

An Excerpt From

The Pause Principle
Step Back to Lead Forward

by Kevin Cashman
Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers

KEVIN CASHMAN

AUTHOR OF THE BESTSELLING CLASSIC

Leadership from the Inside Out

THE
PAUSE
PRINCIPLE



Step Back to Lead Forward

What People Are Saying About *The Pause Principle*

“To thrive and to innovate in today’s complex, globally connected world, leaders need sophisticated ways to step back to understand what they are facing within and outside themselves. *The Pause Principle* provides pragmatic resources for making the critical move from management efficiency to leadership excellence.”

—**Daniel Vasella, MD, Chairman, Novartis**

“Effective leaders would do well to pause and absorb the wisdom that Cashman imparts in this profound book. *The Pause Principle* demonstrates why creative pauses are an absolutely essential ingredient for clearer, more innovative leadership in today’s increasingly dynamic, warp-speed world.”

—**Paul A. Laudicina, Chairman and Managing Partner, AT Kearney, and author of *Beating the Global Odds***

“Kevin Cashman’s latest must-read book focuses on the essence of leadership: being consciously reflective before we act. Incorporating Cashman’s ideas into your daily practices will transform you as a leader.”

—**Bill George, author of *True North*; Professor, Harvard Business School; and former Chairman and CEO, Medtronic**

“Leaders, like so many others, are suffering from hurry sickness—always going somewhere, never being anywhere. *The Pause Principle* is just the right prescription for slowing down, listening, and getting the clarity needed to lead in deep connection with vision and purpose.”

—**Richard Leider, founder and Chairman, The Inventure Group, and bestselling author of *Repacking Your Bags* and *The Power of Purpose***

“Here a veteran coach shares his long experience to help busy executives deal with the question, *In my rush for success, how do I help my soul to breathe and my mind to renew?* His answer echoes an ancient tradition: withdraw and return; reflect and act. I recommend this book wholeheartedly to everyone who is trying to lead a better life.”

—**Dick Bolles, author of the bestselling career management book of all time, *What Color Is Your Parachute?***

“Of the thousands writing leadership books, Kevin Cashman hits the mark. In their quest for speed and efficiency, many leaders fail to pause and ponder, losing perspective, performance capability, and the ability to sustain operations as a consequence. Cashman coaches leaders from madness to sanity, then to wisdom, wealth, and self-worth—the new triple bottom line.”

—**Ken Shelton, CEO and Editor, *Leadership Excellence***

“Leadership is a continual process of stepping back to get new perspectives in order to step forward with greater innovation and impact. Cashman captures the essence of leading in our dynamic, global marketplace.”

—**Paul Walsh, CEO, Diageo plc, and former Chairman and CEO, The Pillsbury Company**

“Cashman has cut through the leadership clutter and found the essence of elevating leadership excellence: pause to perform, pause to be on purpose, pause to innovate. It has freed me to make better decisions, push boundaries further, and be more present to myself and with my team.”

—**Dr. Deborah Dunsire, CEO, Millennium: The Takeda Oncology Company**

“Leave it to Kevin Cashman to challenge us to stop...to dig deeper for purpose and relational connection, to journey beyond the limits of the known to the unknown, to bring more of our leadership potential forward. If you think pause is for the fainthearted, think again. Pause is for the brave-hearted, fearless, most innovative leaders.”

—**Karen Kimsey-House, cofounder and CEO, The Coaches Training Institute, and coauthor of *Co-Active Coaching***

“As we’ve come to expect, Kevin Cashman has once again given us a fresh new way of looking at leadership. In this particular case, he’s produced a primer on the principle of ‘pause.’ And more than just telling us why it matters, Cashman clearly shows us how we can apply this powerful and effective tool to help move our organizations forward.”

—**David Shadovitz, Editor and Publisher, *Human Resource Executive***

“Leadership is tough, but with Cashman’s *The Pause Principle*, you can make it a lot easier and more impactful. Get this book to sort through the leadership smog with clarity, purpose, and innovation!”

—**Michael Paxton, Chairman, Transport America, and former CEO, Chamilia and Häagen Dazs**

“Grab this book, pull up a chair, and spend some quality time you deserve with one of the best executive coaches out there today. Kevin Cashman’s *The Pause Principle* delivers the wisdom we all need in this crazy, fast-paced world. You’ll find your time with Cashman reaffirming, energizing, and rewarding.”

—**Kevin D. Wilde, Chief Learning Officer, General Mills, and author of *Dancing with the Talent Stars***

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KEVIN CASHMAN



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
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The Pause Principle

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*Dedicated to leaders on the authentic, purposeful
journey from management speed and transaction to
leadership significance and transformation.*





*To act with economy of effort and obtain
maximum value, such is the way of the wise leader.*

—Chuang Tzu



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AUTHOR'S NOTE: *THE PAUSE PRINCIPLE*

The Pause Principle can be a book or a life-changing leadership experience. It is up to you. To convert this book from a page-turning intellectual exercise to a life-changing, transformative experience requires profound pause . . . an intentional, conscious stepping back to go deeply into yourself, your leadership, and the world you touch in order to lead forward with deliberate purpose. Take your time to slowly digest this book by savoring the ideas, diving into the questions presented, and by pondering the meaningful implications. If you do, you will activate the latent power of pause and embody its enriching properties versus merely placing another interesting book into your library.

So . . . take a breath . . . slow down, and let's begin the powerful, purpose-filled journey that *The Pause Principle* charts for us.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCING THE PAUSE PRINCIPLE®



SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I SIGNED BOOKS at BookExpo America at McCormick Place in Chicago. It is a huge event with thousands of people and hundreds of authors. Every half-hour or so, thirty-two authors step out from behind a velvet curtain to sign books at an elevated podium. Attendees line up in long rows and patiently wait to receive their signed copies. While it had a bit too much formality for my taste, it was still a big deal for me.

Lining up behind the curtain with the other thirty-one authors, I noticed that to my right was George Stephanopoulos, chief political correspondent for ABC News, formerly White House communications director and senior advisor for policy and strategy during President Bill Clinton's administration. Although George looked like a teenager, he was unfazed by the event—cool, calm, and collected, which was in complete contrast to my visible enthusiasm. When we took our spots at our elevated podiums, George's line was long. It went on forever, wrapping around the corner beyond our sight. My line of people numbered a paltry seven. At first, I cycled through reactive embarrassment, insecurity, and disbelief. I thought, "Am I in the correct spot?" Then, I paused. Stepping back for a moment,

I caught myself and reflected, “How do I best deal with this situation?” This short moment of reflection gave me renewed clarity and purpose. “This isn’t about me. It’s about those seven people, and I will graciously, generously give them my full attention.” Once I made that shift, I had a great time. By connecting deeply, I learned a little about each individual, then I signed each book. It became a wonderful experience.

After a little while, I looked up at my line. A small miracle had happened. I now had a long line of people awaiting my signature. I glanced over at George, and his line had emptied. Apparently his books had not arrived, and he had been dashing off his signature on photos of himself as substitutes without taking much time to talk with people. Evidently, word had gotten out: “You want a photo or a personally signed book from Cashman?” Even George noticed the shift and said, “You must have a great book.” I responded, “Sure is. You want a copy?” Feigning importance, I signed one for him. The truth is I felt bad for him. I wouldn’t have been very happy if my books hadn’t shown up, and clearly his disappointing circumstances helped turn the tide for me and created my surprising book wave. Reflecting on this example and the thousands of other intentional pauses I have had the privilege to witness with clients over the years, it has become clear: *Pause powers performance.*

How often do we miss these small but significant moments? These key opportunities that can unlock our hearts and minds, open us up, and connect us more deeply with others so that we can create something new and different. All too often, we allow ourselves to be carried away by our busyness. We are too hyperactive, too reactive to even notice the hidden value-creating dynamics waiting just under the surface within us and around us. Tethered to our smartphones, we are too caught up and distracted to take the time necessary to sort through complexity or to locate submerged purpose. In our urgent rush to get “there,” we are going everywhere but being nowhere. Far too busy managing with transactive speed, we rarely step back to lead with transformative significance.

PAUSE TO LEAD FORWARD: THE PARADOXICAL LEADERSHIP BREAKTHROUGH

Too often, we take for granted our simplest yet most profound and transformative human capabilities. Sleep, for instance, is on the surface very simple. We lie down, sleep, and when we wake up, we have renewed energy, vitality, and perspective. Our superficial analysis of sleep says, “Yeah, no big deal. We rest and wake up. So what?” But take a moment to consider how profound sleep really is. Every night we go to sleep fatigued and possibly stressed from the day. Maybe we even have a little tightness or muscle ache somewhere in our body. When we awaken we feel completely rejuvenated. The muscle ache has gone away and the mental stress along with it. We feel energized physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Sleep is an amazing, natural capability for transformation. However, we can abuse this inherent gift with overwork, increased stress, and too much stimulation. Imagine how challenging our lives would be if we lost this ability to rest, heal, and restore. In extreme cases of overtaxation and hyper-fatigue, individuals experience burnout, serious illness requiring hospitalization or even death because the restorative process has been compromised by neglect. The French call this *surmenage*. Sleep is a natural, transformative process that cannot be ignored if we hope to operate at peak levels of performance.

What sleep is to the mind and body, pause is to leadership and innovation. Pause transforms management into leadership and the status quo into new realities. Pause, the natural capability to step back in order to move forward with greater clarity, momentum, and impact, holds the creative power to reframe and refresh how we see ourselves and our relationships, our challenges, our capacities, our organizations and missions within a larger context. While losing touch with our ability to pause may be less obvious than losing our ability to rest, it can be just as devastating. Pause, like sleep, is a natural transformative process that cannot be ignored if we want to operate at peak levels of performance. In our fast-paced, achieve-more-now

culture, the loss of pause potential is epidemic. For many it has been lost, ignored, or completely abandoned; for others it is unfamiliar, an unknown.

A prominent, hard-charging CEO came into my office one day, fell into a chair, released a deep sigh, and said, “I don’t know how to put into words what I am feeling. People around me seem to think that I am doing well. My board is happy. But, I am feeling like I have lost my edge a bit. If I am totally transparent, I am not feeling quite as focused, passionate, energetic, and patient anymore. I even sometimes question why I am working so hard. What is the point?” As we spent time together, it became clear that he had slowly, over time, lost connection with his deeper sense of self, his relationships, and his purpose by overtaxing his drive and underinvesting in pause, reflection, and renewal. In the early stages of his career, he just pushed through situations with more and more force, drawing on his considerable will, intelligence, and experience to get through. Later, as he was rapidly expanding and elevating the scope of his responsibilities, he began to disconnect a bit from relationships, as well as from the generative pleasure of taking time to listen, support, and mentor others. Eventually, he got so caught up in doing and achieving that he rarely, if ever, stepped back to get a fresh perspective or consider a new alternative. He took less vacation, pulled back on his fitness regime, gained 20 pounds, was more short-tempered at home, and had this nagging, just-below-the-surface feeling: “Is this all there is?” Having lost touch with his natural pause potential, he coped by pushing harder with more will and control, unknowingly leaving behind his purpose-driven ability to inspire, restore, and innovate.

*Managers assert drive and control to get things
done; leaders pause to discover new ways of
being and achieving.*

The demanding pace for global leaders has never been more challenging. Digitally connected every moment, we are increasingly tied to a 24-hour global clock. We are expected to perform continually in the face of global crises and multifaceted pressures, including downsizing and mergers, and the related stresses and expectations. The list of demands, personal and professional, never ends. This is the “new normal.” Could it be that

going faster and driving harder are not the answers? Could there be another way to creatively sustain high performance? Could it be that the source of our real value as leaders might come from different thinking and different choices rather than from perpetuation of the incessant pace we are straining to maintain?

PAYING ATTENTION TO THE WISDOM OF EXPERIENCE

I had the privilege of sharing some precious time with a colleague who was terminally ill. Aware of the compression of time, we dove into some authentic conversations about life. At one point, I got the courage to ask him, “Bob, what do you want leaders to never forget?” His wise response was, “Never forget to slow down, connect with people, and do something that is meaningful. Never go so fast that you forget that love and service make life worth living.” Slow down? Meaning? Love? Service? As Bob faced his mortality, he had deeper clarity about what brings authentic vitality to living.

David, a seventy-four-year-old chairman of a public company, also shared his life-leadership wisdom: “Early in our careers we use our drive, energy, and ambition to propel us through the ranks. We make things happen. However, as we advance, and if we are self-aware, life begins to teach us new lessons—lessons of humility, reliance on others, and lessons that the whole . . . the bigger picture . . . is more important than we are. Why? The sheer scale and complexity of responsibilities, as well as the consequences to people are too challenging to go it alone. The earlier we learn to view life from this different perspective, the sooner we can line up with what’s most important and figure out how to make our best contribution. If we don’t learn these more people-centered, service-driven lessons until later, our path is much harsher. We spend our energies in battles for control, dominance, and the self-focused drive required to win rather than invested in meaningful service. Step back often. Reflect, and become more aware of yourself, your colleagues, and your mission. The earlier you do this in your career the more productive and fulfilling your leadership and your life will be.”

FLIPPING THE VUCA FORCES

For several years, I had the privilege of being a keynote speaker at one of the Army War College's leadership programs. I was humbled by how much I learned there, particularly about character-driven leadership and a potent perspective of our world called "VUCA." Borrowing this term from the Army War College, Bob Johansen, ten-year forecaster and author of *Get There Early* and *Leaders Make the Future*, has characterized the speed- and action-oriented, fast-changing, demanding world we lead in today as a "VUCA world: Volatile; Unpredictable; Complex; Ambiguous." Our addiction to action, our busy-ness, our preoccupation with incessant distractions and pursuit of the ubiquitous "more" in our 24/7, constantly connected, globally caffeinated culture conspire to diminish rather than strengthen our leadership capacities. We challenge ourselves to keep up, even hasten the grueling pace, and, frankly, we rationalize that it comes with the territory. Paradoxically, the job of leaders is to bring clarity to all this chaos. Warren Bennis mentors, "Leaders bring clarity and hope." No easy task in the vortex of VUCA.

Johansen contends that we have "to flip the VUCA forces to terms that create possibilities and redefine VUCA as: Vision; Understanding; Clarity; Agility." We agree. But, how do we bring about this transformation? Pause—a step back to lead forward—a transformative, pragmatic, albeit paradoxical principle for sorting through complexity and coming into conscious connection with what is important. Daniel Vasella, M.D., chairman of Novartis, who has been acknowledged as one of the most innovative leaders in the life sciences business in history and navigated the firm as CEO for more than fifteen years to its current status as a \$58 billion life sciences powerhouse, shared with me, "Pause gives room to oneself and to others. It allows the digestion of things both conceptual, and emotional. Pause can be a way to sense-making by bringing together a more integrated, complete picture of what is happening in and around us."

For most leaders, at first glance, pausing to elevate performance is incongruous with their leadership DNA, especially for the most productive,

highest achievers. Over the past thirty years of coaching CEOs, senior teams, and senior leaders around the globe, I have lost track of the number of times a high-achieving leader turned to me and asked, “Kevin, how can we step up to achieve more?” To their surprise and discomfort, I often recommend stepping back—pausing—but, because it is antithetical to what they have always done, they insist, “We don’t need to *pause* more, we need to *do* more.”

Why would pragmatic, hard-charging, achievement-driven leaders pause in order to accelerate performance and growth? Put simply, that is exactly what is needed to sort through complexity and then drive performance to the next level. If leaders today do not step back to gain fresh perspective and to transcend the immediacies of life, we will continue to crash economically, personally, and collectively. Our downside survival and upside innovation depend on transformative pause. Certainly, we need to do more to meet the demands of high-performance, complex problems, and innovation, but in today’s world the *doing needs to be new and different*.

CREATING A NEW NORMAL

Pause is a universal principle inherent in living, creative systems. It is part of the order, value, and growth that arises from slowing down and stepping back. In physics, it is the second Law of Thermodynamics: *As activity lessens, order increases*. The Pause Principle is present in economies, physiologies, ecologies, communities, organizations, and nations. We observe pause on the macro and the micro levels as a principle of life and leadership, a natural part of the continuum that catalyzes growth, innovation, and transformation. Like any valuable resource, yet unrecognized and therefore neglected, we have to explore and discover its pragmatic uses in order to experience its value-creating impact. Additionally, we need to learn to tap into pause, incorporating it in our lives and leadership, and leveraging it as a powerful resource, an innovation in and of itself.

The Pause Principle is the conscious, intentional process of stepping back, within ourselves and outside of ourselves, to lead forward with greater authen-

ticity, purpose, and contribution. This value-creating methodology allows more examination, higher-order logic, rational analysis, more profound questioning, deeper listening, higher-quality presence, broader perspective, greater openness to diverse thinking and input, and ultimately more impactful, influential, and innovative action.

*Paradoxically, pause powers
purposeful performance.*

Daniel Kahneman, psychologist, Nobel Prize winner in economic sciences, and author of *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, has discerned two critical systems that determine the way we think. He counsels us to be careful with our “fast thinking,” the overconfident system that is absolutely sure of opinions, impressions, and judgment. This part of our mind generates ideas quickly without much consideration. When we think fast in complex or new situations, we unknowingly limit our options to what we know from the past or habituated patterns. This is dangerous in a VUCA world, which requires more forward-looking agility at every turn. As Kahneman says, “We are normally blind about our own blindness. We’re generally overconfident in our opinions and our impressions and judgments. We exaggerate how knowable the world is. . . . What psychology and behavioral economics have shown is that people don’t think very carefully.”

Incorporating pause as a best practice can change that. Ron James, CEO, Center for Ethical Business Cultures, University of St. Thomas, explains:

Our culture is based on speed and decisiveness, and it’s tough to pause when you are always “on.” Pausing for self-talk about what really matters and incorporating that in our decisions so we act with ethics and integrity is exactly what we need to do. We need to have a set of principles that guides our decisions and behavior. That begins with asking, “What do I stand for? What does the organization stand for?” Although it takes more time up front, pause allows for a richer decision, engages others, and creates a sense of power and early buy-in that impacts execution.

Leaders, especially, when faced with complexity and ambiguity, need to pause and “slow the picture down” to see multiple options, multiple futures more effectively.

Fast thinking is the domain of management transaction, whereas slow thinking is the leadership domain of strategic, innovative transformation.

INTEGRATING PAUSE POINTS

If we are going to flip the VUCA forces to Vision, Understanding, Clarity, and Agility, pragmatic practices, or Pause Points, will help us focus our attention and our energy, to grow, to create, to solve problems, and to innovate. Pause Points will provide a way to instill a consistent, intentional manner for reflection by:

- Building self-awareness and clarity of purpose
- Exploring new ideas
- Risking experimentation
- Questioning, listening, and synthesizing
- Challenging the status quo, within and around us

Taking steps back during the process of reading the book to consider Pause Points will integrate foundational, reliable structures into our leadership development experience. These Pause Points will help to make pause an intentional practice—a new normal—as the transformative benefits activate, show up, and multiply.

Pause can take many forms as practices in our lives. Some help us focus attention and deeper understanding on self-awareness through intentional learning and growth on our own or with our teams; others help us defocus, rest, connect, or become more resilient and more creative. Still other pause practices help us discern what deserves our attention within and outside of ourselves.

Of the 100+ leaders we interviewed, nearly every one told us that there is so much coming at us at once, we need to pause to figure out what is important and what is not. Pause Points, whether structured or spontaneous, can help us do that. They are tools to help us regain our balance, feel grounded, and centered. They can help us be accountable to our commitments, our mission, and to people. Pause Points can help us intentionally imbue generativity, innovation, and a sense of meaningful service in our cultures. These are powerful opportunities for flipping the VUCA forces and for achieving not merely higher performance, but lasting, value-creating impact. In *The Pause Principle*, you will discover and experience many Pause Points to take pause from principle to practice. Let's do our first Pause Point together.

PAUSE POINT: PAUSE TO PERFORM

Take a moment to envision your life at its optimal state of performance. Expand this vision beyond your career to all domains of your life. Imagine your career at its most purposeful and value creating . . . your key relationships and family in deep connection and love . . . your self-awareness genuine and authentic . . . your creativity and innovation at their peaks . . . your mind, body and spirit energized and enlivened. Then, ask yourself:

- What shifts did I make in myself and my life to get here?
- What new choices did I make to create these possibilities?
- How did I step back to see myself, others, my vocation, and my health in new ways?
- How did I pause more deeply into myself to gain deeper insight and perspective?
- How did I more deeply listen, be present, and connect to others at a new level?
- How did I step back to collaborate more synergistically with others to create the new and the different?

- How did these powerful pauses help me to step forward and perform in new ways?

Go deeply into the questions that have the most resonance for you. Take your time. Resist the hyperactive temptation to rush through this opportunity to slow things down. . . . Pause to sort through the complexity and the fog to get clarity and insight.

TURNING DOWN THE NOISE AND TUNING IN

Daily runs, an intensive coaching and development program, a meditation practice, reflecting and pacing in a laboratory, or an annual strategic planning retreat—all are forms of pausing for growth, heightening awareness, catalyzing cognition, and aligning what is important. Pause can even catalyze our creativity. Scientists know little about how creativity works in the brain. One thing that is clear: “taking a break by going for a walk, taking a shower, or going for a drive . . . letting things percolate . . . helps ideas surface.” Pausing or slowing down catalyzes those *Aha!* moments, those flashes of insight that come to you when you are not focusing on a problem, but instead taking a swim, walking to the train, or merely relaxing by a stream. As Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart wrote, “When I am, as it were, completely myself, entirely alone, and of good cheer—say traveling in a carriage or walking after a good meal . . . it is on such occasions that ideas flow best and most abundantly.”

Jonah Lehrer, author of *Imagine: How Creativity Works*, says science tells us that creativity and imagination require both disciplined, focused effort and a sense of freedom and abandonment. “There is no universal prescription for creative thinking.” Instead, there are a variety of processes. “A big epiphany relies on a very different set of brain structures than the editing that comes afterward.” When he’s really stuck, Lehrer says, “I think about all that research on moments of insight which suggest that insights are far

more likely to arrive when we're relaxed, and better able to eavesdrop on the murmurs of the unconscious. Instead of staying at my desk, I go for a long walk." He quotes Einstein as saying "Creativity is the residue of time wasted," and says, "I guess you could say I've gotten much better at wasting time."

Although some creative solutions require conscious effort, others emerge when we rest or step back . . . pause in some way. What may appear as a little "time wasted," may be the vital field from which our next innovative idea arises. Even sleep or power naps have a measured impact on cognitive connections that can impact problem solving. Pause is our inherent tendency and our intentional practice to grow, to let new ideas emerge, to move beyond what is to gather insight, energy, and purpose.

FIGHTING FIRES WITH PAUSE

But pausing, stepping back, is not only about defocusing or relaxing. Our most pragmatic and powerful pause practices for dealing with complexity, crises, and for innovating may be a practice of stepping back for intense, focused inquiry—questioning, experimenting, observing, listening, evaluating—a continuous loop of reflection and action followed by more disciplined reflection and action.

Researchers Michelle Barton and Kathleen Sutcliffe make a hard case for what business leaders can learn from firefighters, who put their lives on the line every day to battle wild fires and save lives. Their research convincingly showed that more successful outcomes occurred when leaders paused, stopped momentum to encourage fire-fighting teams to challenge the current strategy, voice concerns, examine all the current information, and determine the best course of action rather than persist in blind dedication to the original plan. Through intentional interruptions, team members questioned, spoke up, and did not defer to someone else's perceived expertise.

In "Learning When to Stop Momentum," published in *MIT Sloan Management Review*, the researchers tell us, "When engrossed in an action, we tend not to notice small problems that may grow into large ones.

To overcome dysfunctional momentum, we have to be interrupted or create an interruption ourselves . . . points at which we can ask: What’s the story now? Is it the same story as before? If not, how has it changed? And how, if at all, should we adjust our actions?” They explain further, “Once we’re fully engaged in our plans and activities, we have a tendency to continue what we’re doing—that is, to resist changing our course even when redirection might be for the best.”

Barton and Sutcliffe recommend developing “an attitude of wisdom” characterized by a practice of “situated humility,” pausing for different perspectives, and questioning: “How might the future differ from our expectations? How might changes or problems in one part of the business unexpectedly affect other parts? What parts of the situation can’t we see? Try to create healthy skepticism about what you know and a greater awareness of what you don’t know.” By pausing or creating interruptions, we create opportunities to engage and encourage team members to challenge the status quo, to speak up and voice concerns, and to be skeptical of perceived experts. It is a proactive way for leaders to let team members know that they are actively seeking all news—bad or good—and that they are open to diverse perspectives. These are recurring themes in what distinguishes a manager from a leader. *Managers tend to consistently execute well-formulated, time-tested approaches, while leaders tend to find new ways to step into changing circumstances.*

Leaders who pause to develop the agility required to dance with VUCA forces open up possibilities.

AN INNER KNOWING

Leaders must intentionally pause . . . slow things down . . . to access and develop the capability for what W. Brian Arthur, founding head of the Economics Program at the Santa Fe Institute, describes as a deeper level of cognition . . . a “knowing” that comes from inside yourself. He says that when faced with a complicated situation, ideally he would “observe, observe, observe and then simply retreat. . . . You wait and wait and let

your experience well up into something appropriate. In a sense, there is no decision-making. What to do becomes obvious.” This inner knowing comes from a place within us so it requires a deeper awareness and understanding of who we are.

My good friend and colleague, Richard Leider, is author of *The Power of Purpose*; his life’s work is about living and leading connected to your purpose, your authentic self, and to what is truly meaningful. In his work, he sometimes refers to a deep pause as a “purpose moment.” Richard is a committed practitioner of pause, and he guides others in pauses small and big. His annual “Back to the Rhythm” expedition in Tanzania is a big pause—one month on a walking safari, “off the grid,” without cell phones, Internet, or e-mail. This is an experience for reconnecting with nature, the Earth, quiet, solitude, and to another way of living, as part of a sharing community, in order to also reconnect with what makes us feel genuine happiness. Disconnected from the demands of the VUCA world, we pause to reconnect with ourselves, “to quiet our own chatter,” to listen to others around us in a simpler place, in a different world where it is more conducive to stepping back. By doing so, we connect again with our own heart and mind and really listen to our own voice about what is most important and meaningful, so we can then listen more genuinely and contribute more generously to others.

FROM MANAGEMENT TO LEADERSHIP

One of the most challenging developmental shifts for executives is the evolution from management effectiveness to leadership excellence. Research has demonstrated that if managers do not make the critical development move to increased interpersonal collaboration and high-order strategic agility, they will plateau in their careers. The transition is one from expertise and control to authenticity and shared purpose. This crucial evolution requires sufficient, intentional pause to build self-awareness, foster team collaboration, and increase strategic innovation. Pause is a catalytic process that has the potential, if practiced consciously, to bring forth transformative shifts to move from

management to leadership. Seven key shifts from management effectiveness to leadership excellence that we address in this book are

1. Moving from self-centeredness to self-awareness and service
2. Moving from people dominance and control to people development and liberation
3. Moving from complexity and confusion to clarity and hope
4. Moving from a presumption of knowing and expertise to listening and learning
5. Moving from heroic, unchallenged ideas to collaborative, constructive engagement
6. Moving from the status quo to curiosity, exploration, synthesis, and innovation
7. Moving from accuracy and efficiency to purpose and transformation

One of the primary contributions of this book is to discern precisely how specific types of pause can be the prime movers in the transformation from management to leadership.

WHAT DOES PRAGMATIC PAUSE LOOK LIKE?

Mike Paxton, former CEO of Häagen-Dazs, former president of Pillsbury and CEO of Chamilia, reenergizes with regular runs and time with his family. He sketches out complex situations to get clarity by writing them down because that helps him prepare when stepping forward with new initiatives. Steve Piersanti, founder and president, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, practices pause in multiple ways. At the beginning of every staff meeting, he asks for a moment of silence. He intentionally schedules meetings and sets meeting agendas so that they offer recurring opportunities to pause and thoughtfully consider all aspects of Berrett-Koehler's business. He, too, writes to gather his thoughts, reflect, and garner new understanding to clarify decisions.

David Rothenberger, M.D., surgeon at University of Minnesota, has partnered with clinicians across the Fairview Health System to share a powerful pause practice recently established for all surgical procedures. "Brief"

is a few moments taken before every surgical procedure to make sure that everyone on the surgical team, everyone in the room understands why they are there, what the procedure is, and what their shared goal is. “Brief” connects everyone to the value of their individual roles, as well as to their combined impact as a team. In addition to reconnecting everyone to a deeper sense of purpose and meaning in their healing mission, it shifts their mind-set from a hero mentality to a collaborative one and serves the vital objective of increasing the percentages of more positive outcomes.

Karen Kimsey-House, cofounder and CEO of Coaches Training Institute, likes to build in a structure to reflect, create, and connect with vision, purpose, and direction. She takes retreats, sometimes as long as eleven days, “to stop, to be, and to reflect,” because she returns with expanded vision and new ideas for direction. Rohinish Hooda, vice president, U.S. sales and marketing, Ethicon Biosurgery, Johnson & Johnson, incorporates a continuous practice of pausing to question and think. He has initiated BIG—Biosurgery Idea Gurus—as a way to bring together many people working in different aspects of biosurgery to pause to share ideas and gain different perspectives in hopes that this collaboration will energize and accelerate innovation.

Pablo Gaito, vice president of human resources, Cargill, has integrated a powerful practice he calls “Five-Minute Synchronization” to help everyone, whether physically in the room or virtually in the room from places around the globe, to be present at meetings. It begins with a moment of silence and includes a few minutes of focused, inspired thought. Pablo spends time with his family, maintains a fitness regime, and paints on canvas to restore. Jeff George, global head of Sandoz, practices meditation daily to balance his drive with deeper connection.

These leaders are conscious, pragmatic practitioners of pause, and we think they are examples of what is to come. In an article on reshaping the workplace for the *New York Times*, David Allen contends that we need more space, figuratively and literally, to counter “the dizzying number of [technological] options” that overwhelm us. He says that paradoxically they don’t necessarily make us more productive. In fact, they are paralyzing. There is an antidote, “but it’s not going to come from the usual quarters. To be

successful in the new world of work, we need to create a structure for capturing, clarifying, and organizing all the forces that assail us; and to ensure time and space for thinking, reflecting and decision making.”

THE LONG PAUSE

The very act of writing this book was born out of pause. It was originally conceived more than ten years ago as a result of working with my colleagues to help senior executives step back to see new dimensions of themselves, their organizations, their strategies, and their approaches to innovation. Our Executive to Leader Institute® and Chief Executive Institute® have literally been laboratories of pause in which we have observed thousands of leaders who “step back to lead forward.” We observe, and they do, too, the transformative impact of pausing for three days of personal and organizational leadership growth. We discovered that pause is not merely a coaching technique, but a deep inherent life principle supporting all authentic transformation. Pause is woven into the very fabric of life and leadership. It is a principle, a cause-and-effect relationship, that paradoxically impacts progress the more deeply we step back into it.

Fortunately, *The Pause Principle* had a long gestation period to give it a chance to mature and develop. For several years, we practiced it in various forms, observed its effects, interviewed people about it, helped others to practice it, and conducted initial research. This long “pause into pause” gave it substance and pragmatism. Eventually, after four years, I service marked the concept, The Pause Principle, knowing I would one day pursue the project of writing the book. After five more years of study and reflection, I was ready to write. Because the pause was so long and so deep, the writing happened at surprising speed. Pause had worked its magic. Twelve months after beginning the writing, fueled by this ten-year period of reflective pause, the book was published and released. The ten-year period of pausing for reflection gave me the space for that deeper knowing, the welling up of experience and connection deep inside myself that W. Brian Arthur described. From this place of pause, the writing flowed and the book was created.

In the final stages of the manuscript, my wife Soraya and I decided to take a journey to visit the Dalai Lama and to explore sacred sites in India. I was excited about the trip but conflicted about it too. While I was looking forward to the spiritual renewal, I had been traveling extensively internationally during recent months for work and felt that the physical wear and tear of another trip with jet lag and time zone adjustment might be too much. Plus, I had so much writing to accomplish, and although I knew the experience would be inspiring, I was concerned that it might also be a distraction. Once we got to Delhi, we were thrust into an unexpected pause. Illness hit both of us full force, culminating in a hospital stay with beds side by side. We had to forego our visit to see the Dalai Lama. Understandably, we were disappointed. “How could this happen after we came all this way? Why?” Life had other plans; life wanted us to slow down . . . to stop. Surprisingly, it became one of the most creative, productive weeks of writing in my entire life. My body was slowed down. There was nowhere to go, nothing to do, plenty of time to reflect and write. The ten years of incubation produced many of the most important insights, connections, and content of this book. Looking back, I realize that we traveled to India with too much fatigue, too little pause, and life forced us to take a step back to recover our balance. As a result, I fortunately had the opening, the time and space to write. It was a veritable practice field to step back and lead forward.

Pause is an inherent, generative principle that is always there, always available to us. Either we consciously go to it, integrating it in our lives, or it comes to rescue us. Think about the many times you’ve felt the tug of pause . . . your intuition telling you to take a break, or to take another approach . . . and how many times you’ve ignored it until finally you could ignore it no longer.

A BIG BOLD PAUSE

São Paulo is Brazil’s largest city and the eighth largest metropolis by population in the world. With more than 21 million people, it has multiple challenges, including pollution and overcrowding. In an attempt to make a dent

in visual pollution and give Paulistanos a sense of space, São Paulo's leadership stepped back to ask a question: What might happen if we removed the print advertising from our city? This question led to a bold pause that showed up as bold action.

In 2007, the city's mayor passed the Clean City Law, banning advertising on billboards, the outside of buildings, buses, and trains. The law, which is controversial to some and innovative to others, rids the city of the incessant visual advertising that dominated its outdoor space. It is an attempt to transform the urban landscape, reduce stress, turn down the high level of visual pollution, give its residents and visitors a pause from a barrage of visual stimuli that consumed their attention and distracted them from the natural character of the city and its landscape.

Although the ban is not meant to be forever, the mayor said that it has given São Paulo a chance to step back to think about what they want, how they want to reintroduce advertising in a more regulated way. This bold pause gives the citizens a spacious opening to choose intentionally what they want their city to be. This temporary, thoughtful solution began with a bold question that challenged the status quo and led to an even bolder solution.

We create the future and optimize leadership potential in the silence and potency of pause.

“TO PAUSE OR NOT TO PAUSE?” THAT IS THE QUESTION

Leaders foster and accelerate growth: growth of revenue, growth of market share, growth of profit, growth of purpose, growth of innovation, growth of contribution. But the key questions to consider are “Where does all this growth originate? What is the prime mover of growth? What fuels growth in the first place?” Too often, we view growth as merely an external process, rarely pausing deeply to consider its source within us, within others, and within our organizations. We excel at measuring growth, but do we slow down, step back, and precisely look at where it comes from?

From my experience advising CEOs and senior executives on talent development and reviewing research on leadership development, I have come to the conclusion that there are three critical factors to optimizing individual and organizational leadership: *growing oneself*, *growing others*, and *growing an innovative culture*. Imagine your talent with the awareness to self-monitor and self-correct through change. Envision your key talent passionate and equipped to meet the current and emerging strategic needs. What might be possible when you and your talent are able to create a culture that is innovative, learning agile, and resilient to our VUCA world? Would you be very close to what you need to compete in today's world? I think so. The Pause Principle is organized around three growth principles represented by concentric circles: Grow Self, Grow Others, and Grow Cultures of Innovation.



Three Domains of Growth

“TO GROW OR NOT TO GROW?” THAT IS THE OTHER QUESTION!

Growth is an inside-out and outside-in process of transformation beginning with inner self-growth and moving to growing others and growing innovative cultures. Most change begins with self-change, and most growth begins with self-growth. “To grow or not to grow” *is* the other question. No amount of growing others and growing a culture of innovation will compensate for lack of self-growth. As enterprise leaders, our capacity for organizational growth is directly proportional to our own growth. Before we can grow others with

authenticity and purpose, we need to consider our own growth with authenticity and purpose. If we do, our development of others will be powerful, and the credibility we have gained with others will be well earned. When we aspire to become the leader we wish to see in our organization, we have a chance to accelerate the development of others, and ultimately the entire culture.

THE POWER OF QUESTIONS: THE LANGUAGE OF PAUSE

Not only is it paradoxical for leaders to pause, to step back rather than take immediate action, it is often paradoxical for leaders to question and challenge themselves. Questioning our choices is perceived as second-guessing, and in the norms of some cultures, that can be construed as weak. Authors Eric Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs wrote in *The Art of Powerful Questions*:

The aversion in our culture to asking creative questions is linked to an emphasis on finding quick fixes and an attachment to black/white, either/or thinking. In addition, the rapid pace of our lives and work doesn't often provide us with the opportunities to participate in reflective conversations in which we can explore catalytic questions and innovative possibilities before reaching key decisions. These factors, coupled with a prevailing belief that "real work" consists of detailed analysis, immediate decisions, and decisive action, contradict the perspective that effective "knowledge work" consists of asking profound questions and hosting wide-ranging strategic conversations on issues of substance.

Why question when we have all the answers, right? What might happen if instead of having all the answers, we had all the best questions to engage others, ourselves, and our enterprises in optimal discovery? What might be possible if we built a bank of compelling questions and a practice of asking them, using them to probe and learn and to unleash brilliance?

Questioning is perhaps the most powerful pause of all. Questioning is "the art of seeking new possibilities," the language of coaching, the language of innovation, and the language of dealing with complexity and crises.

Questions force a pause and propel us to a new level of thinking and new possibilities. *Effective managers are trained to have the most accurate answers, while leaders foster the skill to pose the most profound questions.*

Therefore, pause is a pragmatic practice of deep, reflective inquiry leading to purposeful change. A questioning and reflecting practice focuses attention on ideas to challenge. It unearths information, expands awareness and clarity, shines more light, and opens up the mind, heart, and will. The process catalyzes fast thinking and slow thinking—the cognitive skill of associating and generating connections and the more reflective, discerning mental activity. Pausing for inquiry also connects us inside-out and outside-in to our inner self, our character, and our purpose, as well as to others and to what is going on around us. It fuels our leadership capacities, our learning agility, and enhances our value-creating impact. As a personal practice, this methodology can accelerate our own growth and contribution. As a practice that permeates the organization, it can throw open the doorways of authentic innovation in the culture of our organization and accelerate the sustained growth of the enterprise. Pause is a pragmatic, transformational methodology that can be learned; yet this process of questioning, reflecting, and synthesizing is rarely taught.

In *The Innovator's DNA: Mastering the Five Skills of Disruptive Momentum*, Clayton Christensen and co-authors Jeff Dyer and Hal Gregersen lay out the five skills they have determined that innovators, including the late Steve Jobs, all have in common. Among these skills is an embodied practice of questioning. “Innovators are consummate questioners,” they exclaim. They are also keen observers, experimenters, and networkers of ideas who make many associations. The “discovery skills,” which are pausing skills at their core, are not beyond the ability or reach of CEOs and senior leaders; many just haven't had the practice developing the skill set. To develop our skills as innovators, we need to improve our discovery skills, beginning with our practice of pausing to probe and question. Then we can use this combination with our delivery or execution skills. Through pause, our execution skill will be more powerful because our discoveries are more profound. Through pause we get clear on what is important and why, then we drive to that outcome.

INNOVATION: THE NEW LEADERSHIP

Even before Steve Jobs passed away in October 2011, innovation was the hot topic. Jobs and Apple, the iPad, the iPhone, iTunes, Apple retail stores, and the new entrepreneurial industry of apps, as well as Pixar and Disney . . . almost anything he touched had become the iconic embodiment of creativity and innovation that transformed our lives. In fact, we could say that innovation has become the new leadership. Jobs's resignation as CEO of Apple and his death soon afterward provoked a global mournfulness for his loss, as well as a global curiosity and conversation about how to be innovative . . . how to "think like Steve." More important, leaders yearn to know how to imbue their organizational cultures with the spirit of innovation evident at Apple, Google, and other continuously innovating entities. Leaders aspire to join Jobs in "making a dent in the universe" in their own unique ways. They want to know not only how to cultivate new ideas but how to foster a culture that takes new ideas and turns them into innovations that transform people's lives.

Pausing for deep inquiry and questioning gives us the capacity to capitalize on disruptions and challenges to the status quo. Rather than viewing disruptions as threats, we can pause and proactively explore their possibilities. Pausing for questioning generates learning and innovation. Extending the questioning challenges accepted thinking and moves us from "what is" to "what might be." Persistent inquiry catalyzes synthesis and the emergence of something new from the intersections of opposing forces and glaring differences. Pausing is a methodology for proactively navigating toward openings, and a capacity for turning uncertainty and volatility to an advantage . . . an opening for something new to emerge.

*If innovation is the new leadership, then pause
is the new, transformative core competency for
innovative breakthrough.*

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