

# Be Brilliant

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HOW TO LEAD  
A LIFE OF INFLUENCE

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BESTSELLING AUTHOR of *IT'S WHO YOU KNOW*

WILEY

# Contents

<i>About Janine</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>The quest to be brilliant</i>	<i>xxiii</i>
<b>Law 1: Be You: Own your spotlight</b>	<b>1</b>
Facet 1: Character	7
Facet 2: Focus	21
Facet 3: Expertise	35
<i>Watch Out!</i>	45
<b>Law 2: Be Ready: Harness your energy</b>	<b>53</b>
Facet 4: Mindset	59
Facet 5: Stamina	69
Facet 6: Behaviour	85
<i>Watch Out!</i>	99
<b>Law 3: Be Together: Connect with intent</b>	<b>105</b>
Facet 7: Engage	113
Facet 8: Network	129
Facet 9: Collaborate	145
<i>Watch Out!</i>	160

<b>Law 4: Be Heard: Magnify your influence</b>	<b>165</b>
Facet 10: Lead	171
Facet 11: Magnify	185
Facet 12: Accelerate	199
<i>Watch Out!</i>	211
<i>Time to shine</i>	215
<i>Connect with me</i>	219
<i>References</i>	221
<i>Index</i>	231

# Introduction

How do you feel about the future? Be honest ... because most of us would agree that the mere thought is simply exhausting.

- ◆ It's *exhausting* trying to keep pace with technological changes.
- ◆ It's *exhausting* keeping on top of other people's lives: our teams, our families, our children, our friends.
- ◆ It's *exhausting* trying to keep up with work demands and the changing business landscape.
- ◆ It's *exhausting* having to conform to industry, societal and — let's be honest — social-media expectations of how to look, be and behave.
- ◆ It's *exhausting* trying to prove that we're good enough.
- ◆ It's *exhausting* trying to perform and play a bigger game.
- ◆ It's *exhausting* being human in today's busy world.

When everything external to us is moving so quickly, the risk is we enter a space of feeling out of control; we worry about what we don't have and seek out solutions to band-aid our perceived imperfections and doubts. We regress into a space of *me*, of self-protection, of 'protect what I know, learn what I don't and until then I'll fake it till I make it'.

We look externally for options to invest in learning and programs to improve our skills and capabilities. We buy tools and expertise to improve performance. We spend hours researching the next big thing so we can be ahead of the curve. And we invest materially in external validations of success.

We want to be in demand, to be needed, to be relevant, to be seen as successful, so we spend a fortune on stuff, on shit, that we think will make us 'better' — that will 'fix us'.

And what does this really get us?

Despite this constant acquisition of skills, work, promotions, learning, material possessions and jam-packed calendars, there are so many of us living daily with imposter-like feelings, doubts of our own abilities and questions about the path we're on.

Despite a perception of increased connectedness thanks to the quantitative counting of friends and connections online, and time spent scrolling, we're living increasingly in an age of loneliness and depression — of disconnection from ourselves and who we want to be.

And despite the outward appearance of being in control, stress, mental health and disengagement levels are at an all-time high in the workplace and at home. Relationships are breaking down, both with our team members at work and our family and mates at home.

We feel uninspired by leaders, organisations, brands, governments and businesses. We question the type of leader, partner, parent, friend and person we want to be.

Worse yet, in this fast-moving new world, we're having to learn to live with incessant change. Talent is no longer enough, truths are hard to find and being fake is more visible; yet somehow, we're expected to live and lead a brilliant life.

**How on earth can we be brilliant — and feel brilliant — when we're engulfed by disillusionment, comparison-itis, blame-itis, imposter syndrome-itis and lack of self-belief-itis?**

## **Why this book — why now?**

These are just some of the examples of *internal* pressures we put ourselves under. What about the *external* ones?

Here's what we're facing.

### *Problem 1: business was simple; now it's competitive*

Business used to be relatively easy. We'd work on our one-, three- and five-year plans. We'd present them for sign-off and then off we'd go, like good little soldiers, implementing them. Life felt uncomplicated. Business felt uncomplicated — calm, simple, known — and the speed of change felt considered.

But now we're living in extraordinary times of change and challenge. Business is more complex than ever before, and we're no longer performing on a level playing field. We're not just competing locally in our own backyard, we're competing nationally and globally for everything: resources, people, sales and profit.

### *Problem 2: clients were easy; now they're demanding*

Likewise, our clients and suppliers used to be relatively easy-going. In fact, we loved hanging out with them. Want to head out for a spot of lunch? Sure, why not? Can we meet to discuss our business terms and plans for the next year? Of course, let's have a chat.

But now our clients, suppliers, employees and leaders are becoming more demanding, wanting everything better, quicker and cheaper. And

if you can't deliver on this you'd better throw in some extra services and value — for free, of course!

And it's not just *them* — it's *us*! We get annoyed if our Uber doesn't turn up in 90 seconds, if we can't get the cheapest flight on offer, that table booked in the new super-cool restaurant, one-hour delivery of that must-have dress for the weekend — and get a replacement within 24 hours.

*Problem 3: communication was straight-forward; now it's overwhelming*

Marketing used to be a four-step process. Once we'd diagnosed the '4Ps' of our marketing plan — product, price, promotion and place — we'd allocate our marketing dollars across a limited range of options: television, radio, print and maybe a promotional event or two.

Now we're operating in an increasingly interconnected, fast and flat world that allows us to market anything, everywhere. As long as you have a phone and a laptop you can get your brand out there from anywhere, at any time and in any place. We're bombarded daily with information that we're attempting to process and compete with. Technology has changed how we connect, interact, work and relate — it's changing how we exist.

*Problem 4: resources were limitless; now they're stretched*

In the 1990s, when I started work, resources were limitless. It was the time of the banking boom in London: the champagne flowed, company credit cards were put behind the bar with free abandon. We could even access the stationery cupboard without asking for a key and print A3 in colour (shock horror!) without worrying about being caught by the office manager.

Now everything has been cut — resources, headcounts, budgets, travel — and we're watched as if under a microscope. Despite the cuts, we're all under the pump to do more with less.

### *Problem 5: employment was secure; now it's uncertain*

Remember when a job was for life? You were embedded into the company, secure in the knowledge that you would be looked after until the day you retired.

But with changing industries, evolving organisational structures, technological advancements changing the jobs available, increased competition across generations and the necessity to upskill, reskill and evolve skills based on the future of work, jobs are no longer guaranteed. In fact, recent research states that millennials will have 17 different jobs in their lifetime! Eek!

Without each other, without collaboration and connection, without us all being our absolute best, we can't adapt and move at the speed needed to meet these demands.

## Better be yourself

We all have to get better at being ourselves.

Think about it: without people being who they truly are, being their brilliant selves, we'll never create the true heart and soul, the belonging that's needed to turn the challenges of our present into the successes of our future. When we reconnect and reclaim who we are in the entirety of our lived experience, imperfections and strengths, and when we stop faking it till we make it, we'll be in a position to unleash our individual brilliance, and at the same time unleash the brilliance in others.

So, the solution here is to start by looking at *who*.

In 2009, Simon Sinek published his first book, *Start with Why*, which included the infamous Golden Circle framework for his approach to leadership — that 'people don't buy *what* you do; they buy *why* you do it'.

While Sinek was undoubtedly correct in identifying a starting point for why you're doing something, this thinking has created a tsunami of significant unrest and anxiety as people and organisations try to find their purpose in life.



What do we value? What's our mission? Why are we here? These are the questions we ask ourselves on a daily basis — and if we don't have the answers, we panic!

While I'm absolutely not discrediting his great work, what I am proposing is that there are other, more critical questions that need to be asked first: Who are you? Who are you being and who do you want to become?

Understanding *why* on its own will never work.

**The *who* we are and who we want to become and the *why* we're doing what we're doing must align, otherwise there will always be a point of tension and conflict.**

Phil Knight, founder of Nike, talks to this concept in his book *Shoe Dog*. He writes about what sparked his success at selling. After being unable to sell encyclopedias because he hated it, and feeling empty inside when selling mutual funds, he started selling shoes and realised he enjoyed it because 'it wasn't selling': he believed in running and believed these were the best shoes to run in and that the 'world would be a better place' if people ran every day. He added, 'People, sensing my belief, wanted some of that belief for themselves. Belief, I decided. Belief is irresistible'.

What Knight shared is that the *why* for other people only became important when he had *belief* in himself — in his *who* — first.

So, what if we could remove the shackles we're placing on ourselves and instead know that we have all we need *right now*? That we have all the skill and capability that's needed to contribute and influence; that our opinion matters; that the culmination of all the facets of ourselves — the strengths, the weaknesses, the successes, the failures, the loves and the imperfections — are our perfectly imperfect and brilliant selves.

We just need to tap into it! Embrace it!

You have all that you need to be brilliant.

To meet all of your challenges and demands head-on, right now.

It starts with *you*.

My wish for you, as a reader of this book, is to understand that we're all unique, that we all have individual facets that, when embraced, will help us become the best individuals, partners, parents, leaders, team and organisations we can be.

Much like learning how to meditate for hours or mastering a one-handed push-up, it takes continuous work to be brilliant, work that lasts a lifetime! But this continuous mastery, ongoing improvement and determination to become better is where the opportunity exists for you and for those you lead.

Only when we take ownership of who we are, who we want to be and who we want to become, only when we accept all of our imperfections and rise above our limitations, only when we unleash our own inner brilliance can we truly create the space for others to do the same.

Brilliance is infectious.

So, let's be brilliant together.

A handwritten signature in a cursive script, appearing to read "James". The signature is written in a dark grey or black ink on a white background.

## Facet 2

# Focus

Imagine if former sprinter and world record holder Usain Bolt ran with his head turned to the side, comparing himself to others, always watching the person in the next lane. What do you think would happen? Well, I don't think he would be known as the greatest sprinter of all time, that's for sure. I think he would be known as the man who lost focus, fell over, seriously injured himself and cursed himself for his mistakes for the rest of his life!

In the same way, so many of us get confused and distracted looking to the left and the right, in front and behind, watching what everyone else is doing, losing focus or jumping onto the 'next big thing' instead of staying in our lane. We then sit, with our head in our hands wondering why we don't seem to be moving forward. We get stuck in inaction.

How often have you found yourself going off on a tangent, only to come back a few days, weeks or months later, head hanging, kicking yourself for not thinking things through; asking yourself, 'What the hell was I thinking?' We all have to fight the desire to chase the shiny objects that pop up in our periphery.

The most successful global businesses—Google, Apple, Pixar, Amazon—have at their heart a very basic tenet. They see that in order to succeed, they need to improve against their own benchmarks, not necessarily those of their competitors.

Now I'm not saying *don't* pay attention to your competition at all, but in a world that demands more of you than ever, doesn't it make sense that your biggest competition is you?

When it comes down to it, you are your own biggest business asset. The biggest competition you have is yourself.

Like Usain Bolt and his vision of being the fastest man on earth, you need to get focused on your own gold medal because only then can you make sure to take the right steps towards your goals.

**Are you so busy obsessing about what other businesses or people are doing that you're running for bronze instead of for gold?**

## How hungry are you?

You can have all of the determination and drive in the world, all of the passion, the vision and purpose imaginable, but unless you're able to answer the following questions with honesty, you'll always struggle to hit your goal.

- ◆ How hungry are you?
- ◆ How hungry are you *really*?
- ◆ How badly do you want to achieve your goal?
- ◆ How much are you prepared to sacrifice along the way?

How many people do you know who have said, 'I really want X or Y' and have set off with plans, roadmaps and vision boards, then four years later those plans are sitting untouched and forgotten because they weren't prepared to give their absolute heart and soul, the pulse and the heartbeat, to getting X or Y? This doesn't make them bad people, or bad leaders, or bad entrepreneurs. It accounts for 99 per cent of us who don't have that fire in the belly for whatever it is we've set out to achieve.

If you have that fire, however, you:

- ◆ take risks and accept the consequences of those risks
- ◆ zig where others zag
- ◆ invest the time that's needed without fuss or complaint
- ◆ think outside the box, and redesign, rebrand and relaunch the box
- ◆ accept (and seek out) constructive criticism from mentors
- ◆ look for outside influences
- ◆ make the most of every opportunity presented to you
- ◆ seek out chances to improve and become better every day.

Angela Duckworth talks to the concept of hunger in her TED Talk *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*. She says,

*Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals... having stamina ... sticking with your future, day-in, day-out. Not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years... working really hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it's a marathon, not a sprint.*

If you have that fire within, then you will seize the day, the month, the year, the opportunity. As Napoleon Hill wrote in his all-time classic *Think and Grow Rich*, 'There is one quality which one must possess to win and that is definiteness of purpose, the knowledge of what one wants, and a burning desire to possess it'.

Cathy Burke is a brilliant example of someone with a burning desire who has never been afraid of a challenge.

Cathy is one of seven children. When I interviewed her for my podcast, Cathy talked about being the 'odd kid'. Her mother struggled with mental health and Cathy struggled with the stigma of her mother being in and out of psychiatric wards. Finally, she was able to escape to university, where she discovered punk anarchy and politics. She describes herself

as a ratbag, comfortable with the unknown and playing on the edges of change.

It was a trip to Goda-Chili, Ethiopia in 1992 that changed Cathy forever. She was a young mum, and Live Aid had captured the world's attention about Ethiopia's famine. The consequences of this were visible during her visit there as a volunteer with The Hunger Project, an organisation committed to the sustainable end of world hunger.

As a young mum herself, Cathy said she couldn't imagine what other mothers go through seeing their kids die of something like a common cold or diarrhoea. 'I just had to do something about it,' she said.

Cathy promised a group of villagers that she would be their voice. Her inner fire was lit.

As she shares, 'I questioned who I was to say this when surely someone like the World Bank should be doing something. But the realisation was, just as I am a renegade Perth girl, a bit of a dag, I could still have a say in how the world goes. Digging into my own leadership and my own power to find what I needed and who I needed to be, to serve in that way, was critical'.

Cathy Burke ended up becoming CEO of The Hunger Project for 20 years. Through her work, millions of the world's poorest people have stepped into their own leadership and have been able to feed themselves and their family. According to their website, The Hunger Project has a global reach of more than 15.9 million people living in rural villages in Africa, India, Bangladesh and Latin America. Cathy's inner hunger and passion to unlock human potential, building movements to drive change, has been a consistent part of her life and now her legacy lives on.

Cathy's focus around ending world hunger fuelled her work, every decision she made, every action she took and everything that she continues to do in her work.

So, what's fuelling your hunger? There will be something that lights you up, that keeps you going, that if you dig deep and think about it, is the

thing that drives your passion to do and be more. And it doesn't need to be as epic as Cathy's example. It's about you and your dreams.

For example, I'm driven by a need for freedom to do the work I love, when I want to do it and in the way I like. It's about making the right decisions that will create freedom of choice for my family and how I choose to live my life. It's a passion in life and in my work to unleash the brilliance in individuals, leaders and teams, because only when we bring brilliant people together can we create extraordinary results — and isn't this what we want for ourselves, the companies we work for and the world around us?

So again, what's fuelling your hunger?

Find this inner hunger and it will fuel your focus.

## Eye on the moon

A rocket to the moon with no plotted course will just go around and around in orbit, but a rocket with a plan and a program behind it, which takes into account the prevailing conditions and the mechanics of the mission, will be set to hit its target.

In much the same way, keeping your eye on the prize is key to maintaining focus. You have to regularly check in on your plan, ask yourself how you're progressing and make the moves needed to ensure you're continually heading in the right direction. Attention to your plan drives sustained motivation.

But we often get distracted with all the external forces fighting every nanosecond of our attention *and* we distract ourselves, putting things off, placing our 'somedays' and 'tomorrows' on the 'once-we-have-achieved-XYZ' list.

Here's what I mean:

- ◆ 'When I get promoted, I will ...'
- ◆ 'When I get more money, I will ...'

- ◆ ‘When I have a bigger team, I will ...’
- ◆ ‘When I write the book, I will ...’
- ◆ ‘When I have 1000 Instagram followers, I will ...’

‘... I will do the thing I really want to do once I’ve done all the other small things that account to nothing!’

Putting things off isn’t keeping your eye on the prize; it’s orbiting the moon!

This is lost focus and you risk ending up in the waiting room with all the other coulda, shoulda, wouldas.

Staying in the action zone takes determination, resilience, a hunger and a belief that what you’re doing—whether in a corporate organisation or on your own—means something to you.

But how? How do you tame the tornado of ideas that constantly run through your brain, competing for attention, threatening to take you off track? How do you rein in Hurricane You?

How you choose to move through life—you controlling life, or life controlling you—is up to you. You have to take ownership of your plan, your direction, your ultimate journey, your focus.

Ask yourself:

- ◆ Why am I doing what I’m doing?
- ◆ Why am I *really* doing what I’m doing?
- ◆ How are things different because of what I’m doing?
- ◆ What is the impact I want to make?

## Anchor and align

I was recently mentoring a CEO of a small production company. We were discussing their vision of building a digital business, with freedom as the key driver. We started discussing plans for the next 12 months to



help them get there, and as my client started sharing the plan, it became apparent that it was misaligned to the bigger vision of creating a business that could provide the opportunity to work from anywhere. The annual plan was based on the ‘norm’ of a traditional agency and on what the CEO thought they ‘should’ be doing: winning the big clients; running in-house strategy days, workshops and programs. Achieving this plan would have resulted in a fixed work location, increased staff and overheads. It didn’t sound much like the picture of freedom they had shared earlier with me.

**If we don’t identify our key driver, we can so easily fall into the trap of doing what is expected of us and lose focus.**

Maintaining focus means having an anchor for everything you do to align with. Stephen Covey put this perfectly when he said, ‘The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing’.

One activity I do every year is to choose a word or a series of words around which to anchor and align my next 365 days. You may say ‘a single word can’t achieve goals for you’. And you would be correct in many ways. It’s just a word or a series of words, after all. Without planning, and effort, and pure hard slog, nothing will happen. But what that word does is give me a focus. It creates something tangible because, as Patrick Rothfuss said in *The Name of the Wind*, ‘As names have power, words have power. Words can light fires in the minds of men. Words can wring tears from the hardest hearts’.

Independence. Profitability. Freedom. Skyrocket. If I were to ask you to get clear on the next 12 months by sharing one, single big word — or the few words — that best describes what you’re doing and why over the next year, what would it be?

My good friend Gabrielle Dolan likes to work with three words and one year she had ‘Fabulous, Fit and Fifty’. Gabrielle ensured she excelled in fabulousness in everything she did and every decision she made, she embraced being 50 and celebrated accordingly and she made a commitment to improving personal fitness and wellbeing.

Everything that you say and do, the action that you take, the decisions you make, the work you say ‘yes’ to and the work you say ‘no’ to needs to align to your word(s) for the next 365 days.

I’ve had clients use mottos such as, ‘If it’s not a “hell yeah” it’s a “f\*\*k no”’; words such as ‘Phoenix’, ‘Visible’, ‘Nurture’, ‘Harvest’; and others that use an inspirational quote or meme as their anchor.

One year my word was ‘Braveheart’. This meant being braver in every decision I made, stepping out courageously, saying ‘yes’ to things that scared me, and having a focused intent on seeing the best in people around me and being fair without judgement.

So, think about it now. What would your word(s) be to sum up your focus for the next 12 months?

How will this/these word(s) help you to stick to the things that matter?

What intentional behaviours are needed to help you deliver to your word(s)?

## Plan and prioritise

Back in my university days we were taught to build detailed one-, three- and five-year plans. While I appreciate this approach may still be necessary depending on the size and scale of your organisation, the reality is this ever-changing world we’re all operating in is forcing us to become more agile, adopt 90-day sprints and drive faster decision making.

Hence, it’s better to nail the bigger vision, the ultimate *why*, to set the course and direction and *then* develop the plan for that next 12 months or 90 days. Focus on doing the right things and taking the right actions that will *contribute* to the bigger vision. As Jim Collins said in *Good to Great*, ‘If you have more than three priorities, you don’t have any’.

Prioritising isn’t always easy — particularly given the scale of options and opportunities available to us right now (remember the choice fatigue I discussed previously?). But it’s what we say ‘no’ to that contributes to our

bigger vision. The late Steve Jobs explained at Apple's 1997 Worldwide Developers Conference, 'You've got to say "no, no, no" and when you say "no", you piss off people'. To Jobs, focus wasn't about willpower. It was about the courage to abandon 1000 great ideas to meet one big goal — even if that upset people in the process.

Focus takes effort, and a plan with priorities helps you pay attention and maintain focus on the right actions.

A planning exercise I run through with my clients and that I recommend you try is:

1. Grab a sheet of paper and put your anchor word(s) from before at the top.
2. Identify key projects for the next 12 months that are going to contribute to achieving that/those word(s).
3. Break it down further: thinking about your 12 months as four quarters, commit to one or two projects per quarter that would get you closer to that goal.
4. Think about what you need to do to achieve those projects — for example, this book didn't write itself. I had to plan a quarter of research and planning time, a quarter of writing and editing time, a quarter of marketing planning and a quarter of go-to market strategy. Without breaking a project into realistic and sizeable chunks it won't get finished.

As the old saying goes: eat the elephant one bite at a time.

## Quit looking in the rear-view mirror

In early 2013, Extended Stay America, a national hotel chain, was coming back from the brink of bankruptcy. Staff were afraid to stick their necks out, make decisions or disrupt the status quo in any way, whether it was

being afraid to give an unhappy guest a free night's accommodation or make decisions about a property. Why? Because they were fully aware of financial pressures and potential layoffs and, as a result, they were too nervous to show any of their own bravery. Despite being part of a bigger team, individually they felt alone.

Jim Donald, the CEO, decided that spending too much time looking in the rear-view mirror wasn't going to solve anything. He knew the answers were in front of him, that his team were capable of playing an integral part in the turnaround — if he could only encourage them to be that little bit braver. They simply had to start looking forward, trusting themselves and the network of people around them, slow down, engage, initiate ideas and take action to build a different future.

Jim created a 'safety net' in the form of miniature 'Get out of jail for free' cards, which he gave to each of his 9000 employees. In return for taking a risk on behalf of the company, all they had to do was hand the cards in — no questions asked. And the cards were used. According to reports, one manager in New Jersey cold-called a movie-production company when she heard it would be filming in the area. The film crew ended up booking \$250 000 in accommodation at the hotel.

Now, this idea seemed to involve a lot of risk. What if they failed? Or worse, what if it had ended up costing the company *more* not less? Well, the company had already been in the worst possible position, and employees were stagnating. Jim Donald acted with honesty, acknowledging that failure is a part of progress and he knew that unless they stepped forward with a focused effort nothing would change.

What we do know from reading stories of amazing entrepreneurs, CEOs and thought leaders like Jim Donald is that there's one thing that separates them from the masses: it's a tipping point that takes them from zero to hero. It's the ability and willingness to take action; it's about being brave enough to courageously move forward in the right direction, versus continually looking in the rear-view mirror questioning what you should be doing better.

## **Forward action is what moves you from zero to hero.**

What do you need to do to stop gazing in the rear-view mirror and instead look out the windscreen in front?

What would you do tomorrow if you had your own 'Get out of jail for free' card?

## **Grab the world by your lapels**

In March 2019, I sold the LBDGroup, which I had founded and nurtured over the previous eight years. The 12 months prior to the sale I went through a lot of soul-searching: Who was I? Who did I want to become? What did I want to keep doing in my work? How was I tracking in terms of my bigger vision for myself and my family? How did my business, in its current form, fit with my vision for the next 10 years?

You have to be willing to change if you want things to change. This means you have to do things differently.

Sometimes doing things differently may mean doing the opposite of what you, or others, think you should do.

This takes a hell of a lot of bravery. You have to weigh up opportunity costs, gain a greater perspective on the direction you're heading, open your eyes to possibilities and pitfalls and ultimately be brave enough to make the decision that's right for you.

And sometimes, this may even mean slowing down to go fast. It may mean you need perspective. It may mean a hit in revenue as you change strategy. It may result in a loss of clients as you stop some product lines and launch new lines. It may even mean an increase in costs as you make investments in people, processes and platforms to drive the change.

Sometimes this is what we have to do. We have to get back to who we are and what we want to do and reset, refocus and re-align. This is the risk and the opportunity of becoming your brilliant self.

During my soul searching and strategising, I knew that for the LBDGroup to grow and evolve to its next stage it required a renewed energy and vision, a continued commitment to growth and elevation and, from a business perspective, this required all the investment that is needed to drive growth.

I also knew deep down that I wanted time to write this book; travel globally with my speaking and training work; and focus and work more closely with my inner circle of private and corporate clients.

I made a decision to re-engineer my work, selling the LBDGroup to ensure continued legacy building and impact under the new guidance, energy and focus of Paula Kensington. I'm so inspired by Paula's passion, focus and momentum behind the brand and it's wonderful to support her work.

At the time it was a risk to move away from everything that I had built over the previous eight years — all the certainty and security — and some people around me didn't understand why I was doing this. But change was necessary.

If you want to do things differently, challenge the norm, play a bigger game, ask for a pay rise or reset work boundaries, it can take risk and maybe even a hell of a lot of bravery.

It takes a level of self-belief to challenge the traditional, the 'it's always been like that' or even 'this is how I've always done it'.

It takes a willingness to try, to test, to learn and to fail.

- ◆ We have to be willing to fail — because this is bravery.
- ◆ We have to be willing to share what we know — because this is bravery.
- ◆ We have to step into our spotlight — because this is bravery.

- ◆ We have to try different ways of doing and working — because this is bravery.
- ◆ We have to manage ourselves, our boundaries, our decisions, our plans and our focus — because this is bravery.

Linda Sapadin, psychologist and author of *Master Your Fears*, says, ‘Courage is taking action despite the fear’. She adds, ‘You really need to be able to get beyond the fear to make your business happen’.

Maya Angelou put it like this: ‘I love to see a young girl go out and grab the world by the lapels. Life’s a bitch. You’ve got to go out and kick ass’.

Go on, get out there and kick some arse because you never know what change it can create.

## Success is a series of steps

Success is not a goal. More so it is about getting clear on what success, as a series of steps, means for you. Getting clear on the projects that matter for you — keeping focused with one big word or a series of words; reclaiming time — and what you do with this will give you the focus to position yourself with impact.

Of course, there will be challenges along the way; things will not always go as planned and there will be failures. But what matters is how you face these challenges. Do you face them head on, learn from them and move forward, or do you get knocked down and stay there, always thinking, coulda, shoulda, woulda?

Brazilian lyricist and novelist Paulo Coelho says, ‘Whenever you want to achieve something, keep your eyes open, concentrate and make sure you know exactly what it is you want. No one can hit their target with their eyes closed’.

Hold yourself accountable and own the highs and the lows, the results and the failures. Own the opportunity to continually learn and grow. Own your success.

## Brilliance in action

### 1. *Set your gold medal standard*

What is your definition of success? What would three definitions of personal success and three of professional success be for you?

<i>My 3 definitions</i> of PERSONAL success are:	<i>My 3 definitions</i> of PROFESSIONAL success are:
1	
2	
3	

### 2. *Choose a word to anchor and align your next 365 days*

Thinking about the next 12 months, what word or series of words could you adopt as the anchor for your year? Take a moment to think deeper: what do these words mean to you in terms of how you will live, lead and make decisions?

### 3. *Plan You*

Thinking about point 2 above, make a list of the projects that matter to you over the next 365 days, how they contribute to your 'word' and why. Think about this in terms of work goals, financial goals, family goals and maybe even add in some 'just for me' goals.

How many have you got? Remember there are only 52 weeks in one year; that's 52 Saturdays and four quarters without excluding holidays or other commitments. So, be realistic... what's really critical? I mean it. What's really, really critical for you to do to get close to achieving your word?