



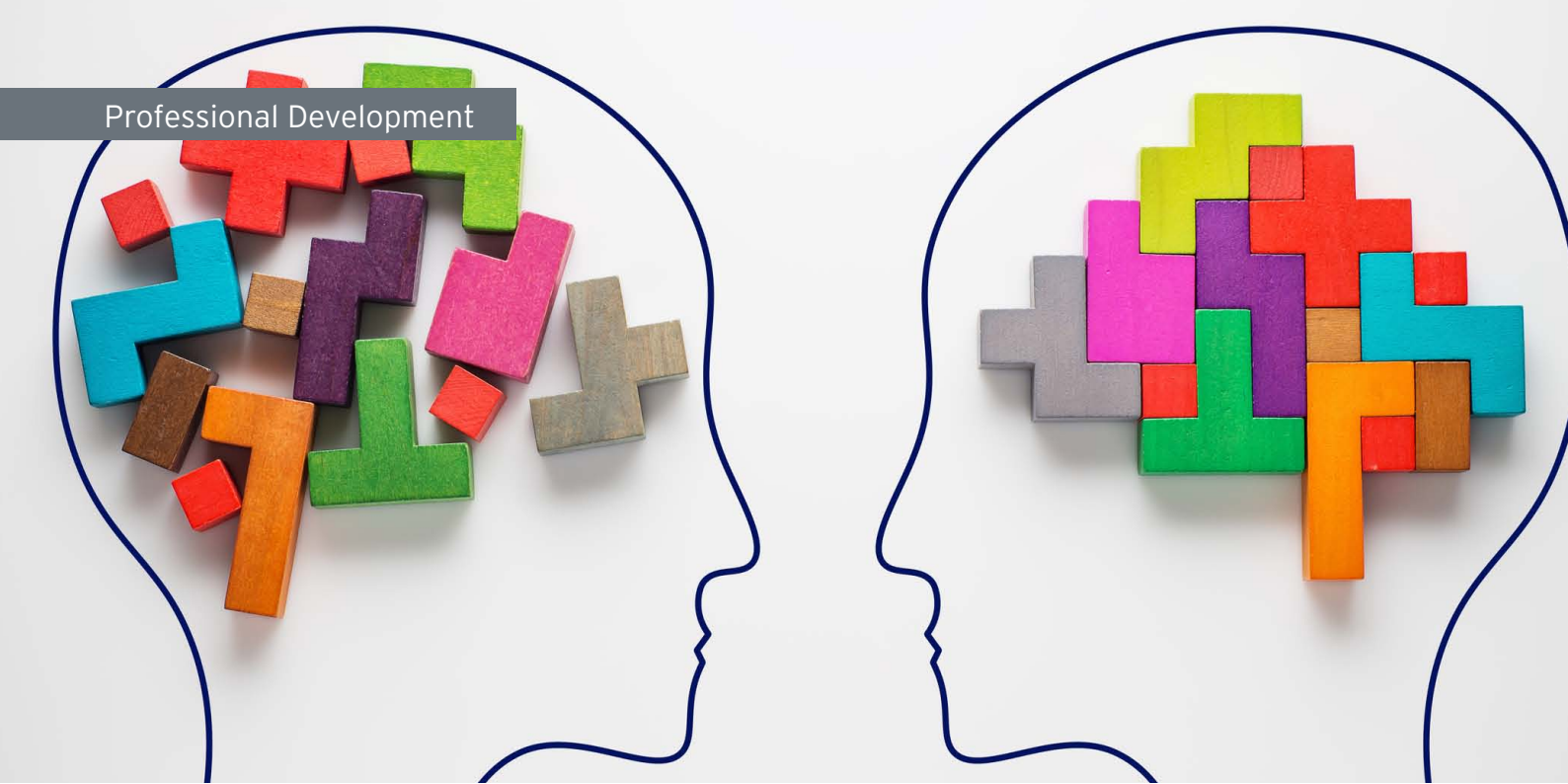
Lisa Stephenson is the author of *Read Me First*, and draws on decades of experience as a global speaker, leadership consultant and success coach.

How to lead with confidence when you don't feel it

Being a great leader is one of the hardest challenges to overcome. Only a special few find that leadership comes naturally. Everyone else has to do the work and the learning before they hit their stride. So, if you are new to your leadership role or your confidence has spiralled down for some reason, buckle up and settle in for the ride.

It's important to think of your leadership career as a marathon, not as a sprint. You need to take a long-term approach and to know you won't get it all right up front. Sometimes, when we think of leadership, we think of people with soft skills who are warm, smart and who attract others. However, true leadership is much more than that. True leaders have the ability to think strategically, build trust quickly, share a vision, and to do it all in way that makes others want to stand beside them. If just reading that made your heart beat faster, keep in mind that most of the world's best leaders have made mistakes, messed up and disappointed people at some point. So, what do we do when our commitment to leadership and people is high, but our confidence is low?

You can start by doing a review of your leadership style as it is now. If that sounds suspiciously like work, it's because it is! But that's what leaders do. They self-assess, reflect and adapt so they are constantly evolving. Consider what strengths you bring to the room. It's important to be clear about where you add value. Reflect on the feedback you have been given on



your performance as a leader and review any changes you have implemented. It is useful to spend time clarifying what you want to be known for in five years' time. What will you stand for? Also, identify the times when you feel most confident and at your best. I always ask coaching clients to make a specific list of attributes and behaviours they value in other leaders. As a final step in your review, write down who you 'don't' want to be.

Build your confidence in three easy steps

Investing in you is the most important investment you will ever make. You will increase your confidence by having a 'leadership plan' for your development. You will set goals for learning opportunities and consult experts who will add to your leadership tool box. Make building your confidence a priority by having a focused approach. These three principles will get you started and keep the momentum going:

1. Find your tribe: Surround yourself with people who want you to succeed as a leader, who will challenge you to be more, and who understand your true potential. Your tribe extends beyond friends and family. They are the people who will both challenge and celebrate you. Identify those in your world whom you trust and who will tell you the truth about how your leadership style is impacting

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others. Your tribe should include a mentor who can guide you and a coach who can hold you accountable to your leadership goals. You should also be connected with a leader outside of your industry who can provide a different perspective—and who can ensure you have someone in your tribe who can be your number one fan!

2. Leadership learning edge: It is true that the greatest learning happens during periods of discomfort. To know what you are really capable of, you have to test your resilience and capabilities as a leader. Taking risks and then succeeding will build your confidence in you! You are an ever-evolving complex human with so many things to learn, and that is where your potential as a truly inspiring leader lies. Intentionally look for new experiences and endeavour to meet people out of your current network. When we aren't feeling confident, our natural response is to be 'head down and bum

up' and to fly under the radar. Leaders don't have that luxury. Leaders have to be prepared both to fail and to push themselves. Find your learning edge by being involved in projects, conversations and opportunities where you will learn and evolve in an accelerated way. This might take time now but it will serve your confidence later.

3. Be resolute, committed and courageous: The reality is there's really only one you on this planet. No single other person looks the same as you, has your beliefs or experiences. One of the greatest leadership challenges of all is to retain your authenticity and courage while leading according to your own values. You need to learn as much as you can from others, but it's what you know and trust about yourself that will show itself the most. It's easy to be a good leader when things are easy. It's how you lead others when it's hard

and you don't know what to do that counts the most. So, put your big girl/boy pants on and make a plan, commit to it and show everyone who you are. As a success coach, I've never met anyone who genuinely became an 'overnight success'. Strong leadership takes work. Enjoy the ride. ●

About the Author

Lisa Stephenson is the author of Read Me First (Major Street Publishing), and draws on decades of experience as a global speaker, leadership consultant and success coach. She is also the founder of the global, Australian-based consulting firm, Who am I Projects. Over the years, she has worked with some of the biggest global names, CEOs, elite athletes and entrepreneurs. Lisa's book will challenge and inspire you, while holding you accountable for going after what you need and want. For more information on Lisa go to www.lisastephensonconsulting.com.au

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