

From Brink to Breakthrough

“Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve.”

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

I am an ordinary man with an extraordinary dream. Over the years, as the dots got connected, I can say with conviction that many of my dreams and goals boiled down to one thing—how to lead a self-actualized life and build an organization that achieved the same level of full potential! My primary tools and skills in making progress in this pursuit have been an insatiable thirst and an intense passion to seek, to know, and to understand. That is all I had to do. The universe, the cosmic intelligence or *Mahaat*, as the Vedas say, took over and conspired to make it happen. I could say that I did it or I pursued my passion. However, I have to declare with all honesty and humility that I was led and shown the way. I was thrust into experiences which forced me to learn, grow, fall, get up, learn more, and grow more.

As I stayed on the journey, something remarkable happened—the answers came, solutions unfolded, and I discovered the keys to leading a self-actualized life and building a self-actualized organization. This included understanding the keys to physical fitness, mental soundness, emotional maturity, and spiritual wisdom. One of the greatest lessons I learned was to recognize that meditating and living consciously doesn't prevent or even solve problems magically. It allows you to deal with problems more effectively. Pain is essential for progress but suffering delays or stops progress. Your goal should not be to avoid pain or problems. You should equip yourself to deal

with any problem business or life throws at you confidently and consciously. My mistakes and failures were painful but necessary for growth. I kept at it and persisted even when it seemed impractical and foolish. With practice, I realized that pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional. The journey got better when I found a way not to suffer or get down even when the obstacles and problems got bigger and bigger. Solutions always followed!

Our modern life is one-dimensional and is heavily focused on intellect. The successful business leaders I work with have this attribute in abundance. I call this professional mastery. They have a solid work ethic and have mastery over their core functions such as finance, engineering, marketing, sales, or operations.

However, to lead a self-actualized life and to build a self-actualized organization, two other dimensions are crucial: personal and organizational mastery. You have to learn and practice the diet, exercise, rest, and sleep patterns that will optimize your physical fitness. You have to always naturally be in a present and balanced mindset, independent of positive or negative external events and circumstances to deal with life's ups and down with equanimity. You have to work on unleashing your inherent genius, expressing your natural gifts and strengths while overcoming the blocks that come in the way. This is personal mastery—you are living an inspired life.

Further, you have to evoke excited, energized, and enthusiastic commitment from the people you lead and serve and provide inspirational leadership by bringing out the best in them. This is *organizational mastery*. While this may sound intimidating and seem like a lot to learn and practice, it is not. They are all connected and mutually reinforce each other. There is a natural flow which makes it rewarding and fun. A self-actualized state is to lead an inspired life and demonstrate inspiring leadership. Everything boils down to discovering how to reach a self-actualized state.

If I can do it, anyone can. You do not have to compromise the way you lead your life and build your career. I believe it is your birthright to show up fully with heart, mind, and spirit everywhere, every time. Life can be lived fully only when you integrate personal, professional,

and spiritual pursuits. You do not have to artificially separate and compartmentalize them.

I know this may sound preposterous to some. You may have plenty of questions and doubts. Seek answers for them with an open and inquiring mind. This approach is a lot more productive than being sure and suspicious about things. I went all in and, in the process, discovered the secrets of personal and organizational mastery practiced by the best and the brightest leaders. I say to my friends and clients, “I love to work with people who are skeptical and open, but there is nothing I can do when you are closed and cynical.”

All the practices and examples I share in this book are based on personal experience, which was followed by repeatedly demonstrating the same processes with several successful CEOs and leaders. I feel humbled, stunned, and proud of the exceptional results we achieved. I am grateful for the trust and confidence these brave men and women had in me. To protect their privacy and confidentiality, I have used composite characters everywhere except for one: my partner in crime in this remarkable journey, Ash Patel, the passionate and courageous CEO of Commercial Bank of California. Ash took the plunge by trusting my process and continues to grow remarkably as a conscious leader.

How did I discover the secrets and practical steps to achieving personal and organizational mastery? How did I integrate them with business processes, strategy, and execution so we can lead a conscious, evolved, and inspired life and provide conscious, enlightened, and inspiring leadership? It has been a journey that began with innate curiosity, then professional disconnect and discontent, followed by intense personal and professional exploration, and finally, the cosmic gift of a breakdown. Then the dots connected, and answers began to emerge.

Innate Curiosity

I was born into a secular Hindu family and grew up in multicultural, cosmopolitan India. My mother taught in the local high school; she was my teacher in fourth grade. My father was a successful execu-

tive in a national pharmaceutical firm, which he eventually ran. The leaders and managers of this organization came from all over the country. My friends were from a variety of states, religions, and ethnic backgrounds and spoke different languages. I studied in a Jesuit school, and some of my close relatives were Christians. My paternal grandmother was a proselytizing Christian preacher; she never lost an opportunity to share stories from the Bible and the power of forgiveness exemplified by Jesus Christ. My maternal grandmother was a devout Hindu. My first close friend was a Sikh; the second one had a white American mom and an Indian dad. My two best friends in high school were Christian and Muslim, respectively. I grew up in a unique, secular, and diverse environment, and I thrived in it.

My family was not particularly religious or ritualistic. Growing up, I was fascinated by the warrior heroes and kings Ram, Arjuna, Karna, Dharma Raj, and their enlightened masters from the two great epics of India: Ramayana and Mahabharata. I also deeply admired the more recent wise warrior-kings, Ashoka, Maharana Pratap, and Akbar. Their demonstration of noble values such as courage, sacrifice, generosity, loyalty, righteousness, and commitment to truth and justice made an indelible impression on me and became the foundation for my life. I was touched and impacted by their universal outlook: treating all human beings with fairness and justice in spite of superficial differences, while living a balanced, well-rounded life. These leaders and kings had great skill and expertise in their profession (archery, weapons, administration, and governance). They sought counsel from wise enlightened masters on the art and science of living purposefully and leading consciously. They ruled with courage, justice and integrity, and at the same time demonstrated respect, love, and compassion for their subjects, society, and family members.

Their behavior and mindset matched what groundbreaking psychologist Abraham Maslow would call a *self-actualized state*. For example: Simultaneously demonstrating behaviors of humility and courage, open and assertive, self-assured and self-effacing, deep listening and emphatic articulation is a typical characteristic trait of self-actualized people. Mahatma Gandhi also was a major influ-

ence, as I was deeply inspired by his will, discipline, and ability to bring about transformation through personal example. These were my heroes, and I truly wanted to emulate their noble characteristics. At the same time, I became aware of the gap in consciousness that existed in the current leaders and society in India. This was disappointing. I was particularly disturbed by rampant corruption and poor ethics, along with a pervasive apathy and inferiority complex in the society.

I wondered what had become of the land which believed in and practiced *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, an ancient Sanskrit term which translates to “world is one family.” Perhaps America, with its inclusive and secular society, would be better equipped to demonstrate these principles. Perhaps I would merge my appreciation of ancient eastern wisdom with modern western practicality. I therefore decided to move to the United States to continue my pursuit of enlightened leadership. I was obsessively driven and crazy enough to risk everything to find the answers—to create a system that could liberate organizations of all sizes from the constraints of left-brain-only approach. I had the love and unconditional support of enlightened masters, family, and friends.

Professional Disconnect and Discontent

I came to the United States from India with a big dream and twenty dollars in my pocket. I earned a master’s degree in electrical engineering in New York and then moved west to Silicon Valley, California, to start my professional career. But I had no interest in engineering or in pursuing a career as a technologist. I was an accidental engineer to begin with, and frankly I was not good at it. I had always been more interested and intrigued by the inner human engineering, i.e., engineering of the human mind, human motivation, human spirit, and fulfilling human potential.

I soon discovered that the enlightened leadership environment that I was desperately seeking was not to be found in the business world of mid-1980s and 1990s. I was fortunate to work with some of the best business minds in diverse organizations of all sizes; large

Fortune 500 corporations and as well as small- and medium-size companies, including technology companies in the dotcom era. These bright, knowledgeable, driven, high-IQ professionals and leaders were focused on intellectual stimulation and financial incentives to motivate people to perform. The daily processes, management behavior, and reward systems overwhelmingly favored intellect over emotional maturity, individual contribution over team collaboration, passion over compassion, and bottom-line results over personal fulfillment. They had very little understanding of what it took to inspire people to give their very best. There was no place for managing or mastering emotion and intuitive feeling for people and business. There seemed to be an underlying fear that if people brought emotion and feelings to the workplace, they would compromise their objectivity and make poor decisions. I knew this wasn't true and felt that emotional mastery actually enhances decision-making, objectivity, fairness, and justice.

My friends and colleagues seemed to be satisfied with intellectual stimulation and material comforts that came with work and were willing to put up with inconveniences. A "practical" person would say I should have been, too. In many ways, I had it made. I was single and living in California with a well-paid job. I was the captain of our company's tennis team. I loved the easy and affordable access to a health club and became a fitness fanatic. All of this was fun but only served as a temporary distraction from my quest for mastery. I was seeking more. I wanted to know and learn how to always stay positive and inspired, no matter what the external circumstances were.

My passion had always been in leadership, *right action*, and human inspiration. Right action is action taken in line with one's values and principles, for the good of the team, without a personal desire to be right. As I toiled at these places, I imagined ruefully how much better the team, division, and company would be if only they embraced these principles in their culture. The companies I worked for and the people I knew were doing well financially and intellectually. I knew they could do much better, but I did not know how to articulate it professionally in business terminology. I had a lot to learn about life

and was struggling to survive in this alien world of business. I had no passion for this work and felt like a fish out of water. My two bad options seemed to be to quit work or sell out, that is postpone the quest for meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. I took the unconventional third option—I went on a deep personal and diverse professional exploration.

Intense Personal and Professional Exploration

Adversity, they say, is the greatest teacher. I have always been passionately driven by right action, leadership, mastery, and living life to the fullest. I channeled my personal disappointment and professional discontent to an intense inner and outer journey of personal and professional exploration. I left my corporate job to set out on this adventure with my wife Usha and three young kids, Suhas, Bhavna, and Ketana. I remember a short but distinct conversation within me. “Sudhir, are you sure you want to do this?” The answer was instantaneous and spontaneous. “Yes, absolutely.” It was a no-brainer. This is my passion, and this is what I was born to do. I had prepared for this situation: I had been working on myself and made significant lifestyle changes, including regular meditation, to become more conscious. I learned a lot about strategy, marketing, operations, and business processes having worked in successful corporations with passionate leaders. Besides, my unique ideas of organizational leadership, engagement, and alignment were being enthusiastically received by the corporate teams I had been leading.

Since my ultimate goal was to lead a life of professional excellence and personal fulfillment, I had to create this career and path for myself. The first step is the recognition that mastery is about understanding human motivation, human emotions, and human nature. What makes us tick? What makes us angry, grateful, or judgmental? What inspires us to give our very best and be engaged in peak performance? The next step is to remember that whatever needs to be said about human nature was already voiced thousands of years ago.

I plunged into physical fitness, competitive tennis, and personal development. I took a deep dive into self-inquiry, meditation, yoga,

and a high-performance vegetarian diet. Meditation had dramatic impact on my life. I became calmer, more confident, less anxious, a much better tennis player, a smoother public speaker and, most importantly, began to develop more clarity in pursuit of personal development and inspirational leadership. I dove into Bhagavad Gita, the 5,000-year-old Indian text, and learned the most profound skills and techniques on leadership, coaching, unleashing human potential, and living a self-actualized life. My search for meaning and purpose, which started in India in my early teens, now took flight in my twenties in California.

Understanding human nature and human potential and integrating that knowledge to improve business performance, organizational effectiveness, employee engagement, productivity, and leadership alignment became my quest and passion. We have teachers and coaches to help us get better and learn faster in school, in college, in sports, in the arts, and practically all aspects of life. Understanding the natural laws of life and leading a self-actualized life, on the other hand, is a lot more complex and confusing. Arjuna, the greatest warrior of his time, had Krishna as his mentor and master coach. Much later, Alexander the Great had the benefit of Aristotle. In modern business leadership, Steve Jobs had Bill Campbell as his coach, and Alan Mulally had Marshall Goldsmith. Doesn't it make sense to learn from someone who has navigated this complex terrain?

The other key issue I was grappling with was how does one develop inspiring, effective, and enlightened leadership? Many thought leaders like Jim Collins defined great leadership as a “paradoxical mix and unique combination of personal humility and professional will.” I agreed with this sentiment but none of them had a practical answer for how to actualize it. This uncommon, almost contradictory combination of behaviors represents a higher self-actualized state of operation, which I believe is the key to personal and organizational mastery.

I ultimately realized that enlightened masters held the key to inspiring leadership—they understood human psychology and motivation better than anyone else. I began my mission to find a teacher or master who exemplified these characteristics.

There's an old Indian saying, "When you know what you want, the world conspires to make it happen for you." I feel blessed to have developed poignant relationships and learned from some of the greatest spiritual teachers of our time. They represent the cosmic intelligence wherein resides all wisdom about human nature. They provided me the experience to tap into that omniscient source and unravel the secrets to Personal and Organizational Mastery. I found these masters to be modern versions of the ancient Rishis or Seers who, through self-inquiry and meditation, discovered methods to keep the body, mind, and spirit functioning at peak performance. I ignored the skepticism and controversy that accompanies any pioneering work. Yoga, meditation, and a vegetarian diet, for example, are now commonly accepted as keys to peak performance. This was ancient knowledge and practice in India. I had to leave India (my Janma Bhoomi—place of birth) and discover it in the United States (my Karma Bhoomi—place of action).

I observed some remarkable characteristics in these saints. They never rushed, were always present, and operated in a flow state of execution effectiveness, easily working sixteen-plus hours a day with barely five hours of sleep. They inspired everyone around them to give their very best. They exemplified the epitome of leading an inspired life and inspiring others to do the same. They demonstrated the best of passion and compassion, courage and humility, individual drive and collaborative spirit, as well as masculine and feminine aspects. They demonstrated Personal and Organizational Mastery.

I explored the depths of mind and spirit and diligently practiced everything I learned—martial arts, yoga, meditation, and breathing exercises, while continuously refining my diet and always staying physically active. I did not miss a single sitting of twice-a-day meditation for ten years. Such was my hunger and thirst for learning the secrets of enlightened life and leadership. Spiritual discipline and routine came naturally to me. I treated my mind and body as the laboratory to experiment with peak performance and self-mastery. A pattern was emerging, proving that in order to function at

peak performance in business; we have to work holistically on body, mind, emotion, and spirit.

At the time, I was traveling extensively for work and we were raising three young children. I couldn't have done it without my wife, Usha, being a fulltime mom. She continues to be a willing partner in this crazy man's intensely passionate journey of Mastery. The great Indian saint Ramakrishna Paramahansa said, "Do not seek illumination unless you seek it as a man whose hair is on fire seeks a pond." Usha and our children would probably agree that I would pass this test for seeking.

My outer exploration took me from one company to another in search of that ideal environment where we can be ourselves without wearing a mask.

Finally, all the pieces had seemingly come together when I got the dream opportunity to build a \$1 billion global organization. I was off to a rocking start, but the universe had other plans. This exciting new adventure was cut short when I was bedridden for most of 2006. This turned out to be a cosmic gift. I had some more lessons to learn—I had to lose ego and judgment and be in a state of gratitude. As the saying goes, "Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it."

Cosmic Gift of a Breakdown

I had to constantly change positions while lying down, shifting from one side to another, and even a faint thought in my mind seemed to cause disturbance and increase physical agony. My only hope to get some physical comfort was to find a way to still my mind. The prescribed treatment was to numb and paralyze the hyperactive muscles in my neck and shoulder with Botox injections every few months. For 40 years, I had lived a robust, healthy life without any medication—not even cold medicine, vitamins, or pain killers, despite a very active lifestyle and many years of competitive athletics and sports. I was sure that I would spend the rest of my life staying healthy. This debilitating ailment was an unexpected jolt that shook me up. I had always intuitively felt that positive thoughts and emotions could play

a major role in preventing and healing physical ailments. Could I heal myself by going within, by understanding my thoughts and emotions, and consciously getting into a more positive, fearless state of mind? I resolved to do exactly that.

I had to first still my mind and accept my situation by letting go of disappointment, anger, blame, guilt, or pity. I stayed in the present by not going back and digging up frustrating situations or perceived injustices of the past. I shut down thoughts about possible catastrophic future events involving my health or financial security for my young family. When I was present and stayed in the moment I was able to physically rest and relax. If I could be in a state of gratitude and joy, perhaps I could fully heal.

I dug in to understand how the workings of my mind and emotions determine who I am, what I believe in, and what I stand for. What obstacles have come in the way of leading a life of my choice? What, if anything, is preventing me from doing that? I recognized the power of mind even more intimately. This experience paved the way for me to dive deeper into emotional mastery and make the connection to business execution, leadership effectiveness, and the pursuit of a purposeful life.

Turns out I had one very important lesson to learn on my journey to unlock the secrets to leading an inspired self-actualized life and leading an inspiring self-actualized organization. I had to fully lose judgment of people, be in a state of gratitude, and fully demonstrate empathy and compassion. This required me to overcome my ego and submit to a greater omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient force. While my goal was noble and lofty, I had to recognize that I am only an instrument and have to align myself to this universal force. My ego cannot be in the driver's seat anymore; it has to be in service of this force which is my deepest essence. Though it initially didn't seem like it when I was flat on my back, it became obvious that this was a cosmic gift for me to have the time and opportunity to connect the dots, get answers to all my questions, and put all the pieces together! I now had the time and freedom to reflect on the questions that fueled my quest, my drive and my mastery journey:

- Why are qualities and characteristics associated with inspirational leadership not widely and regularly demonstrated at work?
- How can we show up fully with intellect, emotion, and spirit at work and integrate our personal, social, and spiritual lives?
- How can we live life to the fullest, as defined by being present and alive with high energy and enthusiasm during our waking hours?
- Why is stress so high and level of engagement so poor in our business organizations? Why do so many good leadership teams accept high stress and lack of balance as normal?
- Why do even the most successful organizations, leadership teams, and individuals only scratch the surface of unleashing their full potential?
- Why do skilled, hardworking professionals struggle to perform at a high level as a team?
- Who am I? Where did I come from? Where will I go? What is my purpose?
- Is decoding and teaching enlightened leadership my purpose?
- What is the key to being effective, happy and contented?

I am probably not unique in seeking answers to these questions. I was just obsessive, impatient, and maniacal about my pursuit. All of us face these questions at one time or another. Some of us postpone the search for a later date, for some the later date never comes, and many others ponder these thoughts and questions on their deathbeds. I began to feel blessed to have this amazing opportunity to reflect on my life as a ninety-year-old on his death bed would, except it was even better. I had another half a life ahead of me to learn from my mistakes and live the life of my dreams. This was a lovely gift—I relaxed fully, and the healing process got turbocharged. I experienced waves of gratitude.

Dots Connect and Answers Emerge

I made the most of my precious cosmic gift of unlimited and unconditional time reflecting, listening to healing music, engag-

ing in self-inquiry and mediation, and reading inspirational stories. The answers I was seeking and the growth I needed became evident as I delightfully leafed through the biography of the enlightened saint, Sri Ganapathy Sachchidananda Swamiji. This powerful cocktail turbocharged my spiritual growth and healing. Instead of blaming people and circumstances, I let go of the past and experienced remarkable breakthrough. Physical pain melted away magically, emotional turmoil evaporated, and spiritual turbulence shifted to tranquility. I experienced in my own being what it takes to have cognitive understanding of gratitude, followed by emotionally feeling it, and then physically acting on it.

This to me is the essence of mastery—it is not an academic exercise or philosophical theory but involves converting our noble intention to impactful action automatically. Consider this:

Gratitude Practice

Cognitive and intellectual understanding leads to experience, both biologically and emotionally, which then can be expressed in action.

Everyone intellectually understands what living in gratitude means, but very few consistently demonstrate it. Only when you experience the pleasantness of that feeling physically and emotionally can you fully appreciate its power. Then consistent action follows naturally. You don't have to force this behavior. This has been my experience.

The physical pain and mental agony that I endured gave me a deeper insight into the suffering of fellow human beings. I developed greater love, compassion, and gratitude. Sri Swamiji said, "When our heart is filled with love, no one and nothing on this earth can cause unhappiness or discontentment." It was my dream to achieve this state of self-actualized equanimity, independent of positive or negative, triumphant or traumatic situations. Five thousand years ago, Krishna told Arjuna to be in this state of "Sthitaprajna." Through this experience I could biologically (not just intellectually or theoretically) experience that state where gratitude and judgment do not co-exist. I felt a deep sense of peace and liberation. Joy, bliss, ecstasy and contentment followed, and several insights were revealed.

Natural Laws

Just as we have laws for traffic and physics, there are natural laws in life. When we follow them, life is smoother and enjoyable physically, emotionally and spiritually. However, they are not spelled out as clearly or explicitly and are certainly not taught in school. It is on us to figure it out. You can't say *sorry I didn't know*. If you violate the laws knowingly or unknowingly, you will pay a price in terms of peace of mind, physical health, emotional well-being, etc. When we connect with our inner essence or spirit, we discover these natural laws and insights as defined below.

Natural Law #1: No crisis, however serious it is, can cause stress by itself. It is our response to the crisis that causes either stress or allows us to be in a state of equanimity. Stress is caused if we blame the crisis on someone else, including ourselves. Stress is caused when we do not fully accept our situation and instead respond with fear, frustration, disappointment, and disillusionment.

Natural Law #2: When we completely accept ourselves and take full responsibility for our situation, we appreciate what we have and can make the most of our talents. We experience gratitude, liberation and contentment. This is a necessary pre-condition for peak performance.

Peak Performance: Peak performance is possible only when we are not attached to the outcome. Unless we are content, we will invariably be attached to the outcome. This is a paradox because we have to be content before achieving the result. It is possible to get great results—make money, run profitable organizations, win world championships, and Olympic medals—but it doesn't necessarily mean that we utilized our full potential. We may have in some cases, but not necessarily always. In fact, it is entirely possible for some who may not have won any medals or trophies to experience peak performance and experience being in the Zone. This is true of business and life. It is not the external recognition but internal realization that ultimately determines if we are utilizing our full potential at that time. Why is utilizing our full potential so important? It is because contentment

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and unleashing our full potential go hand-in-hand. And life would be drudgery if we are not content. Who wants that? We always want to be the best we can be, it is the natural state.

This is how the process works:

**Acceptance > Gratitude > Liberation > Contentment >
Peak Performance**

Acceptance leads to gratitude which results in a feeling of liberation and contentment, which in turn drives peak performance.

We have control over our actions alone and not the results—results are lagging indicators that depend on other factors besides our personal expertise and effort. Based on this experience, I developed the concept of spiritual intelligence (SQ) as being critical to leading an inspired and inspiring life and leadership. This is the next logical step of evolution from emotional intelligence (EQ) as I will explain in Practice 1—Master Human Motivations. We cannot achieve the self-actualized state of equanimity by knowing or thinking about it. A higher SQ naturally leads to a state of equanimity, which is the key to peak performance. It typically involves:

Step 1: Set audacious goals—be the change you wish to see.

Step 2: Execute relentlessly with a single pointed focus on action and process.

Step 3: Let go of the attachment to results. Surrender to a higher cosmic force of universal intelligence.

This is how remarkable change agents in human history such as Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela, to name a few, achieved extraordinary results. Each country, each culture, and each religion has achieved several other similarly evolved souls. I have been inspired by many of these principles in implementing successful change programs in business organizations, which are relatively much less complex than social, political, and religious transformation programs. I have explained this in greater detail in Practice 6, “Engage in Action Leadership,” and Practice 7, “Bake Mastery into Your Organizational DNA.”

I confirmed that my physical ailment had a deeper spiritual root cause and solution. For example, whenever I passionately talked about inspired and inspiring life and leadership with friends and colleagues, physical problems temporarily vanished. This also happened when I demonstrated tolerance and understanding instead of anger and judgment. Suddenly, magic happened, and I felt my personal power like never before. I realized that if my actions were partially responsible for the problem, then I could act differently and shape my destiny by working toward a different outcome. The outcome wouldn't depend entirely on my actions, but I could significantly influence it. At the very least, I would have the satisfaction of doing my best and taking the right action. This realization was amazingly liberating. I was ecstatic.

***Everyone can be great because everyone can
be themselves and unleash their gifts, talents,
and creative genius.***

I realized that I am only an instrument of change. While I am passionate and proud of my work, I cannot take myself too seriously. Why? Because I need to align with the source of universal intelligence in order to make effective progress. I have to allow change to happen through me, not by me. This requires humility and overcoming the ego of "I am doing it" and overcoming judgment of others who are perceptibly "not doing." This shift is necessary for anyone on this journey—we have to ensure that ego is no longer in the driver's seat; rather, it has to be in service of the essence (the spirit, a higher purpose) and there is no judgment of people and situations. The judgment is replaced by intense curiosity which leads to gratitude. All this sounds wonderful in theory but requires an inner awakening to practice consistently.

My state of mind had a direct influence on my physical healing. When I kept my mind still, free from thoughts of disappointment, frustration, and perceived injustices of the past and free from the worries and uncertainty of future, I felt better physically. My doctor at the University of Southern California looked at me in amazement

when he saw me after a few months. He said that he had not seen anything like my rapid recovery in over twenty years of practice. He continued, “I don’t know what you did, I probably don’t understand what that means and how it works. All I can say is that I am delighted to see the physical transformation in you. You obviously don’t need any medication. I would like to take a video of you and inspire my patients of the possibility for them.”

Looking back, the healing process makes perfect sense. How else could it be? We are not just our body. We are not just our mind. We are not just our spirit. We are all three and true health and healing have to involve all three aspects. Perhaps more so in my case because of the intense passion I carried about right action, purposeful life, and enlightened leadership.

Building an Enlightened Organization

When the health crisis was over, I realized that I had truly prepared myself intellectually, physically, emotionally, and spiritually to build and lead an enlightened global organization. This organization would have these qualities:

- A place where every employee and stakeholder can bring the “whole person” to work and unleash his or her full potential.
- An organization that fosters a culture of professional excellence and personal fulfillment.
- A great place to work where everyone looks forward to coming to work, and leaves at the end of the day invigorated and charged, as opposed to being drained and depleted.
- A company that aligns and balances the interests of all parties and stakeholders and does not make kneejerk “either/or” demands. For example, serving customers doesn’t have to be at the expense of overworked, underappreciated, and underpaid employees. Increasing profitability doesn’t have to mean driving suppliers out of business, thus affecting the quality of life in their communities. A focus on the bottom line doesn’t have to mean an uninspiring work environment.

- An organization that truly practices and promotes empowerment and accountability, autonomy and collaboration, toughness and love, passion and compassion.
- A business where people have fun and give full creative expression to their intellect, emotion, and spirit.
- An organization that becomes a playground for realizing the ultimate dream of living life to the fullest.

People working for such an organization do not have to compartmentalize their lives by using the bulk of their intellect at work, nurturing emotion only with family, and postponing their engagement of spirit until they find time on the weekend or waiting for retirement to engage in a worthy cause. Those working for an enlightened organization don't have to sacrifice personal growth and fulfillment for professional achievement or core beliefs and values for financial security.

Forging Business Mastery with This Book

In this book, I make an objective assessment of current socioeconomic reality, identify the root cause of critical problems, and offer specific solutions that inspire us to take action. As I have done personally, I make a case in these pages for business leaders and organizations to look within and recognize areas where they can improve. For example, there is a general lack of trust in both business and political leadership. Confidence in the direction of our country and economy is low. Business has demonstrated much growth and progress but has also generated many avoidable challenges. Business leaders are very good at directing, commanding, controlling, managing efficiently, and motivating with a carrot and stick, but this approach alone is no longer sufficient.

This book is a result of my journey in transforming organizations to a new level of success, using an approach that has become essential in the competitive, dynamic environment of business today. I began to feel like an instrument for expression of the universal and timeless truth. I even named my consulting practice UniTi Group as an expression of Universal and Timeless Principles of Mastery. The source of this truth is the omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient

force which we can call “universal intelligence” or, as Emerson put it, the “great intelligence.” The yogis in India from thousands of years ago referred to this as Mahat, the cosmic intelligence. Over the years, as I began to understand and appreciate this “intelligence”, I found myself to be losing ownership to this work. As I let go of ownership, ironically, the pace picked up. Help started coming from everywhere including from the most unexpected of sources. Inspiration started gushing out from within me in the form of oral and written expression. It was hard to keep up with the flow of information that came at all times. My hand would hurt trying to capture everything that was coming through. My biggest task was to consolidate, organize, and edit all the information that was piling up.

I also discovered, to my delight, that I was not alone in this search. Along the way, I discovered several kindred spirits, all seemingly drawing from the same “source.” Ken Wilber is a good example. He is the founder of integral theory and has been called “the Einstein of consciousness.” He confirmed my perspective on the root cause for all the business, social, and economic challenges and opportunities we face, including the current social and political divide in our country. His comprehensive approach matches my own “integral” thinking. Many books have sprung from the inspiration of Ken’s pioneering work, including *Reinventing Organizations* by Frederic Laloux, *Spiritual Intelligence* by Cindy Wigglesworth, and *Conscious Business* by Fred Kofman. I was on the faculty of Axialent, a wonderful organization that Fred co-founded. There is a rapidly growing list of fellow seekers and cosmic siblings who represent this conscious way of living and leading organizations, embodying the masculine and feminine aspects of life and leadership. Some of the CEOs, business leaders, and thought leaders who embody these attributes are Paul Polman, Satya Nadella, Indra Nooyi, Howard Schulz, Ray Dalio, Jeff Weiner, Mary Barra, Richard Barrett, Robert Kegan, Lisa Lahey, Simon Sinek, Bob Chapman, Charlie Kim, Tony Hsieh, Sheryl Sandberg, John Mackey, Vineet Nayar, Sri Kumar Rao, Chip Conley, Frederic Laloux, Cindy Wigglesworth, Gary Hamel, Craig Hamilton, Dov Seidman, Lance Secretan, and Marshall Goldsmith.

I had several breakthroughs in my journey, and a big one happened during a walk with Marshal Goldsmith. As I was telling my story, he stopped me cold and gave me some tough love. He brought out my concealed arrogance and challenged me to keep my message simple, not to take myself too seriously, and to stay humble. He reviewed one of my earlier drafts and said, “Don’t fight battles that you don’t have to fight. Speak more in your own voice. It sounds like you are trying to change the world—which is noble but may not sell to a practical buyer.” Marshal should know; they call him America’s Coach. He was recognized as the world’s most influential leadership thinker in the biannual *Thinkers 50/Harvard Business Review* study. His greatest attribute is that he is constantly working on not taking himself too seriously. I call him the master of common sense.

Who Should Read This Book?

This book is intended for CEOs and business leaders who dare to pursue professional excellence and success along with emotional and spiritual fulfillment. You can be practical, hardnosed businessmen and at the same time care for the people, the environment, the society, and the planet. I believe there is a significant and rapidly growing population of people who are seeking enlightened practical solutions to major issues that we face in life and business.

This evolved population is not wedded to any dogma or belief system. They are neither parochial nor fanatic. They may be religious or agnostic, but one thing is for sure: they understand that there are many paths to peace, prosperity, and contentment. Their political affiliation is neither left nor right, their leadership style is neither democratic nor autocratic, and socially they are neither liberal nor conservative. They do not blindly believe anything or blindly disbelieve anything. They are independent, strong willed, and take personal responsibility and accountability for all actions and results. They are practical, open, objective, fair, and inclusive. They are willing to go to great lengths to preserve and fight for what is “right.” And, they also clearly see that there is a larger force at play. I represent this population, which is willing to work on a new consciousness-based para-

digm that defines leadership, economic models, forms of government, and life itself. This new paradigm involves tweaking our existing capitalistic and democratic models to be more in tune with higher states of human consciousness.

This book reflects the shift in collective consciousness of the society and the stakeholders in business organizations. This shift demands that solid business performance, financial success, and enhancing shareholder value are minimum requirements. The expectation from leadership is to achieve these benchmarks by demonstrating high moral and ethical values without compromising honesty and integrity, while building purposeful organizations that allow us to expand our mind, heart, and spirit. Many believe that the collective business consciousness is now ready to implement the broader, holistic principles of the spiritual dimension.

The next level of effectiveness in business leadership will come from integrating personal and professional excellence. Business leadership that follows the highest principles of honesty, integrity, inclusiveness, and objectivity (practical spirituality) will achieve superior business results. This is a natural progression of growth in business organizations and our socioeconomic institutions.

The quest for personal fulfillment and professional excellence is universal. Those of us who pursue it seriously end up being role models in leadership positions. As inhabitants of this planet, we are not only responsible for ourselves, but for the well-being of the community we live in and the whole planet. Living life in accordance with this natural law is leadership. We are all leaders of our own lives; we have to make critical choices and decisions. Many of us lead our families jointly with our spouses. Some of us take a leadership role in community and civic groups, social, business, political, and spiritual organizations.

To lead effectively, we need to collaborate with the leadership team and connect with all the constituents of the organization. A good leader is a good follower who takes guidance from his or her mentors, advisors, partners, employees, and all the constituents of the organization.

The current global economic malaise—anemic growth, unsustainable debt, inequality, growth fueled by consumerism, exploitation of natural resources, stressed and poorly engaged employees—is only accelerating the shift toward more meaningful and purposeful living, which translates to the need for enlightened business leadership. This is important because, in the last two hundred-plus years, power has shifted from religious to military to political to business leaders. By resolving our business obstacles, we help overcome larger socio-economic challenges such as economic stagnation, polarized politics, inequality, affordable and quality healthcare, and education. They all have the same root cause and similar solutions. We can make a difference by taking action that is inspired, inclusive, and inspiring! In the process, we help elevate capitalism and democracy to their highest natural capability.

Ultimately, this book is about exploring these next-level methods to further enhance productivity and performance, and therefore leadership effectiveness. It includes experiences and practical insights of personal and business leadership, and the deep connection between the two.