2018 Michael was commissioned by Commonwealth Games Australia to be the official photographer of the Australian team at the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

He has won multiple Australian Football Media Association Awards as well as being a finalist in the prestigious Melbourne Press Club Quill Awards the last three years running. Michael is also a Ted's Master.

His work is featured on AFL.com.au, AFLPhotos.com.au, the AFL Record as well as newspapers and magazines around Australia and the world.



Michael Willson's iconic image of Carlton's Tayla Harris, pure athleticism.

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designing the leadership system







This beautiful and timeless image of the MCG in September, shows Frank 'Bluey' Adams being invited by his captain Ron Barassi to hold up the 1964 Premiership Cup, the club's sixth Premiership in ten seasons.

Adams and Barassi played in all six Premierships. Frank Adams played 164 games for Melbourne, meaning he played in a Premiership every 27 games.

It would be the last game the pair would play for Melbourne, Adams retiring and Barassi famously crossing to Carlton as their Captain/Coach the following year.

To their left, stands Neil 'Froggy' Crompton..

With Melbourne trailing and just minutes remaining in the game, back-pocket Crompton, who had followed his Collingwood opponent up the ground, picked up a loose ball and kicked the ball low towards goal and it floated through for his only goal of the season, giving Melbourne the lead. It was the last goal of the match, and Froggy became a Premiership hero. If you look closely at the image, Froggy is celebrating his place in the history of the game with a cigarette.

This was a true Premiership dynasty, but it was at an end. Melbourne would not play finals for another 23 years and hasn't won a Premiership since, the current longest Premiership drought in the Australian Football League (AFL).



honouring the role

Don't just aspire to be a leader.

Honour the role.

Aspire to make a difference.

As coach, mentor and teacher, my approach is built on the empathy of someone who has deep experience with leadership, including the wisdom that can only come from the need to give of yourself as a leader.

Hence, I like the metaphor of the swan when it comes to leadership.

When in the air or on the water, the swan finds its grace, beauty and presence – it is in its element. But it cannot spend all its time in the air or on the water. It spends much of its life on land, where it looks awkward and lumbering, struggling in this environment.

Such is leadership.

At times leadership requires a level of courage and bravery that you did not realise you possessed until such time as your circumstances demanded.

It is then that you have found your element as a leader.

Hence my mantra:

“Never forget how hard it is!”



cameron schwab
FOUNDER & CEO





Luke Hodge and Jarryd Roughead set a standard at Hawthorn for well over a decade, playing in four Premierships. Jarryd features on the cover of this publication.

the example you set

In my experience the best leaders are not the most talented or gifted; they have established a leadership identity that is a true expression of who they are, and backed it up with outstanding leadership and performance habits.

They have turned self-responsibility into a daily practice, performance habits that compound over time to establish their personal leadership mastery.

At designCEO, we teach a system that is focused on high-performance leadership habits to enable leaders to establish their daily practice of leadership excellence.

High performance ambitions require high performance habits.

Our work builds on the core philosophy that people, teams and organisations do not rise to the level of their ambition, they fall to the standard of their systems.

And what is the most critical system?

It is the talent system, the right people in the right roles, starting with your leaders.

It's for this reason that the programs and mentoring utilise performance frameworks

and methodologies heavily influenced by elite sport, ensuring commitment and accountability to a team-based ethos. We teach a system that develops leadership, on the basis that leaders beget leaders.

People who...

1. Are committed learners. Take responsibility for their personal development in the context of the team/organisation.
2. Consistently set high expectations of themselves and behave to those expectations. They do the right thing, even when it's hard.
3. Have high functional capability. Know their role, play their role, as leaders and technicians.
4. Understand that it not just what they bring to the team, it is what they are prepared to do for the team that counts.

Having achieved this, they embrace the notion of leader as teacher, understanding

their influence, honouring their leadership role by coaching and mentoring self-responsibility.

Simply, a winning organisation is an environment of personal and professional development, in which each individual takes responsibility and shares ownership, knowing better people make better leaders and leaders create leaders.

For organisations with high-performance ambitions, or seeking turnaround, it will be the aggregation of marginal gains that will be the key to transformation.

It is a longer game, perhaps a little less glamorous than some of the folklore stories of business and sport.

It is these ideas that explored in this publication.

There is indeed...

More to the game

it is the hard days that define us

‘How bad are you blokes going?’

The statement brings back many memories.

I'm CEO of an AFL club that does not look like winning, with the gap between performance and expectation getting wider by the week.

These are the mornings when you wake up knowing that regardless of what happened on the weekend, and no matter how bad the defeat, and while you may be bereft of ideas and inspiration, sleepless night and all – you still had to lead.

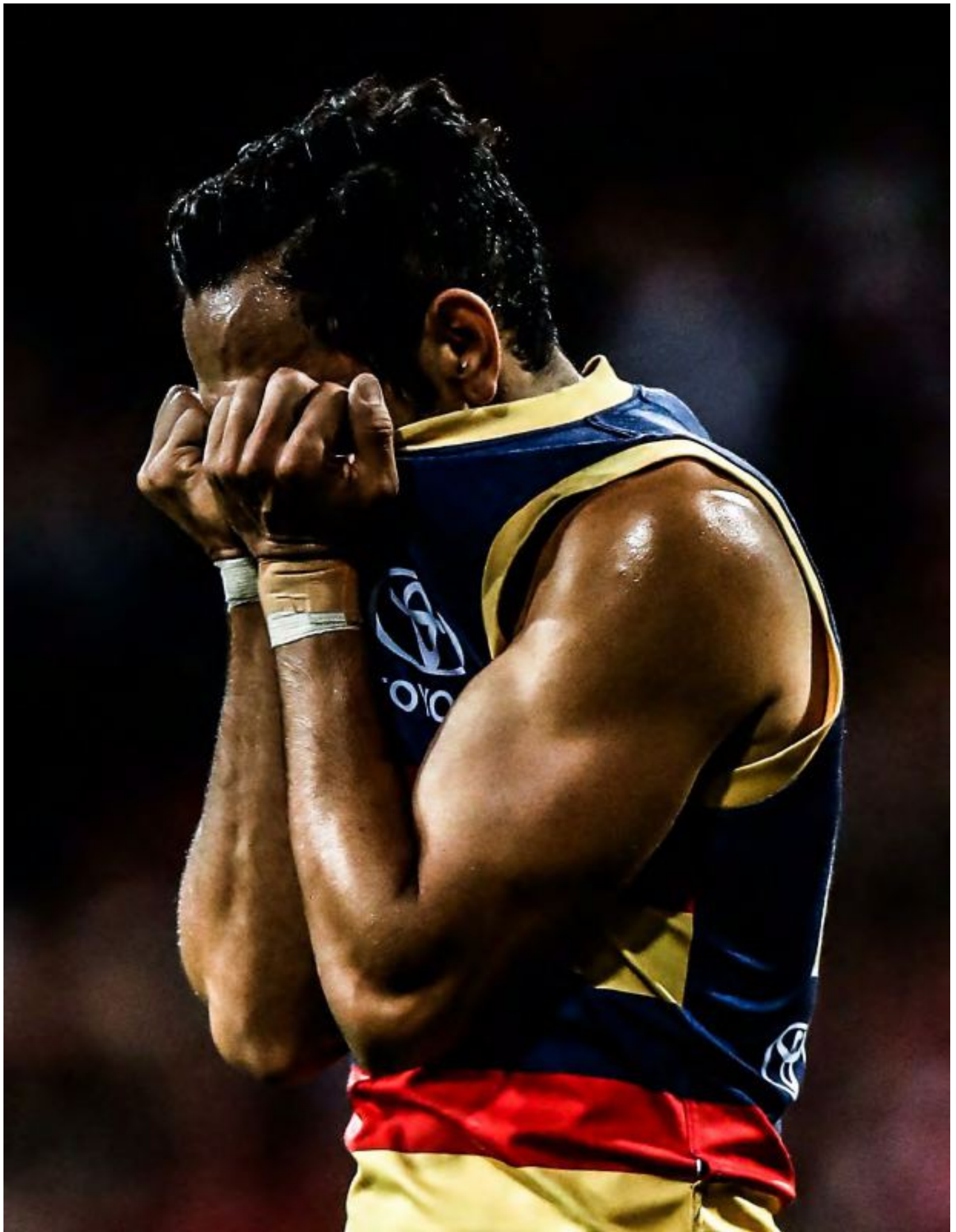
You have no option.

Leading wasn't about riding in on your white horse as the person with all the answers; it was most often the opposite. Create space for a better conversation. Avoid default responses, as they are most likely to be driven by your bruised ego, selfishness and anger. Embrace the ambiguity, complexity and conflict.

Admit you don't know and you need help in making sense of it all.

Be the learner.

...and remember always, it is the hard days that define us.

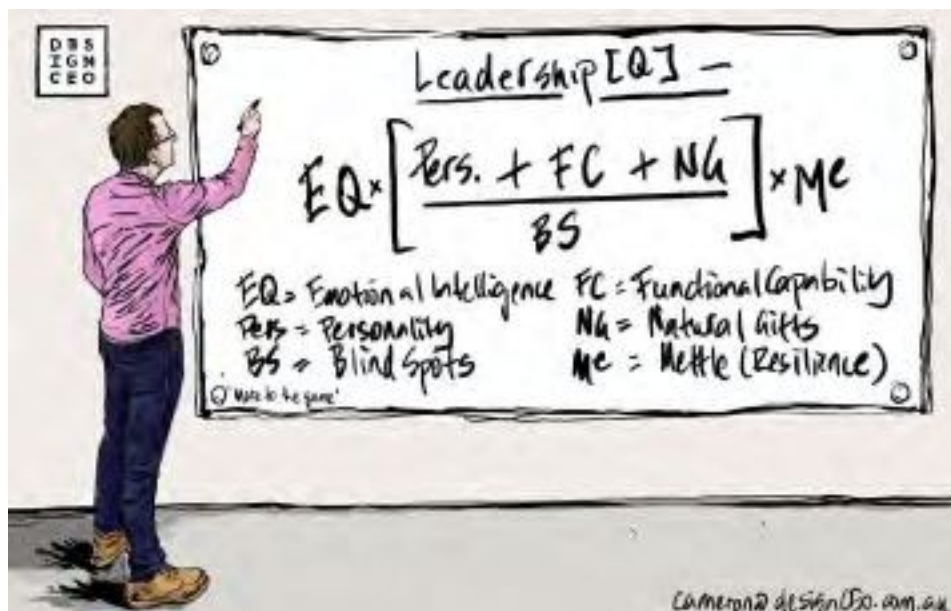




Appointed General Manager (CEO) of the Richmond Football Club in August 1988, at age twenty four.

just so you know, I stuffed this
up many times

While I enjoy the opportunity of coaching from the context of my 'lived leadership experience', some of these reflections are most uncomfortable, sitting somewhere between embarrassment and shame.



The formula for Leadership[Q]

I often use the parenting experience as a metaphor for leadership. There is a moment all parents will relate to.

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It is the day you put your newborn child in your car for the first time. The baby has gone from the sanctuary of the womb, to a hospital with all its reassurances, and now rests in a baby capsule in the back of your car.

You drive, timidly, most likely at around half the speed limit, trying to come to terms with just how unprepared you are for whatever challenges this little bundle will throw your way for the remainder of your life.

Such is leadership, with each day reminding you of the gap between what you thought you knew, and what you actually know, and with that, the ebb and flow of confidence and belief.

I was reminded recently by author and thinker Evette Cordy (who has a wonderful book titled *Cultivating Curiosity*) of a quote by Anais Nin which reads:

"We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are."

In this context, I believe it is essential leaders have an acute sense of their leadership 'WHO'. To lead with authenticity, what I describe as a "fully

self-expressed leader", allowing you to build and sustain trust, but as importantly, maintain personal confidence when feeling overwhelmed by your leadership challenge.

Now that I am in the business of mentoring leaders and their organisations, it requires, almost by necessity, a process of self-reflection on my part. When teaching, or giving advice, there are many times I lean forward and say, "Just so you know, I stuffed this up many times". While I enjoy the opportunity of coaching from the context of my 'lived leadership experience', some of these reflections are most uncomfortable, sitting somewhere between embarrassment and shame.

With this in mind, I have given a lot of thought to the notion of the leadership WHO, which I have tried to express in a vaguely mathematical formula.

We have all heard of IQ, a standardised test to assess human intelligence, and most will be familiar with EQ, our emotional intelligence, the capability to recognise our emotions and those of others. I have put together a LeadershipQ formula,

seeking to articulate the components of an individual's personal leadership offering, in particular, one which is a reflection of our leadership WHO.

Leadership [Q]

It starts with your **PERSONALITY**, your personal differences and characteristics. Most of us would have a collection of personality profiles undertaken over the years, all seeking to define our personality type, motivations and values, and in doing so providing insight and understanding, perhaps to varying degrees, depending on your perspective.

Our personality is unlikely to change much, it is our DNA, and even the baby in the back of the car already has much of their personality hard-wired.

We then add your **FUNCTIONAL CAPABILITY**, noting that it does not just relate to overall competency, it is a focus on the skills and talent required to do this job well, as well as the means by which you are able to maintain personal belief. To move too far from your personal capability, particularly your deeper experience and expertise, while seeking to lead, runs the



risk of a loss of confidence as you face too many new issues without enough context and understanding.

We therefore advise building your leadership game on domains that you understand and enjoy, but also understand your weaknesses, and whilst always seeking to improve, where possible, complement your offering with fellow leaders with strengths in the areas you do not naturally excel.

When I hear the statement from new leaders which goes something like "I didn't know what I didn't know", in our experience, it should be "I didn't know, what I did know".

Of course, functional capability also takes into account the specific leadership competencies required to do this job well.

We then add your **NATURAL GIFTS**. These are an expression of who you are and your uniqueness. From your gifts come your purpose, a means by which you can sustain high energy and focused attention. They are more than your strengths, they are an expression of the work you love to do, and therefore the aspects of the role you will be naturally drawn to.

As part of our designCEO work, we profile Natural Gifts, and the feedback has been excellent, allowing individuals to recognise their uniqueness in relation to their

leadership values and capacity.

These three elements, **PERSONALITY, FUNCTIONAL CAPABILITY and NATURAL GIFTS** are then divided by your BS, and yes there is an element of the colloquial BS, but more specifically, your **BLIND SPOTS**. These are not your weaknesses, as most often we are conscious of our weaknesses, and they are less likely to derail us than our blind spots (often referred to as derailers).

Most often they are a 'shadow' of our strengths, and when they do appear, your first response is likely to be "I should have known better", or "I should have seen that coming".

All of these elements are then multiplied by two factors, those being:

Firstly, your **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**, your EQ as previously defined. We have all experienced very talented people who are unable to leverage their abilities as a result of their inability to emotionally connect. Issues such as a lack of empathy, low self-control and self-knowing or poor relationship skills, diminish the value their unique capabilities would otherwise provide.

We use EQ profiling extensively in the designCEO work. Without wishing to overemphasise its value, perhaps the most important aspect of EQ is that it is coachable. We have many examples

of individuals who have developed the habits and behaviours to make significant changes to their emotional competencies, and in doing so, realise the full value of their expertise and talent as leaders.

The final piece of the formula is the leader's **METTLE**, their leadership and personal resilience. We ask, has the leader established the leadership identity and habits to allow them to sustain the inevitable personal challenges of leadership? These include their physical and mental well-being, learner mindset to develop their leadership craft, relationships and whatever personal activities allow them to actively manage the many trade-offs that challenging leadership roles will inevitably produce.

In many ways, the majority of the designCEO work focuses on establishing leadership mettle, as without it, you cannot sustain any authenticity or personal energy in a leadership role.

We must always remember that no leader brings a 'full leadership game', and we are all a work-in-progress at some level. To build our game however, leaders must embrace learning, because simply, no one is going to do their learning for them.

So how do you measure up on our LeadershipQ formula?

(Below) My final press conference as CEO of the Melbourne Football Club in 2013, ending 25 years as a CEO of three AFL clubs



(Left) CEO of the Melbourne Football Club, round one of the 1999 season. The previous year the team had gone from last to within a game of the Grand Final. I was sacked as CEO at the end of that season.



My drawing of Essendon champ and skipper Jobe Watson in midst of the Essendon peptide crisis





if you were to recruit a person based on one characteristic, what would it be?

I cut my teeth as a recruiter in the AFL, assessing the capabilities of young footballers, trying to forecast their futures, mostly when those players were plying their trade at a standard well below what would be required of them in the premier football competition in this country.

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You were required to pit your skills of assessment against similarly qualified recruiters, who'd spent the same number of hours watching the same players in the same games, editing the same video, talking to the same coaches, teachers, parents etc., yet our assessments would vary such that we would compile a very different list of players come draft day.

Even at the elite level of sport, recruitment remains a very inexact process, although you would never know immediately post-draft as club recruiters speak confidently about the players they have selected and their likely pathway into top-level football and the expected role they will be playing.

The facts are, however, if the draft of five years ago was to be held tomorrow, it would share little resemblance to its original form.

In a results-oriented industry, the fortunes of AFL clubs and their key personnel, live

and die on this often ambiguous process.

Despite the efforts to reduce the margin for error, including many thousands of hours and as much science as a well resourced elite sporting competition can muster, we get it wrong, and often. The same happens across all major sports in the world.

There are however sporting organisations who get it right more often, even marginally, and they are rewarded. The New England Patriots in the NFL are such an example. In 2019, they won their way into their ninth Superbowl in the last 18 years in a competition which has as a draft and salary cap explicitly designed to stop this from occurring, and they were victorious.

Their recruitment is legendary. Two decades littered with stories of unfashionable players who have played critical roles in the success of their team.

So back to the original question:

"If you were to recruit a person based on one characteristic, what would it be?"

We will all have a different take, however, my answer is:

Aptitude.

Aptitude can be defined in a number of ways, but most fundamentally it is the desire and capacity to learn.

So how do we find out whether the person has high aptitude?

A simple question...

"Have you ever taught yourself anything?"

Then wait for the response. If their eyes light up and they start talking about something they feel a deep passion for, however obtuse, you will learn so much about that person. Should they struggle however, I would have serious concerns about employing that person.

There is a certain determination and honesty implicit in this, a form of integrity and humility, as it requires the individual to focus on their personal development, a skill transferable to their role within the organisation.

It also allows the person to evolve as the organisation faces into its own ambiguity and the likelihood that it will need to change in the uncertain world that most businesses are required to confront.

In my experience, while the best players do have a physical talent that allows them to play at the level of competition, this is merely their ticket to the game. What makes them special is their capacity to take responsibility for their careers, and the critical personal attribute they all possess is their commitment to learning

and improving, and a work rate to back it up.

How does this apply to you and your business?

Simply, give yourself the best opportunity to get your talent right.

Yes, you will make mistakes, but you will make less if you focus on the individual's aptitude.

From a recruitment perspective, it is likely

that the individual will have 'track-record' concerning personal responsibility, development and learning in other aspects of their lives. To this extent, I encourage you to go deep during the recruitment process, and if you find someone with high levels of aptitude, you are on a winner.

It is an effort well worth making.



DWIN SMITH STAND





Richmond Football Club captain Trent Cotchin. After some challenging periods, has emerged as a preminent leader in the game, and now a Premiership captain.



"when your eyes are tired, the world looks tired also"

David Whyte

This was a self-portrait I drew to reflect the 'tired eyes' syndrome of being a leader, in this case a CEO.

When your eyes are tired, you stop seeing possibilities. You lose confidence, in yourself and your people. Perhaps most significantly, you lose your nerve, don't show the courage (and clear-headedness) required to face up to the ambiguity and complexity of your leadership role, thereby putting yourself and your organisation in danger of defaulting to the path of least resistance.

When I feel this way as a leader, I try to focus on what gives me energy. I know that simply trying to 'will' my way through will never be the answer.

We are energised by the parts of the role we genuinely enjoy and do well, and often they were the attributes that got us the job in the first place.

Give yourself permission to spend time back in this place.

The inbox can wait.

Leverage your capabilities, rebuild your confidence, and remind yourself of why you love what you do.



turning knowledge into wisdom

I like to quote “an unknown meaning for an unknown person”, particularly as it relates to leadership.

I would like to attribute someone of far more credence, but I have a vague and weird feeling I made it up.

Leadership is many things, but in my mind, teaching sits at its heart. If you are not prepared to embrace teaching as a leader, you are dishonouring the role. It will impact on your performance and those you lead.

Until recently, we rewarded leaders for having the right answers and making sure those they lead have the same answers. This one-dimensional view will not cut it anymore. The complexity, ambiguity and shifting nature of business means that it is not possible to have all the answers, if not now, but certainly in ever shortening time horizons.

The leader's role is now a delicate and somewhat fraught balance between imparting knowledge and helping others to find their own understanding.

There is nothing particularly new in this, but in my experience there is a gap between aspiration and practice even for those who acknowledge the importance of coaching in terms of their leadership.

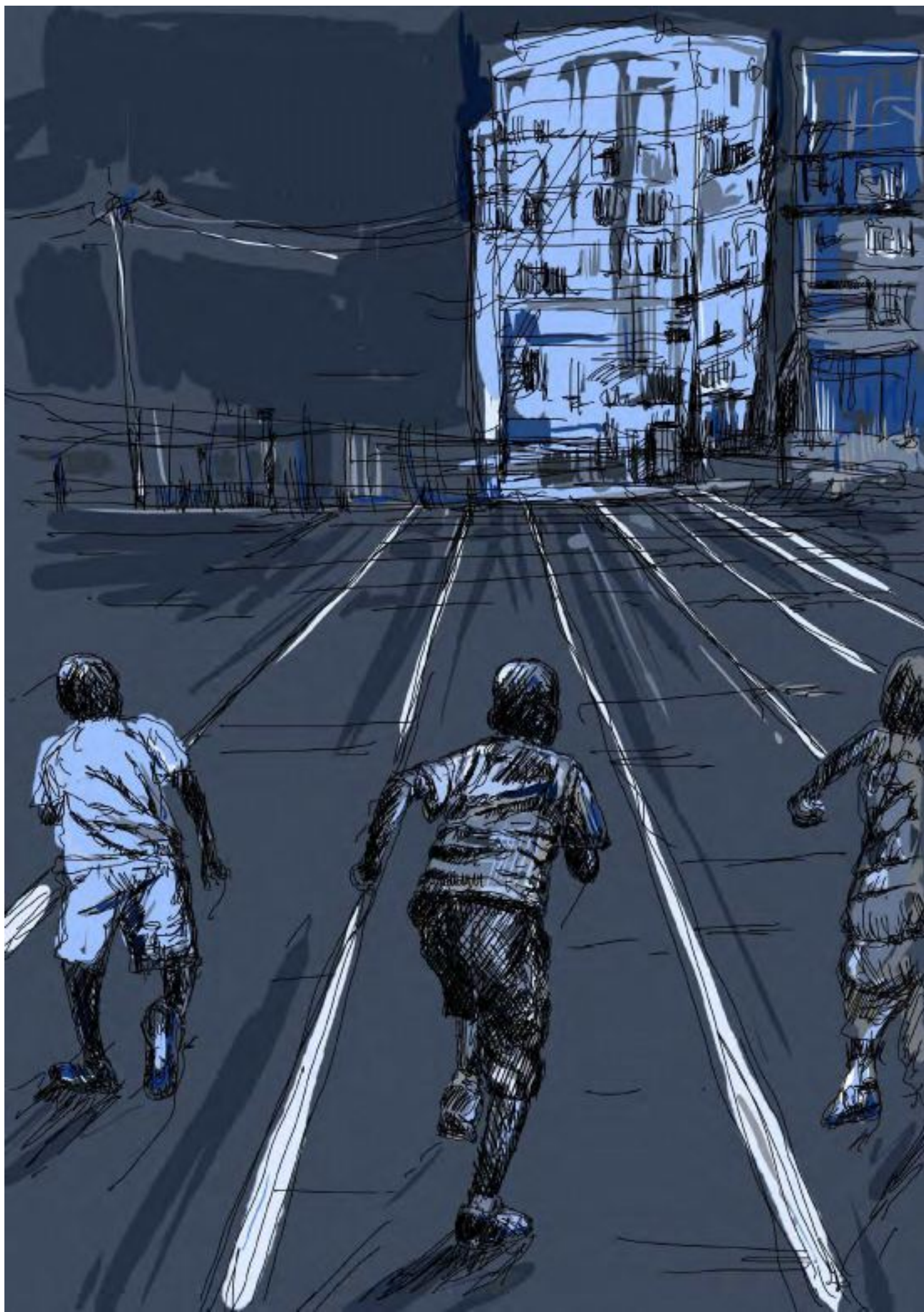
There is a prevailing reason for this. It is hard to be coached, and soon, the mentor gives up. Progress can be slow, and feels 'soft', lacking authority, particularly for those accustomed to a

directive style of leadership.

This is leadership's falsest economy, a distorted and false sense of progress, with leaders in 'tell' mode, when coaching is about asking better questions to create insight.

When I start my workshops with leaders, I ask the participants to bring one thing only, a learner mindset, allowing themselves to be “easy to coach” for the day, explaining that the hardest part about learning is the unlearning required to absorb new information.

My drawing titled "There is always a race" has been interpreted in many ways, most different to my motivation for drawing it. I am comfortable with this, as art, if nothing else, is about the discussion it creates. My intention was to explain that while I understand the intrinsic want (and perhaps need) to compete, we have a choice as to what 'race' we participate in, and to be mindful of our ambitions and their motivations. Velocity, as I have learnt, is never the answer for complexity.



I soon realised that to be a teacher, you must be a learner, the mindset to embrace the discomfort and ambiguity of taking yourself beyond the limits of your understanding, but with the view “It is not what I learn today, it is what I will teach tomorrow that is important”.

I regret not fully understanding the importance of teaching for too long, even in an elite sporting environment and all its emphasis on coaching (teaching) to elicit improved performance.

I was too 'busy' trying to win.

It was a time of personal reckoning. It seems crazy, but I had much higher expectations of others in relation to unlocking potential, being the football coaches and their playing charges, than I had of myself in relation to the off-field team.

I soon realised that to be a teacher, you must be a learner, the mindset to embrace the discomfort and ambiguity of taking yourself beyond the limits of your understanding, but with the view “It is not what I learn today, it is what I will teach tomorrow that is important”.

This attitude means that your 'new' learning is now aligned to your existing understanding (or changed view).

You have now turned knowledge into wisdom.

Responsibility and generosity then kick in, and you pass on your layered understanding to someone else, take them to the edge, help

them find their own form of meaning.

And the process continues, the ripples of the roundel have started, and who knows where it finishes, passed from person to person, hence “an unknown meaning for an unknown person”.

The arts are a great example of this. People find meaning in paintings, music, prose, dance etc that may or may not have been the intention of the artist, and that doesn't matter...they have started the discussion.

My drawing on the previous page, titled “There is always a race” has been interpreted in many ways, most different to my motivation for drawing it. I am comfortable with this, as art, if nothing else, is about the discussion it creates.

My intention was to explain while I understand the intrinsic want (and perhaps need) to compete, we have a choice as to what 'race' we participate in, and to be mindful of our ambitions and their motivations.

Velocity, as I have learned, is never the answer for complexity.

I've had people speak to me about a

conversation we once had when I was their CEO, from which they made deliberate and significant changes to their lives, and I only have vague recollections of our discussion.

I have just finished Neale Daniher's book “When all is said and done”. I have known Neale for 25 years, and still I learned so much from this offering. I have a Moleskin full of notes to ponder and curate.

The book started as a letter to his grandkids. It is the conversation he will never get to have. He has Motor Neurone Disease (MND) and there is no cure.

Neale is many great things, but in his heart, he is a teacher. A coach, and he has gifted this book to the world.

It includes the letter to his grandkids:

“I didn't write this book to tell you what to believe – I am not that smart – but I wanted you to at least have the chance to know my story and understand what it was that I believed”.

This is truly an unknown meaning for an unknown person.

We have been blessed.

Neale Daniher leaves the MCG after the FightMND “Big Freeze”. He has raised millions for research to find a cure for Motor Neurone Disease (MND). Formed in 2014, and the largest independent funder of Motor Neurone Disease research in Australia, FightMND's vision is a world without MND.

A man is seen from behind, wearing a dark blue jacket. The jacket has a white and yellow logo on the back that reads "FIGHT MIND. IT TAKES PEOPLE". He is standing in a dark, industrial environment with a large metal pipe to his right. In the background, another person wearing a blue hard hat and a red jacket is partially visible.

FIGHT
MIND.
IT TAKES PEOPLE



"don't think. do!"

Motivation is complex.

Yes, goals are important, and feedback is crucial, but my view is that a sense of progress is the most important aspect.

When we overthink, procrastinate or delay, motivation can be lost.

When stuck in this mindset, I often think of the legendary Hawthorn coach John Kennedy and his famous call to action...

"Don't think. DO!"

While football has changed in many ways, with strategies, structures and systems playing a major role, there are times when your team gets stuck in a rut by over-complicating the game.

You will see leaders step up, win the ball, bang it on their boot, kicking it as far as they can, then try win the next contest 50 meters closer to their goal.

Progress.

This quick drawing of Collingwood hard man Levi Greenwood from the 2018 finals, keeping it basic and...

"Going Long".



Melbourne's Neville Jetta, proud Noongar man, competitor and self-made player of the highest quality - a true role player. He is tackled by Carlton's Ed Curnow, a man of equal commitment and tenacity.

if nothing changes, nothing is going to change

Most conversations I have with leaders focus on a desired outcome; something they would like to achieve.

They then work back on from the desired outcome and give thought to the processes they hope will achieve their objective. They then try and align complex and multi-layered structures, systems, people and resources to this goal.

“We want to be a high performing team,” the leaders say, and we commence discussions as to the reasons why this goal is important, usually as it relates to an ambitious growth strategy.

The conversation then focuses on the need to match high-performance ambitions with a high-performance culture, articulated in the form of agreed values that are then distributed, painted on walls, added to websites, screensavers and mousepads.

By definition, this conversation isn't about a high-performance culture, it is about our high-performance culture, and this is where it gets complicated.

It will require change.

There is a saying that goes something like... “If nothing changes, nothing is going to change”

Again, by definition, a high-performance culture requires high-performance behaviours. If those behaviours currently existed, we would not be having the conversation.

Often the conversation defaults to the potential actions that may create the desired outcomes. This is fraught, and merely gives the impression of progress, as behind every system of actions, are a system of beliefs far more powerful.

To create the high-performance culture, our high-performance culture, leaders, teams and organisations first need to shift the way they think about themselves.

Your words tell others what you think. Your actions tell them what you believe.

Simply, their 'old' identity can sabotage their ambitions, and their processes for change.

At the heart of this, is the development and establishment of high-performance habits to establish high-performance behaviours. These will create the 'small wins' and importantly provide evidence of a 'new' identity, one that models behavioural and cultural expectations. At the same time, the small improvements will compound over time to make the difference the leaders seek.

My favourite leadership quote of the moment is:

"Your words tell others what you think. Your actions tell them what you believe."

It starts with simple statements around identity such as...

"I am a leader who..."
"We are a team that..."
"We are an organisation which..."

Then these statements are matched by

actions. Leadership is not what we say, it's what we do.

The 2x2 matrix shown in the drawing on the next page focuses on this process. Let us define the quadrants:

1. What? - No process and no change of identity is merely an articulation of 'what' we would like to achieve, but provides no means by which it can occur. It is a want, a dream, and nothing else. Sadly, many organisations struggle to break free from this quadrant as they remain

West Coast Eagles players celebrate their 2018 Premiership victory. One of the great Grand Finals.





Belief Focused vs Outcome Focused

- fully outcome focused.
2. How? - Process without any change to identity gives us an important 'how', but nothing else. It risks incongruency in relation to expectations, the development of a culture that will not achieve the desired outcomes and high-potential for unhealthy and debilitating conflict between leaders and layers within the organisation (eg. Board, CEO and Senior Management Team).
 3. Why? - A change to identity, but with no processes to support will provide an important sense of 'why', and possibly good alignment and intent, but is also unlikely to succeed. It will not provide the small wins necessary to gain momentum for change. Runs the risk of being all talk, no action.
 4. Who? - A strong shift in identity matched by aligned processes, built around high-performance habits, is the belief focused approach that will embed the behaviours to create the desired culture. A culture unique to the organisation, the one it requires to achieve the outcomes it is seeking.
- The work we do at designCEO focuses on the habits to build and entrench the processes and identity to create a system of beliefs.
- It is built around four high-performance habits that are coached and embedded, utilising sophisticated coaching and teaching methods heavily influenced by my personal experience in elite sport.
- They focus on self-responsibility and accountability for the behaviours to achieve desired performance outcomes.
- And it starts with the small wins.



West Coast Eagles Dom Sheed etches himself into football folklore. Kicks the winning goal in the 2018 Grand Final.

everybody needs a hero

Royce Hart was my first childhood sporting hero.

I love this image of the sublimely talented key forward, beautifully balanced, poised, and leaving his beaten opponent in his wake.

If an image of our game was to be immortalised in marble in the tradition of the great Renaissance sculptures, this would be my choice.

As leaders we need heroes.

Not the football kicking, cricket ball bowling, guitar slinging or cape wearing heroes of our childhood, although they have their place, but that person who we can approach with confidence just when our own belief is getting shaky.

There is most likely something on your mind now that you need to resolve, but it is not only the complexity and ambiguity of the issue that can overwhelm, but your growing sense of isolation.

So go find yourself a hero. Someone you can trust, both their character as well as their expertise and experience.

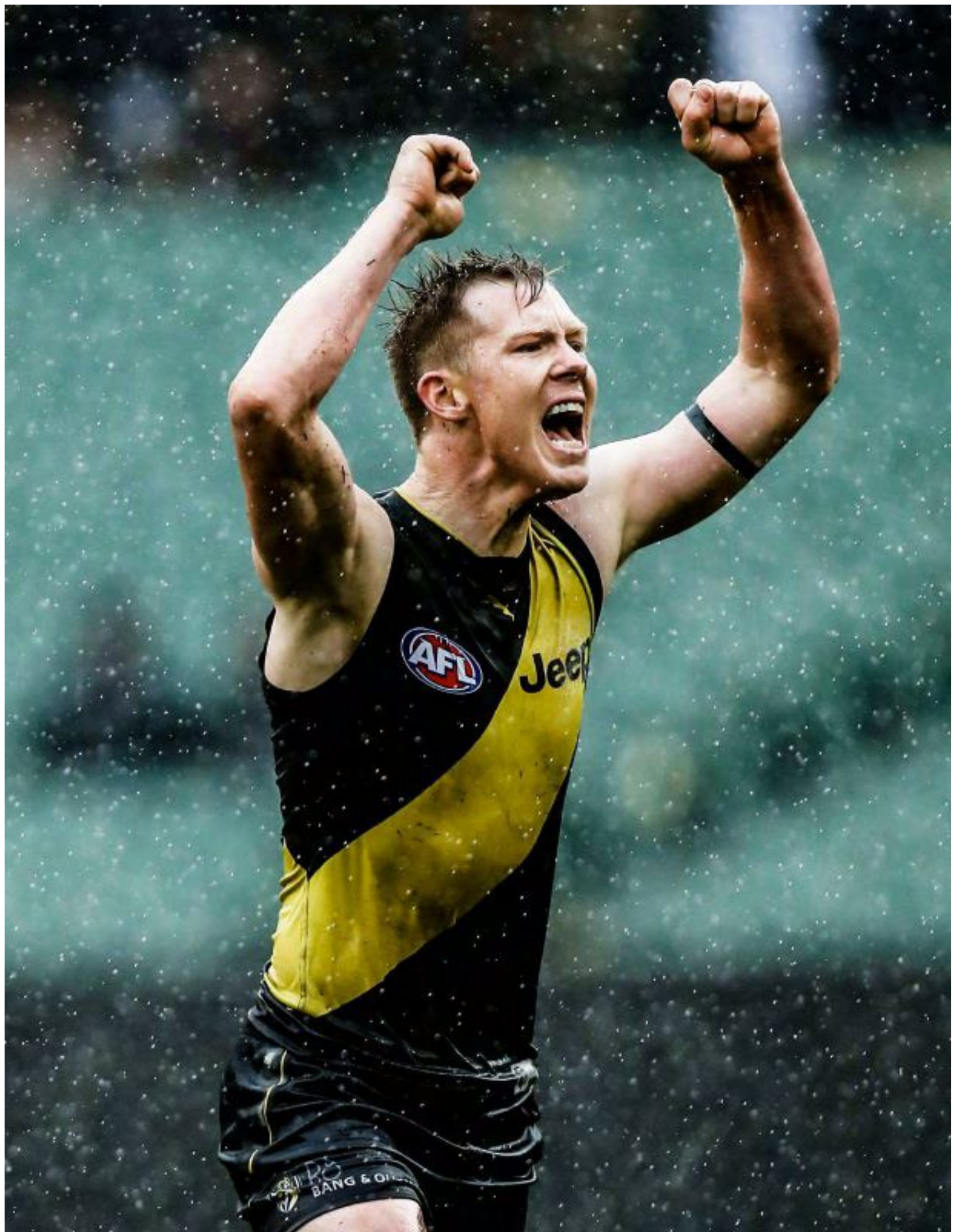
But that is only half of your responsibility.

Make yourself available to be a hero. You have the requisite wisdom to help someone – someone like you.

So go find one, and go be one.









"Royce's Richmond. Roach's Richmond. Richo's Richmond. Riewoldt's Richmond".

out of the hottest fire is forged the strongest steel

Discussions about culture make for a fascinating and often perplexing conversation. It's as though people are searching for the secret herbs and spices, a means of short-cutting or 'hacking' their way to a high-performance environment.

In my experience, strong cultures are the result of shared struggle and learning, most often over lengthy periods, building cohesion and trust as individuals develop the confidence and capability to ask tougher questions of themselves and each other, all in the context of the team.

They reflect on their failings, try new approaches and experiment. They are prepared to force out incongruent individuals, eventually finding a solution and a way forward tailored to the team.

I've been asked a lot in recent years about the Richmond Football Club's recent success, which I have enjoyed greatly given my family's (and personal) relationship with the club.

When a team has unexpected success in high-profile sports, it draws a broad range of analysis. People look at the before and after, particularly changes such as new recruits, adjustments to game style, off-field restructuring etc. This is the stuff that fills newspaper columns, talkback radio, and the many football panel shows.

This commentary is too obvious and somewhat disrespectful. Yes, changes made post-2016 played a role at Richmond, but at the heart of the club is a group of people who had the collective courage and fortitude to work it out for themselves, in the face of criticism, and efforts to unseat them, including a couple of Board takeovers.

There is great cohesion in the Richmond group, deep respect for each other, as well as a nuanced understanding of their relative strengths and weaknesses, and respect for their differences. It transcends from President to CEO, to the coach and his players, who are playing for each other, clearly the core aim of any high-performance culture.

They've asked the hard questions of themselves, made some tough decisions, the most significant of which was to stay the path. They have shared the tough times, the nearly moments, and set a new standard, not only for themselves but for the competition.

It is an overnight success story many years in the making.

They are in good hands.





Trent Cotchin, Bachir Houli and Shane Edwards. Richmond's first Premiership in 37 years in 2017.

what truly matters

I cannot remember when I first heard the quote, but whenever it was, I wished I heard it years earlier.

I recall it was a coach in the US, post game, responding to questions from media. His team had just won its way into an historic college basketball championship game, and he was being pressed to elevate the significance of the occasion.

His answer went something like:

“Because I understand what truly matters, I get to enjoy what seems to matter.”



He then explained that as the coach, he had seen wonderful personal development in the young men in his team. He didn't need to say any more.

But yes, he would enjoy this moment.

Sport for most is a 'heroes and villains' business, and to the victor go the spoils. But this narrative often ignores what counts most, the "what truly matters".

This coach was clear on "what truly matters" and he had seen progress in ways that few sitting in judgement could observe or understand, nor had an appetite for. I say this not out of disrespect for those tasked with questioning the coach, I am articulating the difference in "what truly matters", and "what seems to matter" dependent on where you sit within the microcosm of this sporting system.

Perhaps the coach was also reminding those who communicate the game to the world, earning a living from the sport, to move beyond the shallow observations from the game itself, and not define its value by scoreboards past and present... even just for a few minutes.

You rarely see this from coaches, and when you do, it is mainly from those with plenty of silverware in the trophy cabinet, such that it affords them enough scope and space to give us a deeper insight, and it is priceless.

Great examples of this are NBA coaches Steve Kerr and Gregg Popovich, who try to rise above the banter, noise, and banality. A few hours well spent is listening to either talk beyond the game, even though basketball is the context of their conversation and learning.

Fortunately, there is plenty of stuff available on YouTube and podcasts, a veritable rabbit warren of insight. An example is Dr Michael Gervais' conversation with Steve Kerr in his outstanding 'Finding Mastery' podcast. In this conversation, it is clear that Steve Kerr understands winning, but he's searching for something beyond that.

That coaches are narrowed in this way is such a shame, because in their heart, all coaches are teachers, and it shows up com-

pletely in the way they interact. I'd go as far to say most find it difficult not to teach when they have information to share and the capacity to awaken this in others.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear more insights, including the real learnings from the lived experiences from coaches whose teams are struggling with a loss of confidence and belief, not meeting performance expectations, or dealing with adversity, familiar territory for anyone who has held leadership roles. Unfortunately, they are reduced to a defensive position, left to justify their role suitability and the likelihood of keeping their jobs.

I can say with certainty that I made many of my worst choices as a leader when I lost touch with "what truly matters". I cannot remember making a good decision when my thoughts were clouded by anger, fear or ego, and it happened often enough that I reflect with a sense of shame.

I have worked through this, in mainly healthy ways, but it is hard to budge and will return in my quiet moments.

I recall listening to a podcast with writer Michael Lewis, he of Moneyball, The Big Short and Flash Boys fame, who spoke of the need to "live outside the arena of our ambition". He says our ambition doesn't define us, and it is important that we do not allow it to.

Yes, ambition is important, but he suggests we only visit it for "professional reasons".

I like this, as it forces us to practice humility, particularly the role of learner/teacher. To stay grounded, never being above whatever your organisation, team or family needs from you. It allows you to recognise shortcomings and to behave differently to do something about it.

So how do we cultivate humility?

I recommend contemplation, a systematic process of reflection, going deep to go forward, lift your thinking to shift your thinking.

By definition, this means asking better questions of yourself.

The designCEO system is to set aside three hours of non-distracted time every three months to ask three questions.

1. What does this role expect of me?
2. What do I expect of the role?
3. What do I expect of myself?

I recommend time-blocking in the Cal Newport 'Deep Work' tradition, where you push yourself creatively, seek new ideas, avoid default thinking, ensuring the work you are doing is right for you, and right for those who rely on you as a leader.

Attack it with a purpose and performance mindset, such as "Who I am, and why I do it?"

Then in three months, repeat the exercise. Make it a habit, a ritual. Put it in your diary, an appointment with yourself every three months. Make sure you start afresh each time to ensure that you are not just reiterating what you wrote last time.

And how do we 'inform' this reflection?

Dr Michael Gervais, a psychologist and wonderful thinker on all things high-performance, talks about three elements:

1. Being around, and in conversation with wise people (not just those who are within easy reach).
2. Listen to yourself (Dr Michael is firm on the value of mindfulness, stating high-performance takes place in the present, when wisdom is revealed).
3. Writing (I have become a strong convert to the value of regular writing, such as a weekly blog, to make sense of your thinking in a way that can be communicated with confidence).

I would add a 4th element to Dr Michael's list:

4. Setting aside time for learning (but not only focusing on 'what did I learn?' but also 'what will I teach?')

Humility is the ultimate sign of success, and in my experience, contagious, modelling expectations by showing a deep commitment to something bigger than yourself.

Then you get to enjoy "what seems to matter".





it is a kind of a curiosity vs certainty mindset

Having spent a lifetime in the game, I learned that some people are into growing, but most people are only interested in arrival.

The 'arrival' people create all the commotion that distracts from the critical work of the 'growers', who are playing a much bigger and far more important game, energised by all its possibilities, and significantly, not overwhelmed by its ambiguity.



Nathan Buckley the young Port Adelaide tyro.



Nathan Buckley with his son Jett after Collingwood win their way into the 2018 Grand Final.

I first met Collingwood coach Nathan Buckley over twenty-five years ago. At the time, he was a precocious young football talent who, in a matter of months, had become the hottest prospect in the game.

Still a teenager, he was dominating a very strong South Australian football competition, playing for the famous Port Adelaide Magpies, his season culminating with a Jack Oatey Medal for best-on-ground in a Premiership team and winning the Magarey Medal as the competition's Best & Fairest.

As CEO of the Richmond Football Club, I was one of the many AFL club representatives beating a path to his door, trying to win the signature of this young football tyro by whatever means the player rules of the time vaguely allowed.

We fired our best shot but fell short, even with Nathan's meteoric rise through the ranks, we were too late to this game. Lesson learned.

Nathan eventually found his way to Collingwood via a single season with the then Brisbane Bears, in which he managed to win the inaugural Rising Star award. Every step of this convoluted and complicated journey to the Magpies highlighted on the back pages of the papers in all the footy loving states.

At Collingwood, he would enjoy a storied career as one of the greatest players to represent the game's biggest club: Captain, Brownlow Medallist, six-time Collingwood Best & Fairest and seven-time All Australian.

He was a star.

It seems entirely appropriate that Nathan Buckley is now coaching the club he represented with such distinction. It must be said, however, that many of the game's 'stars', including returning club heroes, have been unable to make this transition. While generalities are often misleading, history tells us most successful coaches were 'role-players' during their playing days, likely self-made footballers able to build on their learnings as players when transitioning into the teacher/mentor role so fundamental to coaching.

This narrative was prominent for much of Buckley's first six years as Collingwood Senior Coach. He failed to take his team to the finals for the previous four seasons

and all the tensions and clamour that go with it, before reaching the 2018 Grand Final, losing by less than a goal, in a match the Magpies led for all but a few minutes.

It was a game of moments, and for Collingwood people, it is a loss that will never get any easier.

Like many, I was taken by Nathan's poise, humility and dignity in the scenes that followed the loss. Again, this should not surprise, but for many it did, but this is the young coach we have watched grow, emerging from the foreboding shadow of a playing career which built a perception of the person as a fiercely focused, standard-setting, perfectionist athlete.

I doubt there has been a more watched person in the history of Australian Football than Nathan Buckley. It was more than 25 years ago that he announced his arrival as a player of immense capabilities and single-minded determination with all the media scrutiny that followed. The judgement has continued unabated, monitored and opinioned by a game that cannot get enough of people like Nathan Buckley.

Much of the commentary has a 'heroes and villains' storyline, and Nathan has been positioned as both. Over the years, our paths have crossed only a few times, but this view did not accord with the person I found to be engaging, thoughtful and generous, even when he didn't have to be.

Having spent a lifetime in the game,

I learned that some people are into growing, but most people are only interested in arrival. The 'arrival' people create all the commotion that distracts from the critical work of the 'growers', who are playing a much bigger and far more important game, energised by all its possibilities, and significantly, not overwhelmed by its ambiguity.

It is a kind of curiosity vs certainty mindset.

Their world is not black and white. The 'growers' see a more nuanced world, full of greys, and they're able to operate in it. They have crafted this capability over time as learners, being prepared to be an unlearner as part of their personal growth.

The football world has spent most of the last 25 years thinking of Nathan Buckley as an 'arriver', but he strikes me as a 'grower', and perhaps he always has been as it is easy to overestimate the role talent plays with those who can make the game look easy.

This feeling was confirmed when listening to a terrific podcast recently, "The Howie Games" where Mark Howard interviews Nathan. He talks with openness and vulnerability, such as his relationship with his father, including the letters his dad, a Vietnam Vet, wrote when he was at boarding school in country Victoria, having grown up in the Northern Territory.

The conversation moves onto that period a few years later when every AFL club is chasing him. He's asked about a 'brown paper bag', an old-time recruiting

technique when a player is handed cash, literally in a brown paper bag, in this case, \$10,000 in a cafe in Adelaide, as an incentive to sign with a club.

They were reflecting on how times have changed, and what massive news such a move would be today had it been found out.

Nathan then reflects "I sometimes think, at times you can get caught between eras, between the old way and the new way".

He then pauses.

"We're always between the old way and the new way."

The words of a leader.

The words of a grower.

I was telling this story to my wife Cecily, and she commented:

"Do you think if Nathan hadn't had his recent success as a coach, we would have ever got to see this side of him?"

It was wonderful insight, and the answer is probably not.

Even after a quarter of a century of intense scrutiny, the world is now only getting to know Nathan Buckley the 'grower', a true representation of the man, at the very time we thought we knew everything we needed to know.

Nathan then reflects, “I sometimes think, at times you can get caught between eras, between the old way and the new way”.

He then pauses.

“We’re always between the old way and the new way.”



high performance
CONFIDENT, COURAGEOUS AND CREATIVE LEADERS

doing the right thing, even when it's hard

The best leaders have successfully created environments that enable their teams and organisations to access the full range of their capabilities.



High performance happens in the moment, and we celebrate it. But the important stuff takes place away from the spotlight.

These are the conversations between teammates. Those seeking to influence team performance, set the standard by asking:

“Will the person do the right thing by the team, even when it’s hard?”.

In the most successful teams, the members of the team ultimately determine its composition. They do not tolerate behaviours that have the potential to undermine team performance, regardless of the profile (and capability) of their teammate.

In my experience, teams gain their resolve from their shared experiences, the most important being the tough times when individuals falter and team ethos is tested.

This Australian cricket team has gone through so much together. They have been broken and rebuilt. While no one would recommend the path they have taken, and they will forever pay a price, the team somehow seems stronger for the experience.

They had a lot of talking to do.

As the group has come together, they have also won back the faith of the lovers of Australian cricket.

So much kudos must go to the captain, Tim Paine. He also shows the benefit of his hardships. He faced into his sporting mortality a few years ago when an injury cut him down just when he seemed ready to make his mark.

In 2010 he had five operations on a finger, including having bone taken from his wrist and hip and grafted to help the break knit. He has a plate and eight pins holding the finger together, not ideal for a wicketkeeper/batsman.

“It just wouldn’t get better, then when it did, I would start to train again and it would break again,” Paine said last year.

“The fact that the break across the top [of the finger] was quite big, and because I was holding the bat, the bottom had sort of shattered a little bit.”

Paine said overcoming the mental anguish was just as difficult as recovering from the physical damage.

“You only have to look at my numbers in those few years when I came back,” Paine said last year.

“I was battling mentally.

“I was out there thinking I was going to get hit and if I did get hit, that I would never play again.

“It certainly rattled me a lot.

“The first step was actually going to speak to someone about that and be honest about it, that I was really battling.”

Leadership found him when he wasn’t looking. He now has his own chapter of cricket folklore, a narrative and a legacy that he deeply understands and respects.

People often ask what business can learn from sport. More than anything else, it is the capacity to individually and collectively learn from mistakes, to reflect, and to make these learnings the platform for creating a better version of itself.

There is no reason business cannot adopt this mindset, and it starts with the leaders.

How do we go about this?

In all the confusion that accompanies disappointment, I recommend that the leader reflect on the following questions:

1. “Do I believe in my people?”
2. “Do they believe in me?”

Neither of these are possible without asking...

3. “Do I believe in me?”.

By extension, you will need to ask “What makes me believable?”, and also what do I need to see in my people for me to believe in them, to trust, both their character and their capability?

Australian cricket is fortunate that Tim Paine could answer yes to all three questions, but the answers would not have come easily.

That’s what high performance looks like.



do your job

As I write this, the 2019 AFL Grand Final has been played and the Richmond Football Club's twelfth Premiership cup is now touring the country.

It means we can also pack away the cliché and metaphor that accompanies the big game, for a few months at least. Those same clichés and metaphors find their way inside football clubs.

Anyone involved in sport at any level would be familiar with clubrooms full of signs, exhorting greater effort, or articulating the team's values, behaviours and expectations.

As the AFL season ends, the NFL season starts.

The New England Patriots are the most successful team in the NFL and USA sport. They have established a dynasty of success in a competition designed expressly to stop this happening.

The Patriots have won 74 games in the past five seasons. The next 'winningest' team are the Pittsburgh Steelers with 56 wins. The Patriots have lapped the second most winning team.

I have read that the Patriots have only one sign in their clubrooms. It reads:

"Do your job."

The mantra of 'do your job' is simple yet holds immense power. By definition, it requires team members to "know their role, play their role", bringing into focus the importance of role-players, those grounded individuals who in developing their 'game', focus their efforts on becoming a better teammate.

They understand their shortcomings but have the insight and humility to build a game almost in response to, and despite their weaknesses.

We saw a wonderful example of this on Grand Final day.

Marlion Pickett has sat through draft after draft as hundreds of names were called, but never his.

Then, at 27, he is drafted by the famous Richmond Football Club in the first Mid-Season Draft for decades. Many pun-

dit's considered this draft a waste of time, but it has proven anything but.

It is difficult to 'rate' stories, but this one is on the podium.

Marlion has four kids, spent time in jail in his teens, and only played his first VFL game for Richmond last month.

He made his debut in a Grand Final, the first time this has happened since 1952. He polled votes in the Norm Smith Medal for Best on Ground and now has a Premiership medallion.

The Richmond Football Club recognises its Premiership players with Life Membership, and regardless of what happens from this time onwards, he is part of the folklore of the game and of a great football club, which he will always be able to call home.

Yes, well done Marlion, and the leaders of

Damien Hardwick enjoys a quiet moment after coaching the Tigers to the 2019 Premiership. He wears the Jock McHale medal, named in honour of the legendary Collingwood coach and presented to the Premiership coach post game.



a club prepared to challenge dogma and are now enjoying the rewards.

But more than anything, on Grand Final day, he 'did his job'

Thinking more about the notion of 'do your job', from both an organisation and individual perspective, I landed on three aspects that allow a person to 'do their job', and modeled it:

1. **Functional Capability**, not just the individual's overall competency, the

focus is the specific skills and talent required to do their current job well.

By extension, it requires leaders to clearly understand role expectations and explain (most likely coached and taught) the skills required. In sporting terms, this is known as recruiting from the inside out.

Knowing what's 'inside' the person, aligned to understanding what's 'inside' the organisation to be sure you know what you are looking for.

2. **Attitude**, those individuals who can leverage the best of their abilities through their capacity to build trusted relationships and the consistency of their effort.

It is a combination of the person's Emotional Intelligence (EQ) with their mettle, having developed the habits and behaviours to build personal resilience in the face of the inevitable challenges ambitious individuals and organisations encounter.







Richmond captain Trent Cotchin and coach Damien Hardwick receive the silverware for the second time in three years. The 2019 Premiership Cup was presented by Maureen Hafey (right), widow of the legendary Richmond coach Tom Hafey, who coached the Tigers to four Premierships. It was a wonderful moment for Richmond.

3. **Aptitude**, which can be defined in a number of ways, but most fundamentally it is the desire and capacity to learn.

There is a certain determination and honesty implicit in this, a form of integrity and humility, as it requires the individual to focus on their personal development as it relates to their role within the organisation. They are energised by learning, the prospect of growing, of being better.

High aptitude also allows the person to evolve as the organisation faces its ambiguity and the likelihood that it will need to change in the uncertain world that most businesses are required to confront. The Patriots

have a wonderful example of this. Champion quarterback Tom Brady, who at 42 years of age, and with six championship rings and nine Super Bowl appearances, the most of any player in history, allows himself to be coached like a college free agent striving for a place on the roster. A leader modelling behaviour.

I understand that not everyone will be in a position where they have the requisite expertise and experience to meet the “do your job” expectations, but what is important is that they’re “on-track” to achieve the standard in an agreed time frame. This is an important conversation, too seldom had, leaving people doubting both their understanding of role expectations and

their capacity to meet them.

Hall of Fame AFL coach Allan Jeans would say “You can’t put in what God left out”. So be realistic about your capacity to change people. This is not an excuse for not creating a high-performance culture and mindset if that’s what your challenge requires, but recognise that it must start with the recruitment and development of highly motivated and capable people.

My sense is that the “do your job” has many applications away from the sporting club.

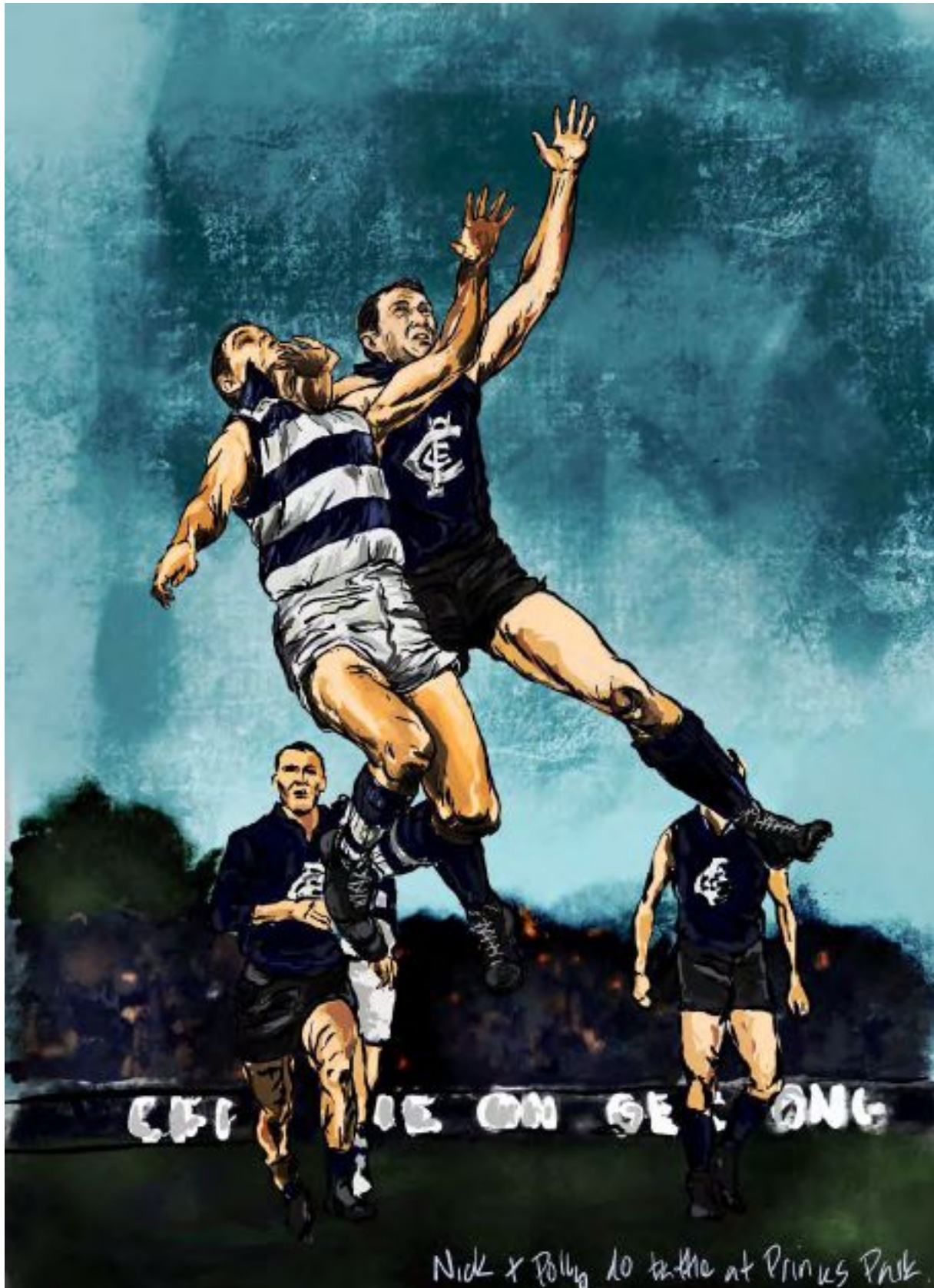
It is a cliché well worth embracing.

It is difficult to ‘rate’ stories, but this one is on the podium. Marlion Pickett has four kids, spent time in jail in his teens, and made his debut in a Grand Final, the first time this has happened since 1952. He polled votes in the Norm Smith Medal for Best on Ground and now has a Premiership medallion.

the icons & the moments

A series of drawings, bringing to life iconic images, players and moments.

I spent my childhood drawing footballers, using comic books as my guide, and here I am still doing it almost 50 years later. I like the superhero metaphor, obviously as it relates to the great talent of the players, but also their kryptonite...their vulnerability.



"Kick it long to Royce".
The cry would be heard from the stands, and most probably the coaches box.
Royce Hart, number 4 for Richmond. My first childhood hero.





Melbourne champ Robbie Flower, the best player I have seen up close.

I had the first five years of my time in the game watching Robbie play, and there was nothing like it.

Beautiful player, and the single reason a generation of Melbourne supporters kept coming to the games.

This was to be his last game. A Gary Buckenara after the siren kick costing Melbourne a place in the Grand Final. He is pictured with Hawthorn champ and fellow skipper Michael Tuck, who reportedly said "This kick will decide it for both of us".



"Everybody needs a hero".

Essendon great John Coleman.

My father said he was the best he had seen. Twelve goals in his first game, and a century in his first year.



"Eat 'em Alive".

The National Anthem prior to 1973 Preliminary Final. To this day my favourite game. I was just a kid when the Tigers came from 45 points down after injured champion Royce Hart came on the ground at half-time. They won by seven points, and beat Carlton in the Grand Final the following week





South Melbourne champ Bobby Skilton seemed to be able to control the ball when it wasn't even in his hand.

He won three Brownlow Medals and was a shining light in an otherwise tough era for his Swans.



"In the back - you're joking!"
Jack O'Rourke flies over Jack Hamilton
Punt Rd Oval

Cam Schwab

Richmond full-forward Jack O'Rourke takes a screamer at the old Punt Road Oval.

I remember feeling a deep sense of injustice when I learned the free-kick had been paid against him, his opponent being Collingwood full-back and future league CEO Jack Hamilton.

Kevin 'Bulldog' Murray is celebrating a milestone game, and a guard of honour against Geelong at the Junction Oval, St Kilda.

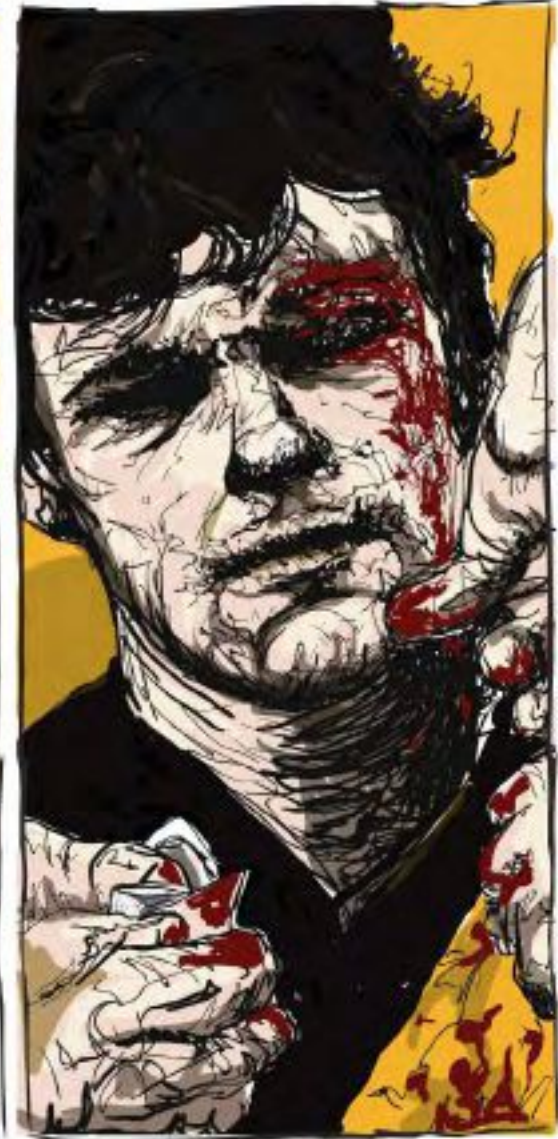
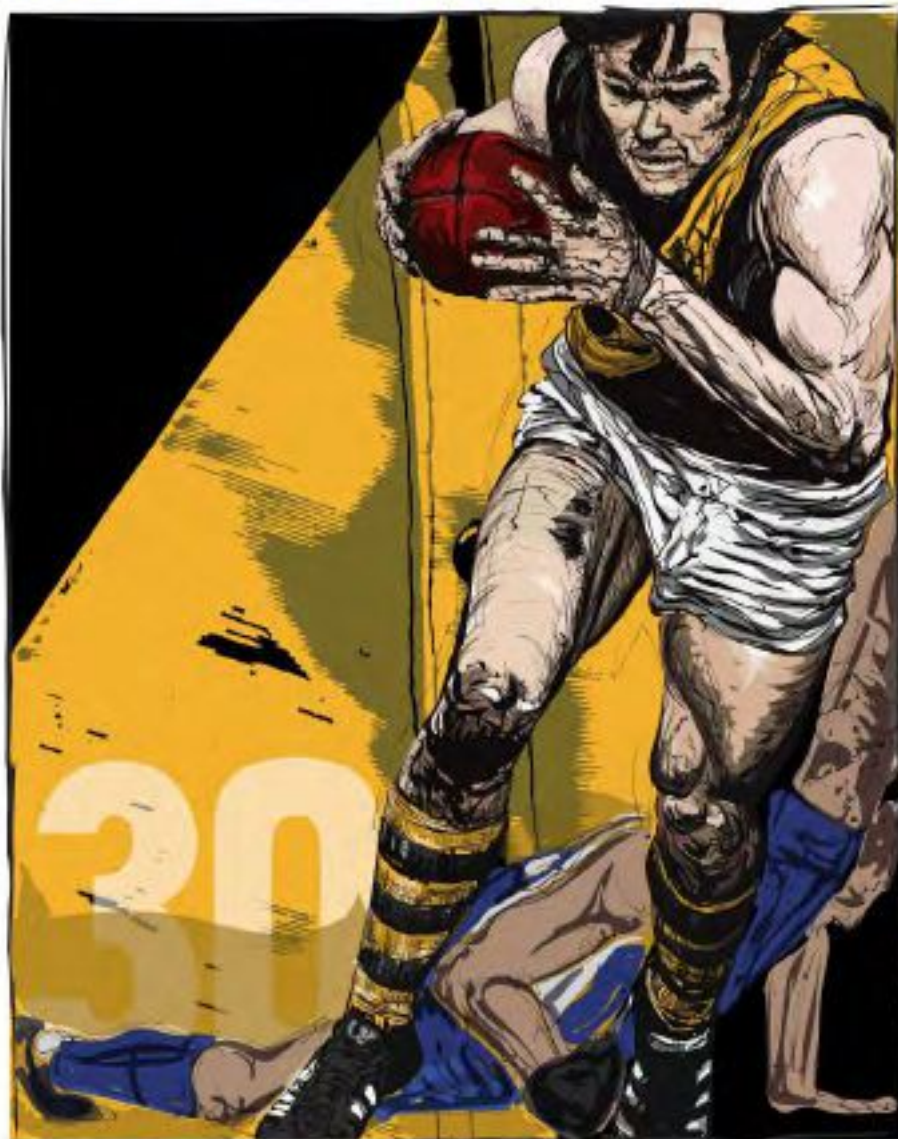
One of the sporting tragedies of my time in the game was the loss of Fitzroy, a beautiful footy club with a wonderful heritage, exemplified by the fighting qualities of men like Brownlow medallist Kevin Murray.



Rog Bogs onto the ground at the Junction Oval!



Corn Schwab-0





My first digital drawing from a few years ago, and I went straight back to familiar territory.

All of these are iconic images in my life.

My father Alan (right) in the player race at the Punt Road Oval with legendary coach Tom Hafey, the determined and bloodied image of the great Francis Bourke, and of course the famous Royce Hart mark.

"It's not how you get knocked down,
it's how you get up".

Famous quote from Hawthorn
coach Allan Jeans when speaking of
his gifted and aggressive centre-
half-forward Dermott Brereton and
his heroics in the 1989 Grand Final.

A game with so much folklore, with
Dermott at the heart of it, picking
himself up after a brutal blow from
Geelong defender Mark Yeates at
the start of the game.

Then he proceeded to take on Steve
Hocking, another hard man and
now the AFL's footy man.

The best game of footy I've seen.





what is a club in any case?

As I write this, two clubs are about to do battle in the AFL Grand Final. One of those clubs, Richmond, is the reason I love the game.

I fell in love with the Tigers before I fell in love with the game.



It is therefore no surprise that this quote from the remarkable Sir Bobby Robson, a legend of the world game, is a favourite.

It reads:

"What is a club in any case?

Not the buildings or the directors or the people who are paid to represent it. It's not the television contracts, get-out clauses, marketing departments or executive boxes.

It's the noise, the passion, the feeling of belonging, the pride in your city.

It's a small boy clambering up stadium steps for the very first time, gripping his father's hand, gawping at the hallowed stretch of turf beneath him, without being able to do a thing about it, falling in love."

In our game, it is a parent holding a child's hand, as our sport is becoming a game for everyone.

All of us can relate to that child. The day you fell in love with something and not being able to do a thing about it. It stays with you, and then as an adult, you get to watch your kids do likewise. From dinosaurs and superheroes, to rockstars and sport, and a new set of heroes.

But how does this apply to your world and your organisation?

What if we were to change the Bobby Robson quote just a little, exchanging the word 'club' for the 'name of your organisation'.

ie. "What is (name of your organisation) in any case?"

This conversation goes to the heart of your organisation's purpose.

It is not a 'faster, higher, stronger' conversation that most people associate with elite sport as per the Leunig cartoon below. It is a 'slower, deeper, wiser' discussion, so often avoided or lost in our sense of overwhelm...the busy.

In my experience, there is no competitive advantage in your Inbox, but that prospect exists if you can build a habit of reflection into the rhythm of your life, and that of your organisation.

The 'deep work' starts with two simple questions:

1. Who we are?
2. Why we do it?

From this process of reflection you are trying to find meaning, connection and belonging, three core components of purpose, and with that a deep sense of belief, something that sport is inherently good at, but ultimately as leaders, a higher-purpose goal to aim for, remembering:

"People want to believe in something bigger than themselves."



Sir Bobby Robson, a legend of the world game

leadership is not
something to do.
leadership is
something to be.



Geelong coach Chris Scott consoles
Mitch Clark after a game at the
MCG. Mitch has spoken about his
personal challenges with mental
illness and was attempting a
comeback for the Cats having taken
a break from the game.



belief

CONFIDENT, COURAGEOUS AND CREATIVE LEADERS

Each time I do a keynote speech, I start with a slide which says...

“Leadership is not something to DO, it is something to BE”.

Some background.

When presented with the opportunity to work in football, the game I had grown to love, I thought it would be a cool “thing to DO”, as compared with other career offerings for a young man straight out of secondary school.

Then, much earlier than I had anticipated and ever expected (or dreamed), when offered the opportunity to be CEO of the Richmond Football Club, the team I had fanatically supported for most of my life, I thought this would be an amazing “thing to DO”.

But leadership is not a DO thing, it is a BE thing. The moment you are accountable to, responsible for, and ultimately dependent on, the performance of people other than yourself, it stops being a DO thing.

Given the hierarchical structure of most organisations and the obvious focus on the leader, it is easy to stay in the DO mindset.

At a practical level, as a DOING leader, when faced with difficult and challenging situations, you default to a mindset of DO more, and expecting (and demanding) your people to DO likewise, you soon learn that DOING is a finite and capped resource.

At a cultural level, by just DOING leadership, you are making it about you. It is driven by selfishness and lacks humility, and dishonours the role. Personally, this learning came from a harsh experience, a time when I allowed my ego to drive my leadership, and lost respect, trust and credibility in the process.

I am convinced that the answer is to BE more in order to DO more.

- BE grounded
- BE real
- BE authentic
- BE yourself

By achieving this, you are now modelling leadership values, and as TD Jakes said:

“Your words tell others what you think, your actions tell them what you believe.”

Getting your ‘Something to BE’ right is not easy, and let’s not pretend that it is. It requires you to go to the heart of finding your personal purpose and meaning in the context of your leadership. This requires a deliberate, committed and regular process of ‘going deep’, understanding that no one can find your leadership purpose and meaning for you.

Dr Michael Gervais, a psychologist and wonderful thinker on all things high-performance, talks about it in the context of three elements:

1. Being around, and in conversation with wise people (not just those who are within easy reach).
2. Listen to yourself (Dr Michael is firm

on the value of mindfulness, stating high-performance takes place in the present, when wisdom is revealed).

3. Writing (I have become a strong convert to the value of regular writing, such a weekly blog, as a means of making sense of your thinking in a way that can then be communicated with confidence).

I would add a 4th element to Dr Michael’s list:
Setting aside time for learning (but not only focusing on ‘what did I learn?’, but also ‘what will I teach?’)

If you achieve this, you will then:

- BE clear
- BE confident
- BE calm
- BE creative
- BE courageous

And how do you know how you’re tracking as a BE leader?

My favourite BE word is BELIEF. In many ways, leaders are in the belief business – creating, giving, and most importantly, having belief.

The questions are:

1. “Do you believe in your people?”
 2. “Do they believe in you?“, neither of which is possible without asking...
 3. “Do you believe in yourself?”.
-





we are better for having lost

You often hear leaders talk about the ‘impostor syndrome’.

This ‘condition’ has been deeply analysed. My take is relatively straightforward.

Simply, leadership is hard.

This is particularly the case when trying to match often elevated expectations with capability, an always scarce resource.

You will also fail often.

But let us remember, failure is our greatest teacher.

Recently, I heard USA basketball coach Gregg Popovich, when facing the media having been beaten by the Australian Boomers in an historic loss/win (depending on where you sit), say:

“We are a better team than the start of the game because of the knowledge we have gained.”

A wonderful example.

I also like this quote from writer Steve Maraboli:

“For me, the most interesting people seem to have the bumpiest pasts. I prefer to connect with someone who has experienced the struggles, battles and casualties of life’s journey. There is beauty, wisdom, and truth to be found in the scars”.

Perhaps the quote appeals to me as someone who was sacked as CEO on a couple of occasions. I have no doubt it was these setbacks, personally challenging and heartbreaking at the time, that created the path to the work I now do.

Whenever I was in doubt, I referred to theses ‘truisms’:

- Leadership is Hard
- Change is Different
- Communication is Important
- Things get Complicated
- People are Human
- The Future is Tomorrow

They won't let you down.

he's sired a thoroughbred

Because my father Alan and I both worked in footy, the only Richmond game I got to watch with dad was Matthew Richardson's first game in 1993.

Matthew's dad Alan 'Bull' Richardson played at Richmond when dad was secretary, and was a Tiger Premiership player, so dad had a keen interest in his young son who had already created a lot of hype and excitement.

He didn't have to wait long, as early in the game Richo kicked a running bouncing goal from the boundary in front of the members stand at the MCG. Dad turned to me and said, "His old man, the Mighty Bull was a terrific player, but he was a draught horse. I think he may have sired a thoroughbred".

My father died a few weeks later.

During the tough Tiger times, it was Matthew Richardson who gave the Tiger supporters a reason to come to the footy. He was a hero to a generation of Tiger supporters.

This is my drawing of Matthew, with his father Alan silhouetted in the background, marking in typically spectacular fashion against the old enemy Collingwood in front of the Tiger faithful.



Richmond coach Tom Hafey and my father Alan Schwab in conversation in the player race at the Punt Road Oval prior to the 1969 Grand Final. The Tigers went on to win the Premiership.



"The Mighty Bull has sired a thoroughbred —"

Cam Schwab



North Melbourne's
Majak Daw.
A trailblazer in so
many ways.



well, you're in the wrong caper

My personal experience is that leadership finds you wherever you are now, with your current knowledge, understanding and take on the world, but never leaves you where it found you.

You will be changed, different in so many ways that you will sometimes struggle to relate to the pre-leader version of yourself.

I remember a well-known, somewhat outspoken AFL footballer, who after his retirement coached his own team at state league level. I heard him speak after two years in the role where he made the statement:

"I'd like to publicly apologise to every coach I've ever had".

Leadership had changed him, finding him somewhere and leaving him somewhere else, and if this statement is anything to go by, a more humble and generous place.

Given the multi-faceted challenge of leadership, and its transformational forces, how do you ever know where you are at, and where you are going? The sense of disorientation can overwhelm, and with that, the fundamental need to remain grounded.

There is an element of 'buckling-in for the ride', understanding that any effort to control the many factors that will forge their independent and often random paths, is exhausting, and mostly futile.

In response, I often hear leaders speak of the need to find 'clarity', and my first thoughts are "Well, you're in the wrong caper".

There will always be complexity and complicatedness in ambitious organisations, hence the need for quality leadership to match this challenge.

While clarity is an ideological objective, there are means by which you can frame

this ambiguity with a simple and powerful routine to maintain leadership confidence and a way forward.

It only requires the setting aside of an hour or so every month, a fresh journal page and a pad of sticky-notes. At the top of the page, add the date, and then write down the simple question:

"Do I believe in my people, and do they believe in me?"

Then set about answering it.

Take a 360-degree view, taking the perspective of all of those with whom you require their belief- your Board, your boss, your fellow leaders, staff, and even your customers and key stakeholders.

Ask yourself: "What makes me believable?"

A checklist could include questions that relate to your leadership values, such as:

1. Do I do the right thing, even when it's hard?
2. Have I established well-understood performance expectations, and do I model these?
3. Am I consistent in my personal attitude and motivations?
4. Is the strategy that I have played a role in developing convincing, compelling and well-articulated?
5. Are my actions consistent with my words?
6. Do I have the technical expertise and experience to be believable in this domain?

7. Am I building track-record to support my assertions?
8. Etc etc

For each of the questions, ask yourself:

1. What are two of my behaviours that support this value?
2. What are two of my behaviours that are outside of this value?
3. What is a leadership habit that will allow me to embed this value more consistently?

Having completed this, then ask the same questions of your people, those who you lead. Should any of the answers be negative, or if you are questioning individuals, then ask yourself:

"What am I doing about it?"

At the end of the exercise, you should have added a few new tasks to your 'to-do list', encouraged and energised that you can make the impact as a leader that was the very motivation for taking the role in the first place.

These are the leadership habits and routines we teach and coach as part of our designCEO offering, remembering:

A high-performance culture requires high-performance behaviours, which are established via high-performance habits.



behaviours

CONFIDENT, COURAGEOUS AND CREATIVE LEADERS



Gabriella Pound and Katie Loynes of the Blues celebrate during the 2019 AFLW Grand Final.

the score takes care of itself

Because the objective in AFL football is so obvious, it is not often spoken about inside an AFL club.

Yes, we are all trying to win the Premiership, and because only one team can win it, clubs can go generations without achieving their core objective.

Even by comparison with other sporting competitions across the world, the AFL has the most singular ambition. There are no conference or divisional championships, no FA Cup if you miss out on winning the Premier League, no qualifying for Europe etc.

Just one piece of silverware...the Premiership Cup, and they are rare and precious.

The conversations inside an AFL club focus on one overarching question.

Have we got the right system(s) in place to give ourselves the best chance of winning one, either now, or at some time in the nearish future?

It is not a competition of teams; it's a competition of systems.

The Hawthorn Football Club has spent the best part of a decade winning because they've had the best system. Other clubs have sought to learn this system, appointing coaches and support staff who have an insight into this process.

Since coach Alastair Clarkson's Hawks won three in a row from 2013-2015, the next three Premierships have been won by clubs led by coaches who spent significant periods in the Clarkson/Hawthorn system.

2016 – Western Bulldogs – Luke Beveridge

2017 – Richmond – Damien Hardwick
2018 – West Coast Eagles – Adam Simpson

The New England Patriots, led by coach Bill Belichick and quarterback Tom Brady have now won six Superbowls. Before this duo came together, the Patriots had never won a Superbowl.

I have known Alastair Clarkson for many years, appointing him to his first coaching role way back in 1998 as Neale Daniher's assistant/runner the year after Clarko retired as a player. He has many fine qualities as a coach, but if I was to name the one attribute that sets him apart, it would be his aptitude. He has a voracious appetite for learning, but also the courage to experiment, go with a hunch, ask better questions, try new things knowing that many will sit in judgement, and he will get things wrong from time-to-time.

The result? Alastair Clarkson is the most influential coaching voice of his generation.

Like many in the sporting world, I have studied the Patriots from afar. They are not an easy club to get close to. They remain guarded, and why not? They seem to have the secret sauce, or more likely, the best systems. The Hawks and the Patriots have much in common. Both have had their share of controversies, but more than anything, they develop great systems that produce championship teams.

So how does this apply to business?

Firstly, I believe the 'goal' is overrated. Yes, it will provide you with a focus, and that's important, but it is your systems that'll be the key to your

success (or otherwise).

All of our work at designCEO builds on the core philosophy that people, teams and organisations do not rise to the level of their ambition, they fall to the standard of their systems.

And what is the most critical system?

It is your talent system, starting with your leaders.

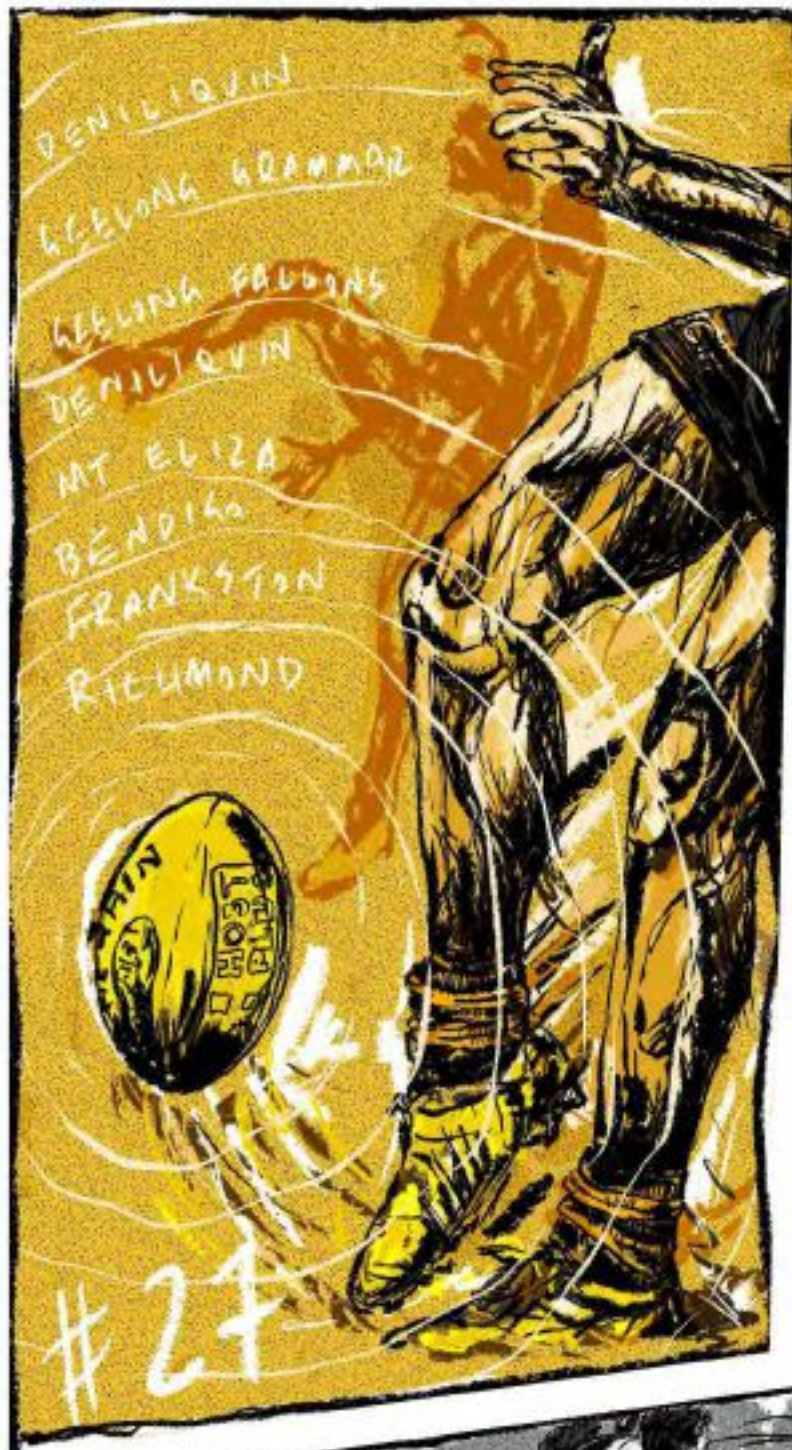
It's for this reason the designCEO facilitated programs and mentoring utilise performance frameworks and methodologies heavily influenced by elite sport, ensuring commitment and accountability to a team-based ethos.

We teach a system that develops leadership, on the basis that leaders beget leaders.
People who...

1. Do the right thing, even when it's hard.
2. Take responsibility for their personal development in the context of the team/organisation.
3. Understand that it not just what they bring to the team, it is what they are prepared to do for the team that counts.

Then, as Hall of Fame NFL coach Bill Walsh would say...

"The score takes care of itself"



the most important person in a club is the one with the ball in their hand

Time for a football metaphor...

“The most important person in a club is the one with the ball in their hand”

Decisions are best made at the level of organisation where there is the most expertise, knowledge and understanding. For leaders, this means ‘passing the ball’.

Sam Lloyd was never able to secure a permanent place in the Richmond Football Club senior line-up. He was never able to take his place in the team for granted. Despite his good form, he missed selection in the Tigers’ 2017 Premiership team, and was traded to the Western Bulldogs at the end of 2018.

Whenever I watch him play, I am

reminded of a game in the 2016 season against a powerful Sydney Swans team. The ball was in his hand when the siren rang, and his team needed a goal for victory.

It wasn’t an easy shot, obviously made more challenging by the situation. It had been a tough year; the club was under great scrutiny as performances had failed to meet elevated expectations. It was a club under pressure.

At this point, no one other than Sam can influence the outcome. None of his teammates, none of his coaches, none of the hundreds of thousands watching at the game or on TV, many of whom would know little of Sam’s prowess with ball in hand.

But those who knew their footy

understood the ball was in good hands. While Sam is a journeyed player, taking a long time to find his way into an AFL club, wherever he played, regardless of the standard, he kicked goals.

He confidently went through his normal goalkicking routine, and it never looked like missing.

It was a great Tiger victory, a highlight in an otherwise disappointing season for the club. This is my drawing of the event as it unfolded.

It is a wonderful metaphor for leaders... teach, grow and empower your people by always having the confidence and belief to pass the ball.

Decisions are best made at the level of organisation where there is the most expertise, knowledge and understanding. For leaders, this means ‘passing the ball’.

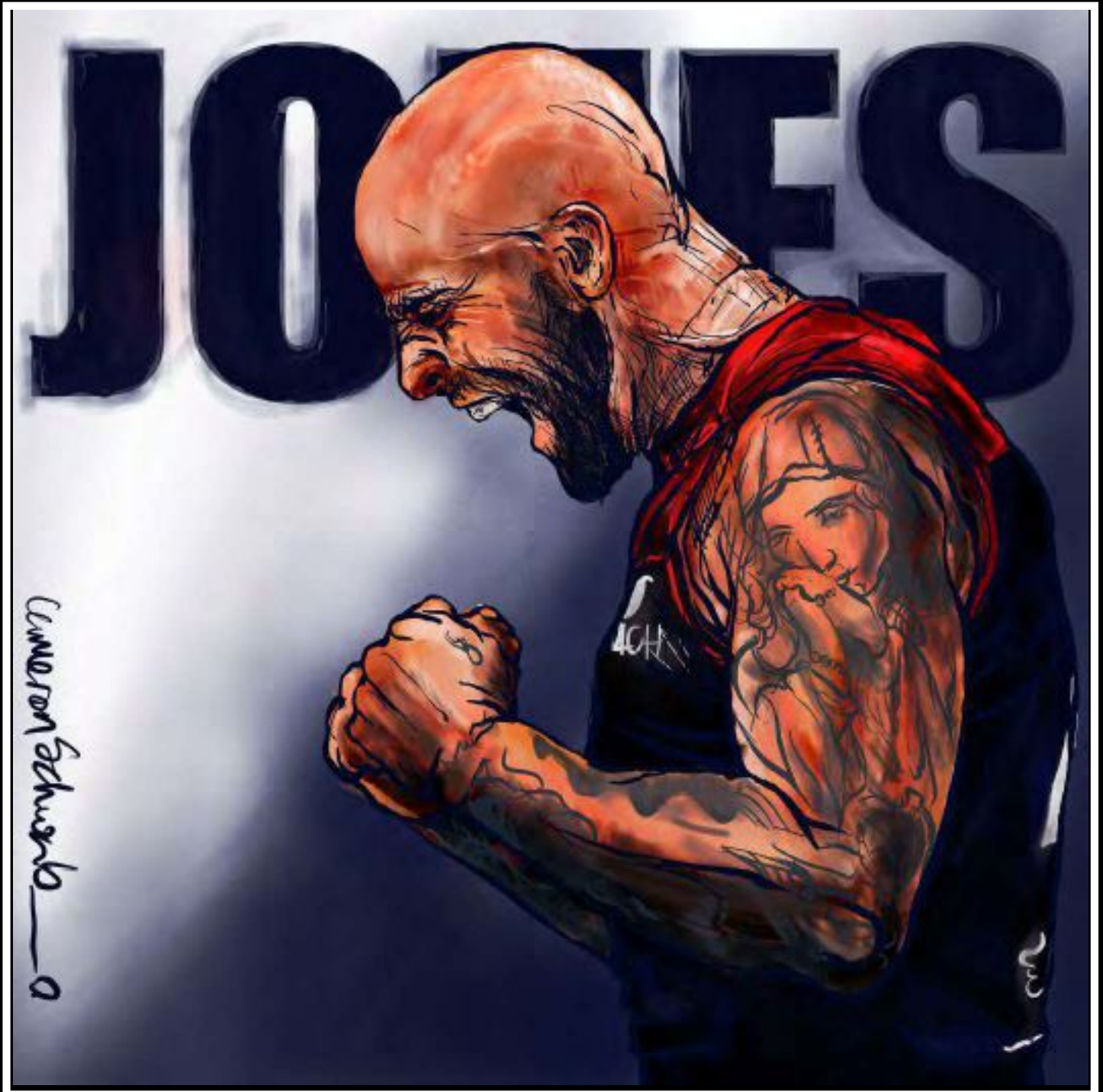
BONES



Cam Schwebel

Bones and Jones. Tattoos from different times.

Above, Richmond's Robert "Bones" McGhie, enjoys a cigarette after playing Centre Half Back in the Tigers' 1973 Premiership victory. Right, Melbourne warrior Nathan Jones' fist pump, a player who has given his all during some of the club's darkest days.



mind. body. craft.

I was listening to high-performance psychologist Dr Michael Gervais' wonderful podcast "Finding Mastery" recently when I heard him say that we only get to train three things, our mind, body and craft.

It immediately resonated.

Perhaps cricket's most difficult craft is leg spin bowling. Anyone who has played cricket will have at least given it a go.

All but a few persevere beyond those first few clumsy attempts to do what the laws of physics tell us shouldn't be possible.

For those who persist, and land the ball somewhere in the batter's vicinity, then have to endure their offering being belted all over the park, presenting no more a threat than a gentle underarm

By this stage, most have given up, their leg spin bowling only seen at the end of a friendly net session or the family BBQ with a half-taped tennis ball.

I wonder just how many young leg

spinners were on the cusp of mastery, but do not keep at it. Leg spin bowling is a wonderful example of craft (technical competency), with a fair bit of body (physical capabilities), but mostly mind (emotional faculty).

For those who have studied high-performance, there is no golden thread, but there are common characteristics. The high performers have found a way to master a craft, the capability to operate on the edge of their technical, physical and emotional limits every time they ply their trade. That is what high performance ultimately requires, the capacity to deal with the uncertainty that will accompany every ball they bowl.

Fortunately for the game itself, enough people struggle on, able to recover from the many setbacks. Having watched the ball being bashed over the boundary, they walk back to their bowling mark, bring themselves back to the present, make a correction or two, and prepare to bowl the next ball to the same person who has just

treated their last offering with disdain.

Those who survive this and have mastered their craft, bring a rich joy to the game.

One such person is 19-year-old New Zealander Amelia Kerr, who took three wickets in an over on debut in the Big Bash League. If you read up on Amelia, you will hear her teammates and coaches say:

- Learner – "like a sponge"
- Calm – "cool-headed in any situation"
- Effort – "practices hard, makes sacrifices"
- Competitive – "wants to be the best"
- Fun – "always singing and dancing"

Perhaps they are the five characteristics for anyone seeking to master a craft, particularly one so sure to test you as leg spin bowling surely will.

Sounds also like she would be a wonderful teammate, and a joy to coach.



Amelia Kerr, 19 year-old New Zealand leg spinner. Bringing mastery and joy to the game. (Getty Images)

knowing where you are at

I use the metaphor, stories and decision-making frameworks from high-performance team sport, specifically AFL, as a means of teaching and coaching leaders and their teams.

I feel confident to do so because it is my background – my 30-year lived experience.

I do not talk about the often-referenced organisations such as Google, Apple, Tesla etc. because my understanding of those companies has come from someone else's take, that has made its way to me via many voices and views. By the time it has got to me, what is real and what is myth, is impossible to know.

That's not to say there are not many 'myths and legends' in football given the enormous public interest in the sport, and the many people in the media professing their opinion on what coach, club and player should've done, mostly with the wisdom of hindsight, and what they should do next, understanding they will seldom be held accountable for this opinion.

What everyone gets to judge is the performance of the team on the field on matchday and the column which was the W's and L's (i.e. the wins and losses). While clubs understand that they are ultimately accountable to the scoreboard, it can be a distraction for all but the few clubs who are in a position to win regularly enough to genuinely contend for the Premiership.

Often expectations are ahead of capability, and poorly managed expectations can ruin clubs. The challenge of rebuilding momentum and confidence after a run of disappointing losses, knowing whether to hold a line or when to pivot, are the actions and decisions that can only be made by leaders working together.

In the AFL, these leaders will not want for advice – there will be many voices from over the fence, thousands of column inches and other morphing media channels, both mainstream and social, analysing their progress.

The noise can be deafening – and blinding.

During these times, it is critical that the organisation has a firm understanding of its stage of development.

With this in mind, elite sporting clubs, seek to be in one of two phases:

1. We are good enough to win now
2. We are on track to build a team good enough to win in the future.

To be in neither phase means you are in a strategic and performance wilderness, stuck in the middle, likely to be teasing with the odd good performance that creates false hope and optimism, and a tendency to idealise prospects, as well as overestimating the capabilities of your talent base. A run of losses has the opposite effect, a black cloud soon descending and a sense of hopelessness and waning confidence stifling the

capabilities of even the most talented.

I call this place the "not knowing" phase, and it can be a familiar place for leaders as they seek to understand their organisation's place in an unknown and unknowable future.

This is an error I made on a number of occasions as an AFL club CEO, and not without consequence.

So what do we do?

My recommendation is for leaders individually and collectively to build a monthly habit of going deep with four questions:

1. What does winning look like?
2. What do we need to be good at?
3. What are we going to do?
4. How will we know?

These questions are particularly important when winning doesn't look like winning, as it allows you to align ambition with capability, to establish expectations from which you can measure performance.

You will then understand what phase you are in, manage the 'noise', align expectations across the organisation allowing you to make calm, thoughtful and purposeful decisions with confidence and belief.

What does winning look like?
What do we need to be good at?
What are we going to do?
How will we know?

Brisbane Lions players Sabrina Frederick-Traub and Kate McCarthy celebrate during the 2017 AFLW Grand Final .



did we stay calm?

Siya Kolisi became the first black South African captain to lift the William Webb Ellis Trophy when the Springboks beat England 32-12 to win the 2019 Rugby World Cup. A famous and historic win, and his country celebrated. His post game interview in the immediate aftermath was equally inspiring.

Just minutes after the game he says:

“A team like this, we come from different backgrounds and different races but came together with one goal and wanted to achieve it. I really hope we have done that for South Africa, to show that we can pull together.”

“We can achieve anything if we can work together as one.”

In that moment, Siya could be excused some personal indulgence, yet remains humble and fully present. While he appreciates his place in history, he understands the importance of the win for his country.

It is a victory bigger than himself and his team. They are the example their country can follow. As he speaks, he is not only leading his team, the world is watching, and he decides to lead his country.

He builds this narrative in the knowledge that he can well and truly back it up.

As TD Jakes said “Your words will tell others what you think. Your actions will tell them what you believe.”

His performance on the field have told us what he believes, he is now telling us what he thinks.

This is what resilient leadership looks like.

I have spent a lot of time studying and learning about resilience. Conversations about resilience naturally focus on how we cope with adversity, but it is also our capacity to deal with our successes.

It is our clarity and rationality in the face of amplified situations, be it dealing with crisis or celebrating victory.

Dan Abrahams in his wonderful “The Sport Psych Podcast” interviews writer Ben Lyttleton about his terrific book ‘Edge: What Business Can Learn from Football’ and quotes Tim Harkness Head of Sports Science and Psychology at Chelsea FC, who defines resilience as:

“Accurately assessing threats and opportunities and allocating emotional resources accordingly”.

Sport is very good at reflecting on experiences both positive and negative, the wins and the losses, with the intention of gaining as much knowledge, insight and understanding from a learning perspective to assist the next time we are in similar circumstances, in most cases, the next game we play.

It builds habits and systems to achieve this. The game ‘post-mortem’ is an integral part of the process of growing, and we are always seeking ways to make it more effective so as to fast track learning.

Sport understands that resilience is learnable, and while some already have the implicit skills, for most they are learned. In some cases, the capacity to develop skills of resilience will be the difference between success and failure in many endeavours, individually and collectively.

Once of the reasons Siya is so humble in this moment is that he has trained for it. His team’s success would come as no surprise to him, and he has a very deep well of personal and team experiences to prepare him for this moment.

A lot of the work I do with leaders at designCEO focuses on resilience, building the skills personally and organisationally

to “allocate emotional resources accordingly” in both victory and defeat.

Many of my personal learnings in relation to resilience come from the lived experience as a CEO of AFL clubs. This was a test I failed often, tough lessons learned when dealing with the ups and downs, often with inappropriate allocation of emotional resources. Fortunately, I also had the opportunity of working with leaders and mentors who had built the requisite resilience to thrive in an often unforgiving environment.

I well remember former Adelaide Football Club Senior Coach (coincidentally now High Performance Manager of England Rugby), who I worked with at the Melbourne Football Club, starting meetings when reviewing our responses during difficult and ambiguous situations by asking:

“Did we stay calm?”

He understood that unless we “allocated the appropriate emotional resources”, we had little chance of achieving anything close to an optimal outcome.

The question required us to reflect on our own responses and their likely impact on others in the decision making group. After completion of the analysis, we then ask:

“What have learned, and what would we do differently next time?”

They are simple questions but powerful. Remember, “it is the hard days that define us”, the times when we’re are most tested will provide the greatest insights, and the opportunities to learn resilience.

Siya Kolisi, you set a superb example.

Well played.



resilience
CONFIDENT, COURAGEOUS AND CREATIVE LEADERS

South African Captain Siya Kolisi "We can achieve anything if we can work together as one."
(Getty Images)

only one player can kick the goal, but it is a team that scores it

I often joke that AFL clubs recruit the most selfish human beings known to mankind. The eighteen-year-old male.

Yet, the first value we seek to teach is selflessness. The player's career will be defined by their capacity to make this transition. It is wonderful to watch it happen as young men grow. They become role players; recognising their value is not what they bring to the team, it is what they're prepared to do for the team.

They learn that only one player can kick the goal, but it is a team that scores it.

In recent years, a personal favourite is Adelaide champ is Eddie Betts. He is just about the most watchable player in the game's history. A highlights reel like no other.

Eddie was dropped from Adelaide's senior team during the 2019 season. It was big news.

Eddie would be the first to admit his form wasn't up to his usual standard, yet he had still scored more goals than any other Adelaide player to that point in the season. He had kicked 32, a reasonable return for a small forward in a year where scoring for all clubs had been low. Only seven players in the competition had kicked more goals than him.

The decision to drop Eddie is the type of decision that can put club, coach and player under enormous pressure. I am sure it was an intense topic of conversation in a city that loves its footy, and Eddie is a hero.

Adelaide FC came into the 2019 season with high expectations. But their form was inconsistent, and they are an aging team. Still, they were in finals contention, sitting in eighth place.

The club was in that challenging phase of trying to get the best from its current playing list to remain in the mix in season 2019, while having an eye to the next

generation of Adelaide players. I call this the 'future-now' phase and a difficult balance for club decision makers.

Eddie understands this. He is thirty-two and knows his time is nearing the end. The game has been good for him, as he's been good for it, but he also recognises the need for his club to invest games in young players, to see if they have what it takes at this level, and someone has to make way.

Eddie was the beneficiary of this same system fifteen years ago when Carlton took a chance on him. They elevated him from their Rookie list and played him in the senior team. A tiny, under conditioned, enigmatic but inconsistent goal kicker.

Then, 300 games and 595 goals later,



he is a great of the game, in the very highest echelon of small forwards.

But he also knows the pressure the club and his coach, Don Pyke, will be under as a result of their decision to omit him from the team.

Eddie could be forgiven for some indulgence at this challenging stage of life, facing into his football mortality, but instead he puts his club and teammates first, using his own popularity and standing to diffuse the situation via his personal social media platform.

He has made it personal, heartfelt and real. With a smiling photo taken in the Adelaide changerooms with the young man who has taken his place in the team, 20-year-old Tyson Stengle, selected to play just his second game for Adelaide, Eddie writes:

"Yes a bit disappointed to be dropped but at the same time super excited that this kid gets another run at AFL level, turn it on little brother"

Tyson is also Indigenous, and a small forward.

One of my favourite leadership quotes is from TD Jakes:

"Your words tell others what you think. Your actions tell them what you believe."

Eddie has left us in no doubt what he thinks, and what he believes.

Selfless.





what crap are you putting up with?

This image, captured perfectly by photographer Wayne Ludbey, is folklore in Australian sport.

Nicky Winmar, a Noongar man from Pengelly, a Wheatbelt town south of Perth (WA), lifting his jumper at Victoria Park in 1993 immediately following a famous St Kilda victory.

His act of courage not only changed the game but changed the conversation parents were having with their children.

I read that prior to the game, in a conversation with his indigenous teammate Gibert McAdam, when confronted with the racist slurs from the Collingwood crowd, said simply:

“We’re not going to put up with this crap”.

The talented duo then played their hearts out, starring in the first St Kilda win at Collingwood’s hostile home ground in two decades.

Again, I refer to the TD Jakes quote:

“Your words tell others what you think. Your actions tell them what you believe.”

Let’s think about Nicky’s words, a private conversation with a friend and teammate. They are only known 25 years later because of the actions that followed. They should not however, be underestimated in terms

of their power and meaning.

I would ask you the question, “What crap are you putting up with?”

It could be behaviours that are not aligned with the values of the organisation, let alone the standards and expectations you are seeking to institutionalise as a leader.

For example, does your organisation gossip, and if so what are you doing about it?

Gossip is insidious. It is bullying in another form, and if leaders turn a blind eye, or are engaging in it, then it is a reflection on them (and you) and severely undermining the capacity to build trust, fundamental to any high-performance culture.

It is not enough to say that it is unacceptable, are you prepared to do something about it?

It wasn’t what Nicky Winmar said, as powerful and succinct as his words were, it is what he did that made the difference. Without the act of lifting his jumper and pointing to his skin, the words are lost in the moment. Instead, he changed the

culture of the game, and while it still has much work to do (eg the insufficient and weak response to the Adam Goodes booing a few years ago), it doesn’t ‘put up with this crap’.

So ask yourself, are you matching the values you talk to, with the standards you model, and are you prepared to call people out for behaviours outside of these expectations, regardless of who they are, be it status or ‘technical’ performance?

I can reflect on many times when I did not do this, and with that a sense of shame, even as I write this, at my lack of courage, particularly in the earlier years.

I learned that courage in leadership is both a decision, and a skill, and you need both.

We seek to teach the skill, from which the courage will develop as the leader grows in confidence. It is central to all of our leadership development programs.

Remember, leadership is not what you say...it is what you do.

Wayne Ludbey’s brilliant photo of Nicky Winmar, lifting his jumper at Victoria Park in 1993 immediately following a famous St Kilda victory.

My drawing of Adam Goodes at the height of booing (bullying) of one of the game's very best.

A time of great shame.

"Those claiming to boo Goodes for non-racial reasons also need to understand they are providing a cover for racists.

And so we are back at the racial divide. The mistake is to think we ever leave it."

- Martin Flanagan





unexamined beliefs

I am not sure how many times I'd said....

“Culture eats strategy for breakfast”, before I thought..

“I don't believe it”.

I think I heard this Peter Drucker quote was when I was undertaking my first management education course, a four week live-in Advanced Management Program (AMP) at the Melbourne Business School 25 years ago.

This course was the first step on a journey of wonderful educational experiences that I'd previously assumed beyond the scope of my capability.

I'd gone straight from high school to work in football, and through circumstance and situation found myself in leadership roles with no formal leadership, management or business training.

I didn't even do a business subject at high-school, and now I am doing Harvard Business School case studies with some of the best educators in the country, and a cohort of leaders deemed 'high-potential' by some of the biggest organisations in town.

I was still in my twenties and about to start

my sixth year as the CEO of Richmond Football Club, and I absorbed everything, filling notebooks and chunks of brain space with this newfound wisdom.

It was energising.

I left this course like a boy with a new toy, keen to show off my shiny new plaything.

I started rolling out the Drucker quote and had plenty of opportunities to do so. Such is the obsession with sport and its relationship with performance, people holding positions of leadership responsibility in the



Legend AFL Coach Kevin Sheedy. The game changer.



Champion footballer Debbie Lee. The most committed football person I know. Game changer.

game are furnished with an audience well beyond their relative corporate standing, be it media or public speaking.

I'd say "culture eats strategy for breakfast", and people would nod sagely, reach for their pen and notebook and write it down, just as I had. I even practiced my timing for maximum effect, and never once did anyone question it. Profound wisdom I thought, and I am happy to bask in its reflected glory.

The irony is, the reason I used it was to move beyond the classical sporting cliché, and perhaps with more than a little ego, show myself as someone who was bringing the latest in business school speak into my repertoire, and Peter Drucker, one of the great thinkers, was a safe pair of hands.

I was using a cliché so as not to appear clichéd, and in doing so, it became what I now define as an 'unexamined belief', and the world is full of them, and they are counterproductive and potentially dangerous.

Now, twenty-five years later, I don't believe

the quote, and I have also instigated a process of reflective thinking in which, amongst other things, creates a process whereby I question my 'unexamined beliefs'.

In terms of the Drucker quote, I now think of culture as an outcome, the product of many organisational behaviours, good and bad, particularly the personal conduct of the more influential individuals, mainly the leaders.

Our cumulative behaviours are the result of our organisational decision making, as basic as the standards we set, people we hire, systems we employ, conduct we reward, etc. Every organisational culture is different because every organisation has different inputs, all the consequence of decisions made (or not made) by those with whom decision making power wrests.

This penny dropped when I visited FCBarcelona in Spain a decade ago, a club I'd long admired and studied from afar. They are very experienced in hosting ambitious sporting clubs from all over the world.

The first piece of advice from their leaders was do not attempt to copy our culture, as proud and powerful as it is, make your culture unique and special to who you are.

I was a tad disappointed, hoping to bring back the FCBarcelona magic dust, but now understood that our ability to create a high performance culture would be a product of our capacity to make the right decisions more often, aligned to the values we will need to agree upon as they relate to the type of club we are seeking to build.

In other words, a simple formula, as Bill Walsh author of the fabulous book "The score takes care of itself", get the plan right, find the people.

"Running a football franchise is not unlike running any other business: You start first with a structural format and basic philosophy and then find the people who can implement it," he'd say.

Yes, you can study and learn from other organisations you admire, seek out conversations with leaders who have a track record of building cultures, but I don't believe you



"How can we soar like eagles, when you feed us like chooks". - Sir Doug Nicholls

can 'short-cut' your organisational culture by copying another company's culture. It is the product of a compelling, insightful and well-executed strategy and talented, high intent people to execute it.

I then started to examine my 'unexamined beliefs', and they were everywhere.

History is littered with great people with the courage and insight to question 'unexamined beliefs' and they have changed everything.

Sometimes, they are born out of bias and prejudice.

Perhaps football's best example is the attitude towards indigenous players.

Aboriginal players do not play the game

any better today than they did fifty years ago, when basically no indigenous players were in league ranks. They were held back by beliefs (racism), which has thankfully changed, and the game (and the nation) is much better for it, understanding that we still have a long way to go. I credit Kevin Sheedy as the key person, using both his insight and standing in the game, in changing this belief.

The same with women's football, and the prevailing view for decades that people will not watch women's football, then 52,000 people turn up to watch the 2019 AFLW Grand Final at Adelaide Oval. Here, I credit Debbie Lee, a wonderful and unsung football person. Her achievement is even more meritorious given she did not have the platform of someone like Kevin Sheedy, and suffered the personal

bias directed at women footballers, with every effort to grow the game met with resistance and prejudice.

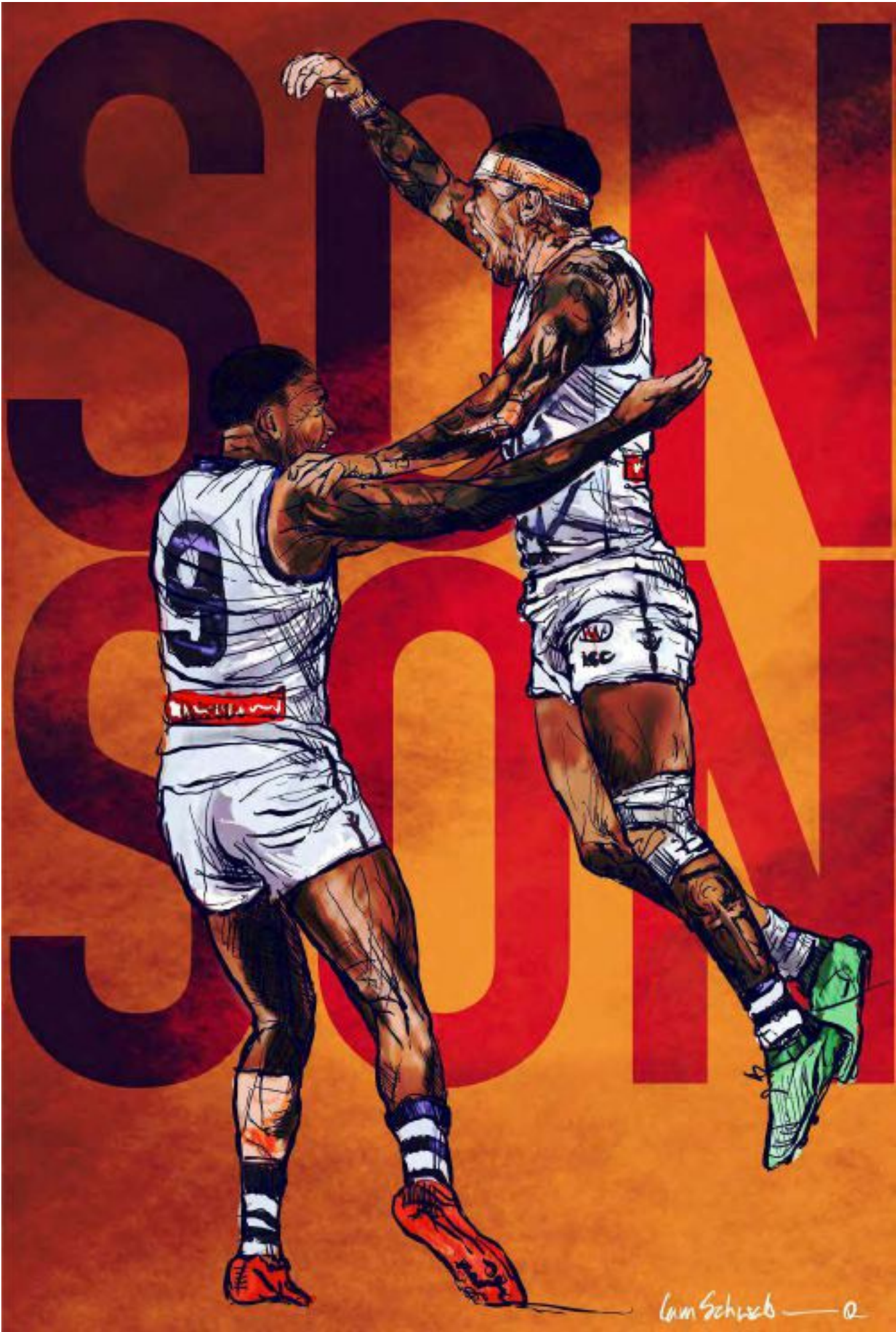
The process is not hard and it starts with a simple question:

"Do I really believe this?"

Then test it, put it out there, ask better questions. To do otherwise means you are ignoring your own ignorance.

At times you may be a lone voice, but you just might soon find a chorus of support, and change happens and the world becomes a better place.

Fremantle's Michael Walters and Brad Hill. Bringing something special to the game.



great teams need great role players

Those grounded individuals, who in developing their 'game', focus their personal efforts on how they become a better teammate.

Richmond's Shane Edwards celebrates his moment in history.





Role players understand their shortcomings but have the personal insight and humility to build a game almost in response to, and despite of, their weaknesses.

These are rare characteristics, and worth their weight in gold.

Great role players appreciate the strengths of others, but they do not resent their talent; they seek to amplify it, understanding their own efforts will often go unseen as a result. Rare will be the public recognition that will be reserved for their higher-profile teammates, and they are fine with that.

They know only one player can kick the goal, but it is a team that scores it.

Great role players are lifetime learners, understanding they must remain ahead of the game, never taking their role in the team for granted. Not only do they have an appetite for learning, but they also have an equally intense hunger for application. As a result, their most powerful influence is as a role model, as the combination of attitude, ethos and humility is contagious.

While the star players can inspire, lift the team in the moment with acts of brilliance, it is the role player who is more likely to shift the team culture through the consistency of their behaviours, setting a standard, exemplifying the attitude of team above self.

For the role player, it's not about being the best at something in the game...it's about being the best at something for the team.

My favourite role player in the AFL, and perhaps my favourite player overall, is Richmond midfielder Shane Edwards. He exemplifies all of the values I have articulated, and while he is a talented player, he has become so much more in a team of far more profiled individuals, improving every year of his long and mostly unsung career. My guess, he would be a favourite teammate of those big-name players and loved by his coaches.

As leaders, it is our responsibility to identify and develop the role players, a highly underestimated aspect of leadership.

It starts with recruiting, not sacrificing culture for talent, and being steadfast in hiring individuals with a track record of self-responsibility for personal development.

And if you get it wrong, and you will, being prepared to make a quick call, and as the legendary coach, Allan Jeans would say...

"Your first loss is your best loss".

Beyond recruiting, valuing and encouraging the importance of the role player must form part of your systems and symbols, roles and routines.

Your attitude to the notion of 'role player' will also say so much about you as a leader, what you really value, the behaviours you reward, building trust, as well as your personal commitment to establishing a sustainable team ethos.

You simply cannot be a great organisation without great role players.

**For the role player,
it's not about
being the best at
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something for the
team.**

what do you bring to the team? what will you give to the team?

The pursuit of a career in a professional team sport is inherently selfish.

Often from a young age, players have been made to feel as though they're different. In some cases, those around them have been required to compromise their personal goals to support the dreams and aspirations of the young athlete.

This changes the second they enter the elite sport environment.

Team sport places its highest value on selflessness – the part of you that you are required to 'give up' or 'sacrifice' for the good of the team.

This is not an opt-in/opt-out scenario, the competition and the expectations of coaches and teammates demand it.

So how do leaders create this attitude in their organisations?

It starts with two questions, not as a one-off, but as a regular part of your leadership narrative and embedded into your daily practice.

They are:

What do you bring to the team?

What will you give to the team?

Yes, we bring our experience and expertise, but there is some part of ourselves that we are required to grow and develop, or let go, for the good of the team.

It is a very powerful and often emotional exercise.

At your next team meeting, give it a try.







Sam Mitchell of the Hawks leaves the MCC after his 300th match with his wife Lyndall and children Smith, Emmerson and Scarlett.

what I've learned about vulnerability

Vulnerability is part of who we are, our essence, and to try and be invulnerable, is to try and be something or somebody that we are not.

The Tom Boyd goal that sealed the Western Bulldogs' premiership in 2016, the second in the club's history and first since 1954.



In 2019, Western Bulldogs footballer Tom Boyd retired from AFL football citing physical and mental health issues.

He was 23 years old.

Just two years earlier, Tom, a former number 1 draft selection, was close to the best player on the ground in the Western Bulldogs' 2016 Grand Final victory, as the club broke its 62 year Premiership drought, the longest in the AFL.

His coach, Luke Beveridge, struggled to compose himself as he spoke about Tom.

"When you reflect on Tom's career, there are lots of emotions," Beveridge said.

"At the end of 2016, we thought the footy world was Tom's oyster. We didn't see the black dog creep up on him and at that time we weren't really aware that he had struggles historically and so it is sad because of what could have been in his footy career. But since then he has had some enormous struggles."

Recently as part of an event for Sport and Life Training (SALT), I was asked to interview two Premiership coaches, Alastair Clarkson (Hawthorn) and Damien Hardwick (Richmond). Both spoke openly about their own emotional challenges, and those of friends, family and of course, the young men they coach.

They quickly and comfortably went into a space, that until recently, would never have been a no-go zone for leaders in the ultra-competitive and unforgiving world of elite sport.

This is a place, I now go to regularly when speaking to leaders, as I reflect upon my own personal challenges as a leader in the game I love, but has given me the best and worst of moments over more than three decades.

Unfortunately, and with some regret, I did not go into this space, my darkness, while I carried

with me the title of CEO of an AFL club.

When I speak with leaders as part of the work I now do, with my only responsibility being to my family and myself and not a professional football club, people will speak of my preparedness to show this vulnerability.

Because I get to speak about it often, it is perhaps less about vulnerability, but I'd like to think it remains generous.

So what have I learned about vulnerability?

Firstly, it is part of who we are, our essence, and to try and be invulnerable, is to try and be something or somebody that we are not.

Secondly, to try and control it, you are deluding yourself, pretending to be someone who can deal with the challenges of life, so many of which are out of our control, in a way that is not human.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, by not showing vulnerability, you are making yourself unavailable to be helped by those who can, and are willing, to support you, share your burden, be your friend.

One of my favourite quotes is from the author David Whyte, who heavily informs my thoughts on personal growth:

"If your eyes are tired, the world looks tired also".

Nothing tires your eyes more than suppressing your vulnerability. The antidote is personal compassion, and the bravery and generosity this requires then builds the resilience necessary to lead.

To do otherwise, is simply, not worth the risk.

Unfortunately, and with some regret, I did not go into this space, my darkness, while I carried with me the title of CEO of an AFL club.

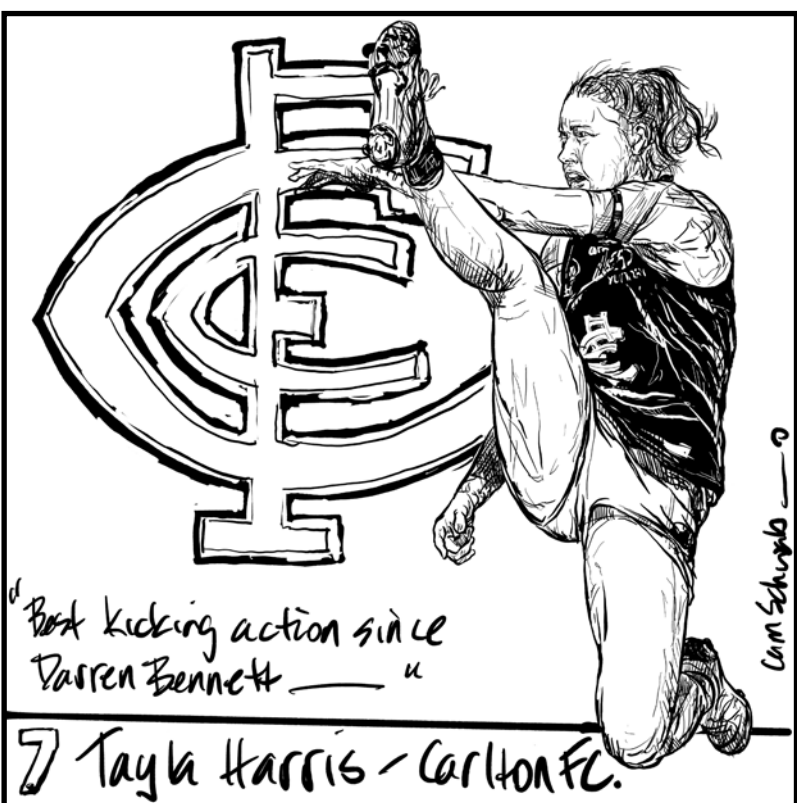
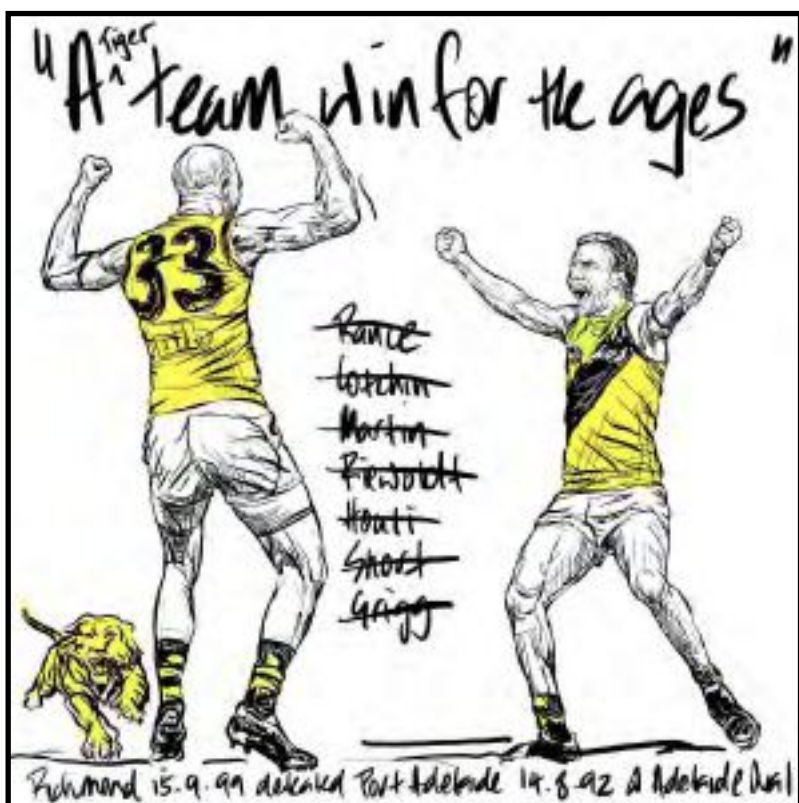
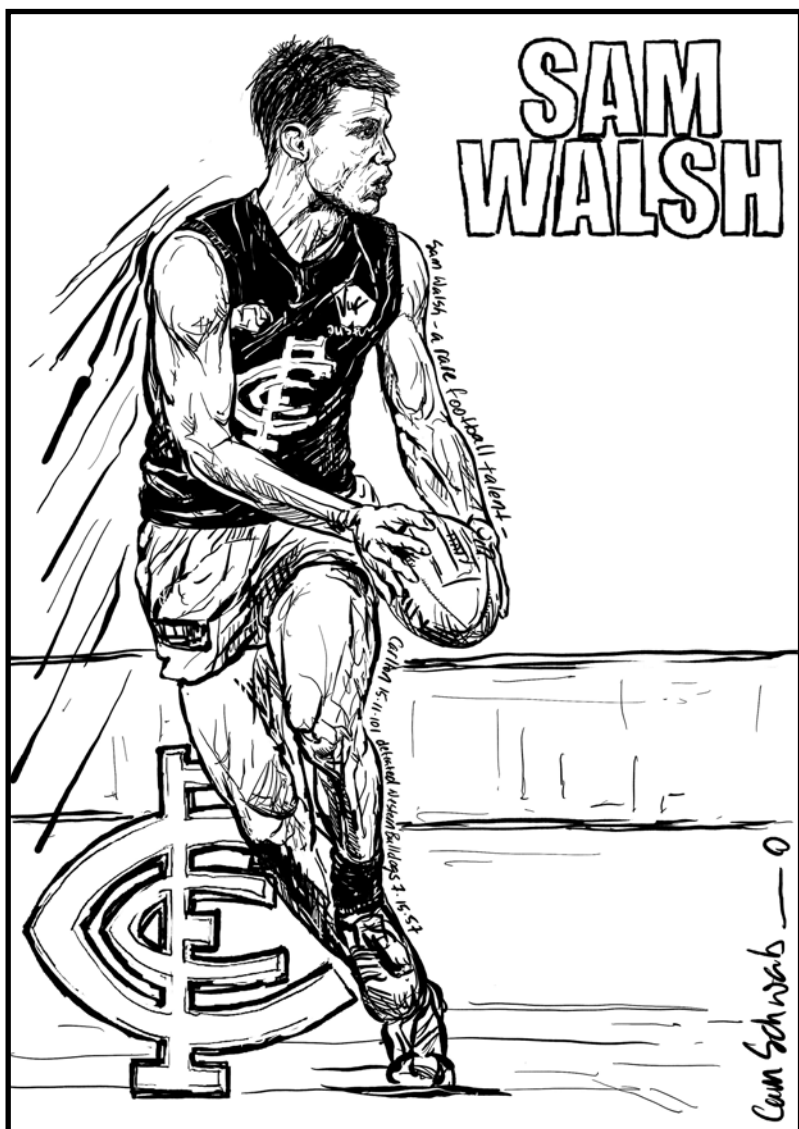
Tom Boyd goals in the 2016 Grand Final, and footy folklore is made.



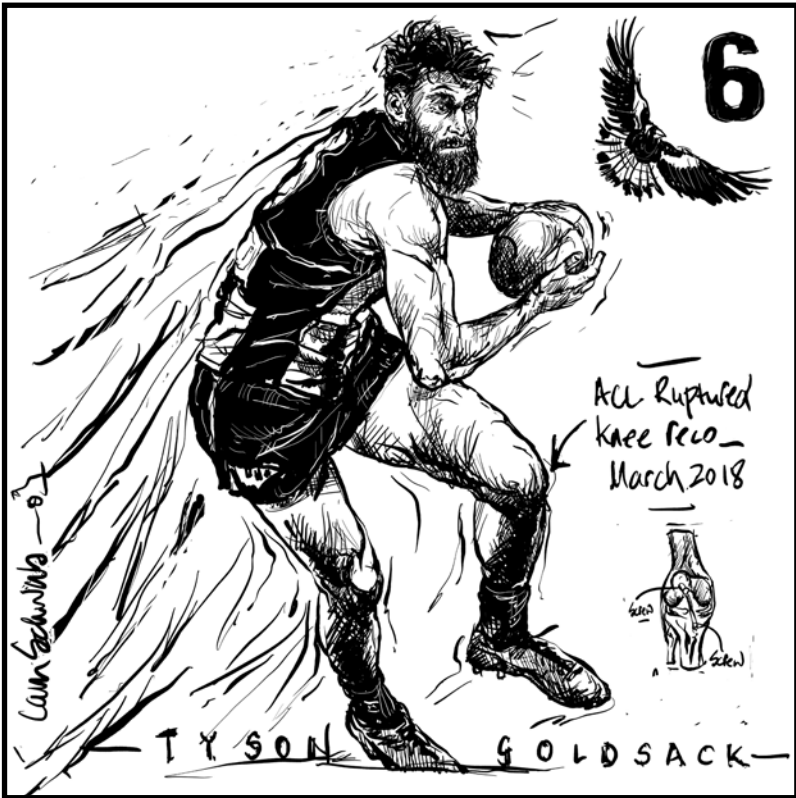
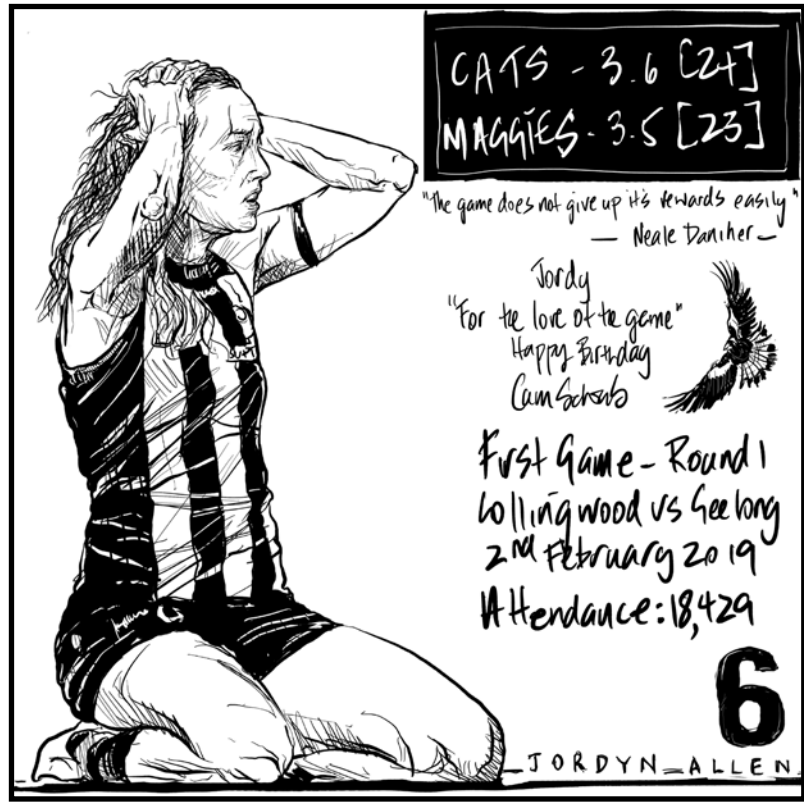
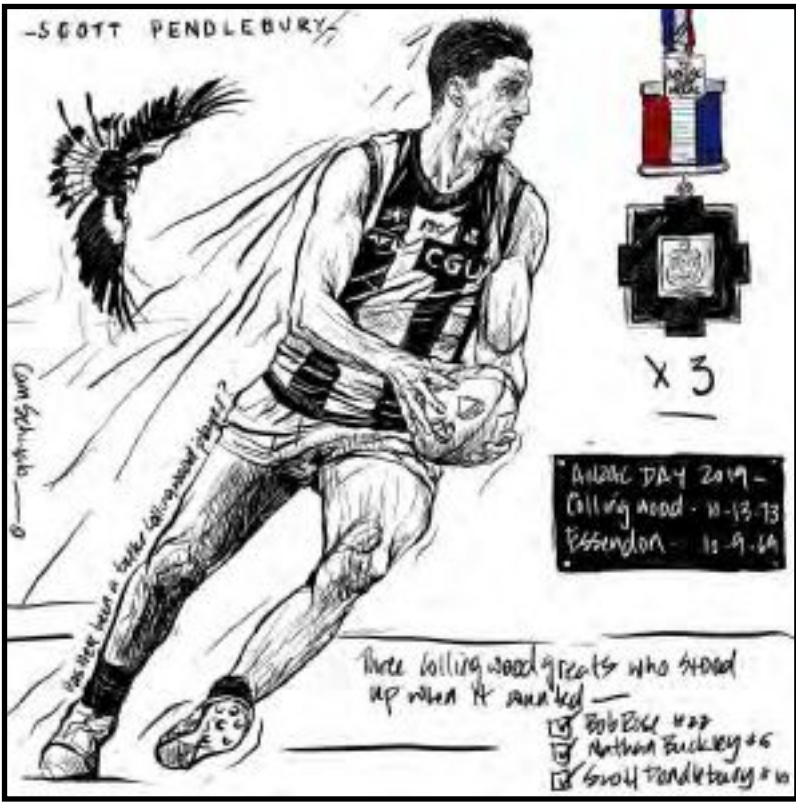


in the moment

These are quick drawings, mostly inspired by the person of the moment.



7 Taylor Harris - Carlton FC.



stop talking start teaching

As a personal reflection, my greatest regret as a leader is not spending more time teaching. There were too many times I allowed myself to get lost in far less meaningful aspects of leadership.

Jarryd Roughead

The first advice I give to leaders... "Stop talking, start teaching".

Recently we saw a wonderful example of this.

Jarryd Roughead, champion Hawthorn player and captain was dropped from the senior team during the 2019 season. From a performance perspective, he responded by kicking five goals, but an act that just happened to be captured on video was far more significant.

In the field of battle, in the middle of the MCG, Jarryd is seen taking time to coach his young opponent, Reuben William. I have never seen this before in 35 years of involvement in the AFL. It is a wonderful moment.

Jarryd Roughead has had quite the football journey, four Premierships and the captaincy of his great club, but also a career put on hold by his courageous fight with cancer. He has achieved so much as a player, but it seems his best is yet to come.

When leaders undertake the programs we offer at designCEO, the question isn't "What did I learn today?", it is "What can I teach tomorrow?".

Challenge yourself to answer this same question when you finish that podcast that captured your attention, or that book that just made sense.

Take the time to write a few notes, collect those important first thoughts, the memorable quote, the compelling argument, the insightful take.

Then build into your routine deliberate time away from the busyness of your day-to-day, to curate your thoughts by aligning the new thinking against your personal experiences and current beliefs.

Have they shifted, changed your view, or added greater depth and meaning to your understanding, be it your broader view of leadership, or a more specific, perhaps tactical approach to your leadership challenge?

Finally, ask yourself "Can I teach it?".

This question will force you to go even deeper, test your assumptions, seek feedback, as well as encourage important conversations with trusted colleagues, acknowledging their wisdom, and adding even greater depth to your understanding.

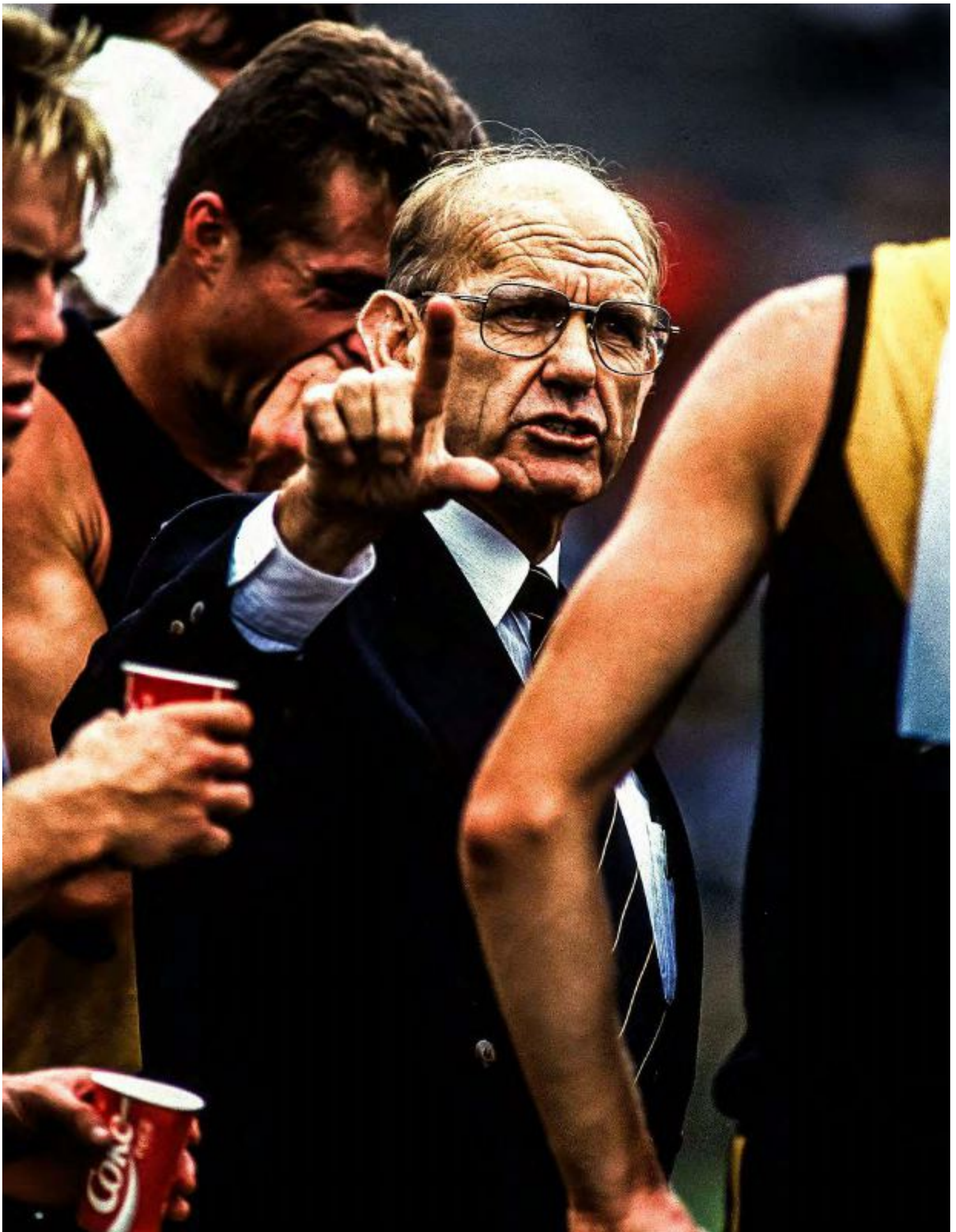
This process requires humility, courage and generosity. The vulnerability of not knowing, the bravery to acknowledge this, and then magnanimity to share your learning.

If you understand what really matters, you get to enjoy what seems to matter.

Teaching matters.

The question isn't... "What did I learn today?"
It is... "What can I teach tomorrow?".





"I was born with big ears, so I figured I might as well use them."

Allan Jeans

In elite sport, and in my experience, it is the curious and courageous learner-teacher that separates the great coaches/teachers.

Hall of Fame coach Allan Jeans is my favourite example, and his influence on generations of football people is evidence of his remarkable leadership legacy.

The reason for this is simple. For Allan Jeans, identity was fundamental, and he educated and coached based on ensuring you had an understanding of where you have come from, where your place is now, and providing a clear understanding of where you were heading.

The basis from which he built this was trust, and Allan was the type of person who trusted easily, and trusted freely.

Whilst he had a somewhat intimidating veneer, his warmth and wisdom quickly become apparent, as he did what he could to help you find who you are, what you want to be, and what you want to stand for.

And for many young people finding their way in this most distracted of environments, identity can be elusive.

It needs to be taught.

You quickly learn however, to benefit from the Allan's wisened methodology meant leaving your ego at the door, opening yourself up knowing that your confidences were safe, and you would be emboldened by his preparedness to reciprocate your openness.

While Allan's booming coach's voice was legendary, his silences were even more profound.

"I was born with big ears, so I figured I might as well use them", he would say, and listen he would. He also had a unique way of creating the space required for you to work it out for yourself – surely the best form of teaching.

"Success needs no explanation, failure accepts no alibis", he would say, knowing fully that building resilience means you have to learn from your disappointments. That's how you find out who you are.

As a personal reflection, my greatest regret as a leader was not spending more time teaching. There were too many times I allowed myself to get lost in far less meaningful aspects of the role, the busyness, the stuff that really doesn't matter.

With leadership, if you understand what really matters, you get to appreciate what seems to matter.

Teaching really matters.



Allan Jeans and Cameron Schwab on the MCG

"because son, when it is all said and done, more is said than done."

Neale Daniher

Neale Daniher is addressing the young Melbourne Football Club players prior to the Queen's Birthday game against Collingwood a couple of years ago.

It is a big game for the improving Demons against their most traditional of rivals. The promise of an 80,000 plus crowd at their home ground, the magnificent MCG.

The man addressing them is very familiar to everyone in the room. He was the Demon's coach from a decade earlier, and while few of the young Demons played under him, he is for those few precious minutes, again their coach and mentor.

Everyone in the room understands that their old coach is dying. He has Motor

Neurone Disease (MND) and has known of his fate for a number of years.

And Neale's response to his personal tragedy?

Firstly, give his disease a name, "The Beast", and secondly, dedicate his life to building a not-for-profit, FightMND, that has raised millions of dollars to fight it.

But for Neale Daniher, this moment is not about him, or his insidious disease, or even his charity. It is about the young men in the room. Simply, every opportunity to speak is an opportunity to teach.

Again, it is a great lesson for leaders...

"Stop talking. Start teaching."

As he speaks to the Melbourne players, he is asked the question, "Neale, knowing that you are dying, why aren't you working through your life's bucket-list? Living in Tuscany, going to the world's great sporting events...?"

Neale pauses, and while his disease has clearly impacted his speech, in his very familiar Ungarie rural drawl made famous by the four Daniher brothers who got to play in the AFL, he says...

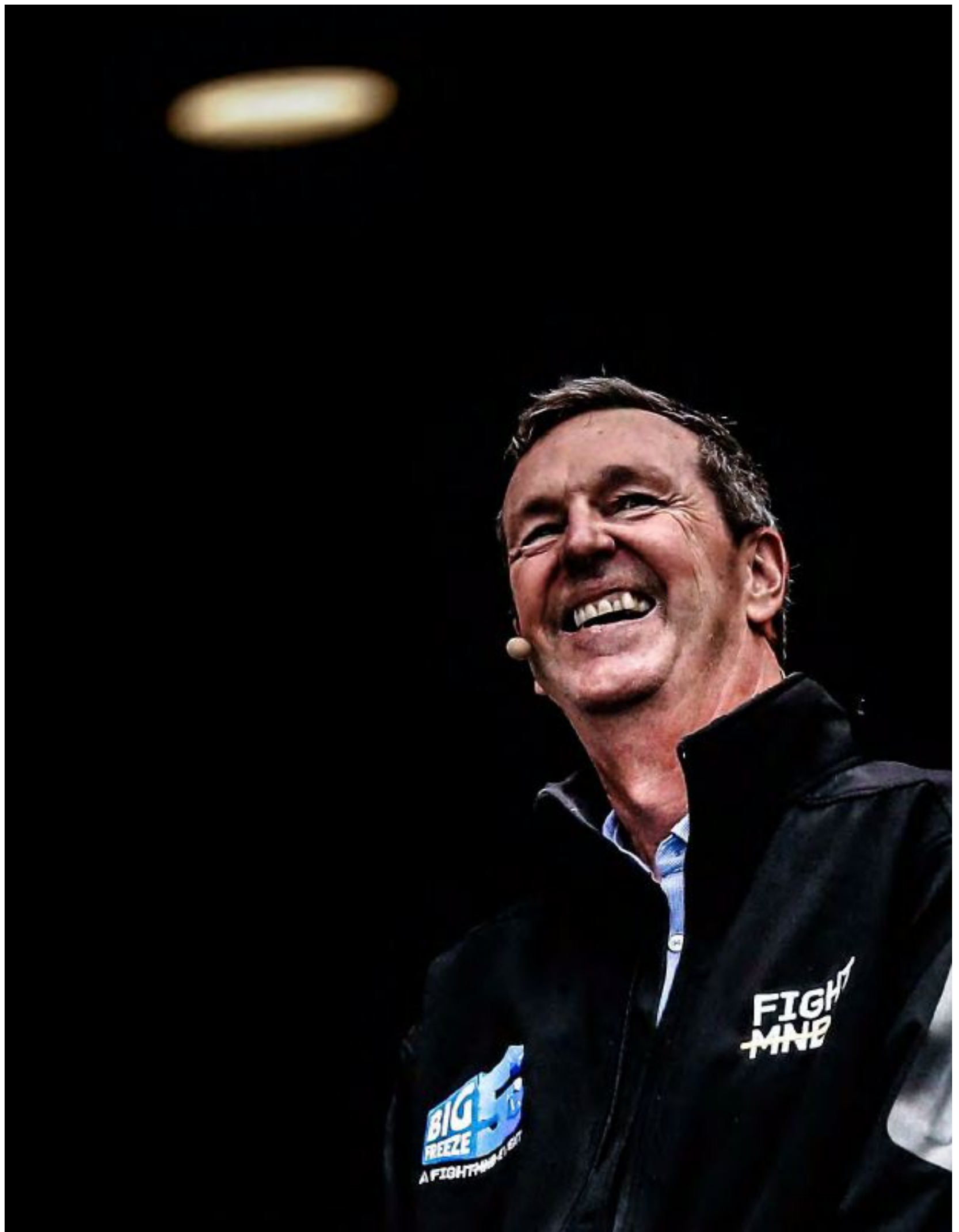
"Because son, when it is all said and done, more is said than done."

Our words tell others what we think, but our actions tell them what we believe.

Neale well and truly understands that to find a cure for MND is to play a long game, and Neale doesn't have a long time. Neale's relentless efforts to slay "The Beast" are for the benefit of those who will receive the same heartbreaking news he and his family received a few years ago.

No one in the room is left with any doubt what Neale believes.

He is a teacher.



when it's over

In AFL clubs, footballers soon work it out. Grow up fast and age slowly. But age they must. The game they love will eventually wear them out. It will be done with them, before they're done with it.

“The hardest time in a man's life is when he faces death. The hardest time in a footballer's life is when he faces retirement.”

Allan Jeans, AFL Hall of Fame coach

Rarely do they give it up. It is a decision made for them. For the 'lucky' ones, the body will choose. More often it will be the judgment of their club. Either way, be it doctor or coach, someone will need to tell them their time is up.

From that moment, the footballer is expected to let go, but how can he? Former New York Yankees pitcher Jim Bouton said, “I spent my whole life gripping a baseball, and in the end I found out that all along it was the other way around.”

This is the footballer's Faustian pact, trading the glories of his first-life for the appreciation that can only be understood in his second life.

For the recently retired or delisted, this reality is waking up with them every morning. Stories about the current model of footballer and their effort to ready themselves for the approaching season. Just a few months ago, it was a brotherhood for which he belonged. Now life seems loose and vague.

Often there is little real compassion for the ex-athlete and that is simply unfair. For all of the idolisation, there

is also envy and resentment, those who enjoy the revenge the sport is exacting on the ex-footballer as they struggle to find a life beyond the game. This can leave them vulnerably alone and too proud to admit it.

Being a footballer isn't just something to do, it is something to be. They love it and they are good at it, most likely significantly better than anything else in their life. They've devoted everything since childhood to getting better at it. Then it stops, and they are expected to make peace before they've unstrapped their ankles.

For many ex-footballers, the transition from first life to second life will require a purging of emotions, hopefully in a broadly healthy form, yet often on their own.

Their first emotion is likely to be one of denial, and as much as most will not admit it, there is also anger. The sense of injustice that their body and/or club has betrayed them. There may also be some bargaining, seeking one last moment, to run out one more time. Then sadness that it is indeed over, and then their reality.

There will be regrets. Yes, the goal missed and money unsaved, but also be the selfish responses and unformed relationships, realising too late the opportunities lost in the sensory whirl of the game.

Now for the 'real' world as it is described and defined for them. But the footballer's world is not the same. They've always been made to feel as though they're different. As a teenager they were given a

special diet and weights program and expected to follow to the last kilojoule whilst their mates were eating twisties and surfing. People around them sacrificed their goals for his. They were given a scholarship to a private school, but missed exams and the school dance.

At so many levels, the footballer receives the most extraordinary education and learning, underestimated outside of the sport, much of which can be taken into the next life. The daily discipline and the will to compete. The selflessness required to play their role in a team environment, to lead and bounce back from setbacks, failure and disappointment. In a game of errors, learn to make as few as possible whilst having the confidence to take risks.

In AFL clubs, footballers soon work it out. Grow up fast and age slowly. But age they must. The game they love will eventually wear them out. It will be done with them, before they're done with it.

There is always a lot of talk about the culture of elite sporting teams and clubs, often from people who have never lived it. Contradictions abound. For all of its collegiality, it shakes itself back to its true form when futures are decided at the selection and trade tables. You are valued whilst you produce what is required of you, or unless someone quicker, bigger and more skillful, or younger, cheaper and less riskier is available and then you are replaced. It is a game of constant tradeoffs.

Players know this and they talk about



it amongst each other. It is part of their daily existence. A week after seeing off a tearful teammate, they are shaking hands with the next generation, sizing them up, hoping they can help them win but also wondering whether they will take their place.

Post career, footballers are required to pick up the remnants of many things, including relationships. Friends and family they'd moved away from in their teens. Partners who have dealt with their moods and the selfishness the game demands.

Initially there may be support from those who surrounded them during their time in the game. Care but without the eagerness, and

perhaps the urgency their situation requires. This support will fade unless mutuality remains in the relationship, which is rare. It moves onto the current breed and the hope it represents.

I've heard people talking about ex-athletes in terms of loss of identity, the need to align it something other than their sport. But it is far more complex. Many former players cringe at the identity they forged whilst in the game. The things they did to fit in, hide weaknesses and vulnerabilities for fear of being judged in a career limiting way and to survive at combustible moments. They know this identity outlives their time in the game even though it didn't represent the man then, and

certainly not the man now.

But there is light, and perhaps meaning, which they can only understand in their retirement. They are reminded of this often. Part of them will always be on the sporting field, something for which they can be forever proud. But it is not a standard from which their life should be measured, or how they define themselves.

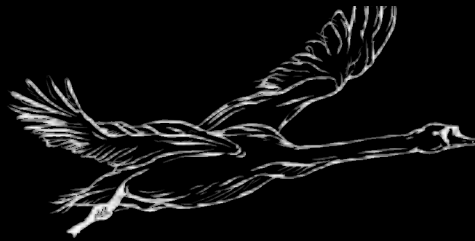




Collingwood's Luke Ball leaves the MCG for the last time a player



honouring the role



Don't just aspire to be a leader, honour the role. Aspire to make a difference.

As coach, mentor and teacher, my approach is built on the empathy of someone who has deep experience with leadership, including the wisdom that can only come from the need to give of yourself as a leader.

Hence, I like the metaphor of the swan when it comes to leadership.

When in the air or on the water, the swan finds its grace, beauty and presence – it is in its element. But it cannot spend all its time in the air or on the water. It spends much of its life on land, where it looks awkward and lumbering, struggling in this environment.

Such is leadership.

At times leadership requires a level of courage and bravery that you did not realise you possessed until such time as your circumstances demanded.

It is then that you have found your element as a leader.

Hence my mantra:

“NEVER FORGET HOW HARD IT IS!”



leadership is about the example you set and the culture you create

The designCEO leadership programs are a deep personal learning experience, ensuring that leaders have the means to lead with authenticity, the key to establishing high levels of personal leadership trust.

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The goal is to help the leaders become 'fully self-expressed', leading in a way that is true to their purpose, values and unique capabilities, without compromise, as the basis of establishing and maintaining personal leadership trust.

True learning is often accompanied by struggle and conflict. It is in this process of struggling that leaders learn to challenge assumptions, recognise their own behaviour, and see perspectives they otherwise take for granted.

Our leadership offering is a true 'level-up' program.

Upon completion, the leaders will have the tool-kit required to walk back into their offices the next morning with a clear understanding of "what next", highly motivated and confident, with the capabilities to match their ambitions.



contradiction and complexity of high performance

The best leaders I have worked with and studied in sport and business, all shared one key competency.

While they may have approached the role with different philosophies and methodologies, they successfully created environments that enabled their teams and organisations to access the full range of their capabilities.

In sport and business, there are many elements that promote selfishness, undermining team effectiveness.

High achieving individuals receive personal accolades and rewards, yet in the best organisations, the real value is placed on selflessness, a commitment to a team-first ethos.

For many, this transition is beyond their reach, and as a result, the team and organisation do not reach their full potential.

In the most successful teams, it is the members of the team that ultimately determine its composition.

They do not tolerate behaviours that have the potential to undermine team performance, regardless of the profile (and individual capability) of their teammate.

They place the highest value on trust.

Most significantly, they trust the character of their teammate, and secondly, they trust their competency.

Put simply, they ask "will the person do the right thing by the team, even when its hard?"

This is built on a system, coached by the leaders, but ultimately owned by the members of the team.

What is often misunderstood is elite team sport is not club versus club, it is system vs system - developed and implemented by the leaders of those organisations.

It is the system that establishes the behaviours, that in turn institutionalises the values and culture, to achieve the aspirations of high performance organisations.



COLLINGWOOD PLAYERS
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES

- PERCY ROWE
- M WORLE
- CAMPBELL
- CORDNER
- FIELDING
- LANGTREE
- MARTIN
- BRUN
- IVER



our learning system

The designCEO leadership offering is for leaders, teams and organisations seeking to build high levels of cultural, strategic and personal trust as the basis for sustained high-performance.

In our experience the best leaders are not the most talented or gifted, they have established outstanding leadership and performance habits.

They have turned self responsibility into a daily practice, performance habits that compound over time to establish their personal leadership mastery.

At designCEO, we teach a system that is focused on high-performance leadership habits to enable leaders to establish their daily practice of leadership excellence.

We teach and embed four main leadership habits, to create the behaviours and culture to achieve high performance outcomes.

The system is known as “Performance Trust”, recognising the need for alignment of purpose and performance to achieve leadership goals and objectives.

The overarching objective is to be ‘Good at Trust’ as the basis of high performance.

Above all else, we are seeking to build powerful leadership habits, small changes done regularly, all aligned to a high-performance leadership mindset.

The goal is personal leadership mastery, which requires breaking down the elements and finding a system that works for the leaders and their teams.

The designCEO methodology builds on contemporary and sophisticated coaching and learning models and systems that focus on self-responsibility to maximise individual and group performance in team-focused environments.



who is it for?

designCEO is committed to coaching and entrenching a mindset of self-responsibility, whereby individuals take charge of their development in the context of the leadership and performance expectations of their role.

With this in mind, our work has been developed specifically for leaders, teams and organisations:

1. Seeking a team-based approach to organisational performance, particularly as it relates to senior management, executive leadership teams and boards.
2. New teams forming, or established teams looking for a lift in momentum, motivation and performance.
3. Navigating change, complexity and ambiguity, and believe courageous, purposeful and confident leadership drives progress and achieves strategic outcomes.
4. Committed to developing leaders with the capacity to inspire and institutionalise trust and are prepared to embrace expectations and personally model performance standards.
5. Not comfortable with the status quo, and willing to challenge assumptions, disrupt default thinking by asking better and more compelling questions, and introduce original ways of thinking in relation to developing leaders.
6. Ready to fast-track emerging leaders for greater responsibility.
7. Provide leaders with the opportunity to create their leadership style, leveraging their unique characteristics and skills as a means of building personal leadership authenticity, belief and resilience.
8. Ensure accountability for team-based outcomes.

We focus on delivering unique, advanced, yet deliverable strategy and culture concepts and frameworks from the uncompromising world of professional sport in combination with leading-edge academic concepts from the Harvard and Melbourne Business Schools, that will be relatable and executable to your organisation and teams.



designing the leadership system

Our leadership offering is for leaders, teams and organisations seeking to build high levels of trust as the basis for sustained performance, remembering leadership is about the example you set and the culture you create.

The designCEO leadership system is known as “Performance Trust”, recognising the need for alignment of purpose and performance to achieve leadership goals and objectives.

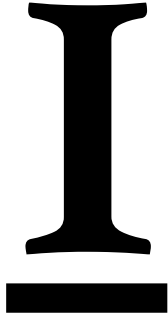
The overarching objective is to be ‘Good at Trust’ as the basis of high performance.

To achieve this, we must:

1. Define the leadership need
2. Focus on the leadership behaviours to build leadership capability
3. Embed the leadership system of operation
4. Ensure leadership Return on Investment (ROI) and Return on Effort (ROE)

The designCEO offering builds on the core philosophy that people, teams and organisations do not rise to the level of their ambition, they fall to the standard of their systems.





step one

Define the leadership need

Many leadership development programs fail to answer the most critical questions, including:

- **What is the organisational need for this program?**
- **What outcomes are you seeking from the program?**

We first seek to determine the type of program required by the organisation utilising the designCEO Performance Trust framework that matches leadership ambition with leadership capability to define expectations and performance outcomes.

To achieve the organisation's leadership goals, we build around an iteration of three key program frameworks:

1. **Organisational Leadership Transformation Program**, a sophisticated and multi-layered program designed to transform leadership mindset, skillset, behaviours, to establish and sustain a high-performance culture.
2. **Executive Leadership Capability Program**, specifically designed to build high-performance leadership capabilities for the organisation's most senior leaders to build trust, set standards, model behaviours and establish performance expectations to address current and longer-term cultural and strategic imperatives and goals.
3. **Leadership Pipeline Programs**, designed to prepare a targeted group of leaders for future high-impact leadership roles, recognising the need to perform well now, while preparing for the next role.





Define the leadership need



2

step two

Focus on leadership behaviours to build leadership capability

When the goal is to build a leadership capability, we focus on developing the leadership behaviours that are most essential to meeting your organisational needs.

These fall into three groups:

1. **Personal Leadership:** Developing what we define as Leadership[Q] by embedding leadership habits to develop the leadership behaviours and influencing skills to lead a high-performance organisation.

This requires high-level emotional intelligence (EQ), which we profile and coach. It also needs leadership resilience based on robust personal habits, while building on individual strengths and natural gifts (again profiled) and high-level functional capability as it relates to the specifics of the role. It also necessitates an awareness of potential leadership blind-spots which can reduce and derail otherwise capable leaders.

2. **Team Leadership:** Above all else, our programs require the leader to embrace and model a learner mindset, to apply this knowledge as a teacher, coach and mentor.

This recognises the role of the leader as the 'talent manager', firstly by identifying the right people relative to the strategic needs of the organisation, but also playing a key role in talent development in the context of a team-based culture. This means embracing the need for specific, substantive and tangible feedback to establish accountabilities and belief, as well as inspire, align and engage teams.

Team leadership capability relates to both team leadership and team membership. The differences are significant, particularly for members of executive leadership teams, most of whom will also be leading a team, as well as having to play a role in the context of the most crucial decision-making group in the organisation.

3. **Execution Leadership:** Strategic development and execution aligned to a high-performance culture, performance management, decision-making judgment, and at all times, matching ambition with capability.

Simply it means, getting the job done.





Focus on leadership behaviours to build leadership capability.



3

step three

Embed the leadership system of operation

A central part of the program's design is that it does not seek to replace important strategic, human resource and governance frameworks already established. Its role is to ask the right questions of these programs, but more importantly, ensure that leaders take responsibility for their overall effectiveness.

Above all else, we are seeking to build powerful leadership habits, small changes done regularly, all aligned to a high-performance leadership mindset and identity.

The goal is personal leadership mastery, which requires breaking down the elements and finding a system that works for the leaders and their teams.

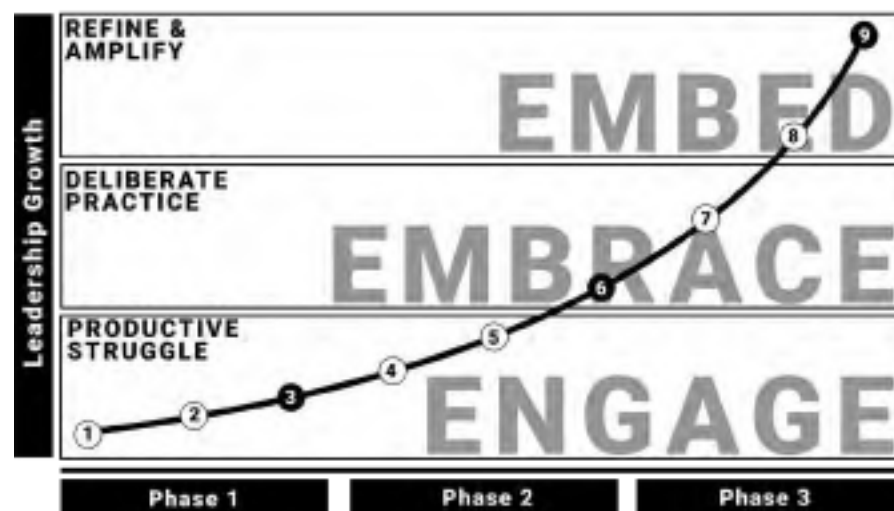
We teach and coach an integrated performance system utilising sophisticated learning models and systems garnered from elite team sport, supported by training and insights from the Harvard Business School and Columbia University (NY).

The Performance Trust program is a leadership development system made up of six-parts, undertaken via intensive and immersive workshop(s) along with personal coaching and mentoring utilising scientific and tested profiling tools.

Both the system, and methodology are highly accountable, building on four high-performance trust habits that are immediately executable, and will complement and amplify the effectiveness of existing strategic and performance management systems.

This is achieved by:

1. **Intensive and immersive workshops**, focused on leadership learning and accountability to agreed team performance expectations. Team-based cohort learning is essential for teams seeking to work together. They share experiences, establish intent, build trust and understanding, make collective commitments that are specific and unique to the team.
2. **Coaching and mentoring** to ensure understanding and accountability of the processes. Our coaching and mentoring utilise profiling tools relating to the leader's Emotional Intelligence (EQ) as well as seeking to build on their strengths using a process known as Natural Gifts.
3. **Deliberate practice**, taking the learnings and immediately test leaders and teams in relation to their expectations. This occurs in the context of workshops, but also in the days, weeks and months immediately following the learning.
4. **Performance accountability**, a process of regular check-ins to build accountability, ensure understanding and receive feedback. This will be set up to complement existing meeting frameworks and work-flows.





Embed a leadership system of operation.



4

step four

Ensure ROI and ROE on the leadership investment

In terms of measurement, your leadership Return on Investment (ROI) and Return on Effort (ROE), we focus on behavioural and business impact, as well as overall program effectiveness, reflecting on the discussions held when designing the program.

At its core, the system builds on four key habits and routines - daily, weekly, monthly and three-monthly, and relies heavily on the accountability of leaders to apply the learnings to themselves, which in turn provides a means of application to the teams they lead and the organisation itself.

For this purpose, we utilise one of the key designCEO Performance Trust frameworks to assess the effectiveness of the undertaking at three levels:

- **Behaviour Impact**
- **Business Impact**
- **Program Effectiveness**

The framework focuses on four questions are:

1. **Ambition:** What does winning look like?
2. **Capability:** What do we need to be good at?
3. **Action:** What are we going to do?
4. **Measurement:** How will we know?

Depending on the specific timeframes of the program, these questions are answered at least monthly at an individual, team and organisational level, providing not only a means of measurement but the capacity to make adjustments and address issues as the program evolves.

**What does winning look like?
What do we need to be good at?
What are we going to do?
How will we know?**

Measuring ROI and ROE on the leadership investment

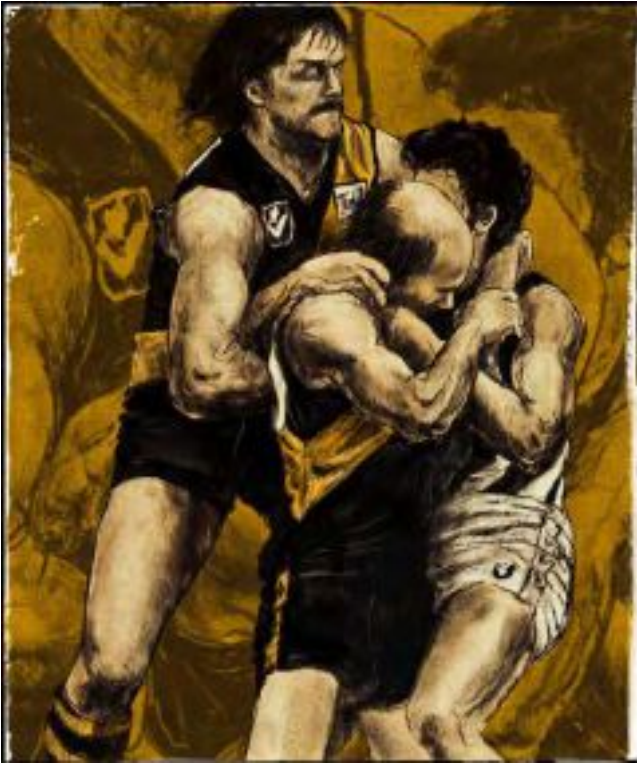


Ensure ROI and ROE on the leadership investment.









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the man in the arena

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

Theodore Roosevelt

Organisations often turn to the elite football codes when seeking to understand the key concepts of team, particularly the role of leadership in terms of establishing a winning culture and executing a game plan.

But what are the real transferable principles and their application?

Cameron Schwab was appointed CEO of the famous Richmond Football Club at age 24, the youngest in the history of the game. He then spent the next 25 years as the CEO of three AFL clubs, the second longest serving CEO in the modern game.

The CEO roles Cameron took on all had something in common. The clubs were at their lowest ebb, uncompetitive on the field, and facing massive financial, structural and strategic challenges off it, which, in combination, threatened their survival.

The AFL is an unforgiving, unrelenting and often ruthless environment. Progress is hard-won, but in all cases, the fortunes of the clubs Cameron led were restored, both on and off the field.

He is now a leadership mentor, coach and strategist, who has taken the insights and wisdom from a fully-lived leadership experience.

Cameron is also an artist, and there is a compelling creativity and originality in his storytelling. He explores the deep personal and professional challenges he faced as a leader, his openness, vulnerability and generosity, creating a powerful connection.

In this publication, Cameron has combined his writings and drawings with the beautiful imagery of Michael Willson, the premier AFL photographer.

Michael has earned the respect and trust of players and clubs alike, creatively photographing all the action, triumph, heartbreak, blood, sweat and tears - often capturing moments otherwise unseen - from a unique perspective that can only come from an intimate knowledge and love for photography and Australian Football.

There is indeed...

More to the game.

