A PLAYBOOK FOR OWNERS AND CEOS

Why Your Next Level Is Not Another Strategy

For business owners, entrepreneurs and CEOs who have built something real and hit a ceiling no plan seems to move

ConfidenceCoach

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BEFORE WE START

The ceiling is almost never in the strategy.

I've spent more than fifteen years coaching owners, founders and CEOs, and the pattern barely changes. The person across from me is competent, respected and further along than most people they know. And they're still leading from fear.

Not the loud kind. The quiet kind, where you keep performing because you're not sure what happens if you stop, and where every new strategy is one more attempt to buy a little proof that you're enough.

Here's what I see constantly in high-achieving leaders. They're using performance to solve an identity problem. It never works, because performance and identity live in two different worlds. Performance says prove it. Identity says you already are it. Performance is only as good as your last result. Identity doesn't move with the market, the launch, the quarter or the review.

> *Peace was never on the other side of performance. Until that gets reordered, you keep running a race with no finish line.*

So this isn't a playbook about strategy. You have plenty of strategy. It's about the place you run it from, and what happens to a company when that place finally gets settled.

I wrote it for one person: the owner or CEO who has built something real and hit a ceiling no plan seems to move. If that's you, keep reading. It's short on purpose.

WHY THIS PLAYBOOK EXISTS

I built the company. The company did not build me.

When I was seven, my teacher moved my desk to the back corner of the room and told me I was stupid and would never be anything. I was severely dyslexic in the 1960s, when nobody had a name for it. I was raised to respect teachers, so I believed her. That became my identity, and it nearly cost me everything.

My mom and my grandmother refused to accept it. They found me a tutor, and she started every single lesson the same way: you're going to do something significant, you were made to change the world. I finally asked her why she kept saying it. She said, until you live into it and believe it, I'm going to keep telling you. She did that for five years. By sixth grade I was student of the year, voted by the teachers and the students.

I still took thirteen years to finish twelve years of school, and I flunked out of three colleges because I couldn't read. Then I spent ten years starting businesses and failing at every one of them. Ten in a row. Every time, Orlena asked me the same two questions: what did you learn, and what are you going to do next time?

The eleventh one we started at our kitchen table with a hundred dollars, in an industry I knew nothing about. It didn't make a penny for three years. Then it became one of the top three sellers of that product in the country, in forty-two states, with four thousand people. We ran it twenty-one years and sold it.

Nothing about that strategy was smarter than the ten that failed. What was different was who I believed I was while I ran it. And here's the part I'm least proud of and most sure about: for all twenty-one years, nobody in that company knew I was dyslexic. I never used my full ability, because I was afraid people would find out who I really was.

That's why this playbook exists. Not to hand you a better plan. To get you to the place I took far too long to find.

AT A GLANCE

Coaching since 2009

Owners, founders, CEOs and marketplace leaders, one-on-one and in a mastermind group.

Forty-seven years an owner

Ten failed businesses, then one that reached the top three in the country.

The framework

Being, then Seeing, then Doing. Identity first, tactics last.

Off the clock

Forty-eight years with the same girl, three married kids and seven grandkids, all in Oregon. Sixty-three countries so far.

SCOTT ON STAGE. THE TALK IS ALWAYS THE SAME ONE: WHO YOU ARE BEFORE WHAT YOU DO.

WHAT YOU'LL DISCOVER

The five places a strong owner quietly runs out of belief

01 Another strategy where a decision belongs

The plan isn't missing. A settled place to make the call from is.

02 Confidence borrowed from the last result

When every soft quarter turns into a referendum on you.

03 A company that has outgrown its founder's self-image

The business is bigger than the version of you that started it.

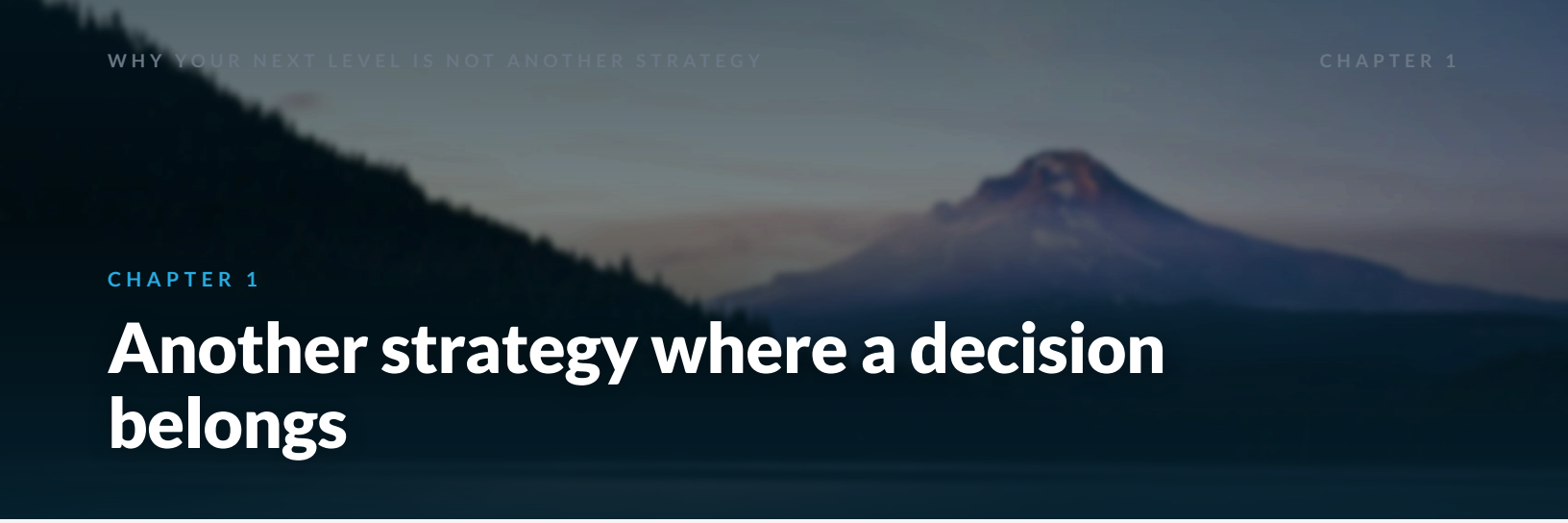
04 Performing where you used to lead

You still say the right things. You can feel the gap between saying them and meaning them.

05 Nobody left who gets to ask you the hard question

You're where everyone brings their doubt. Where do you bring yours?

None of these look like problems from the outside. That is why they can sit inside a good company for years.



CHAPTER 1

Another strategy where a decision belongs

Most owners ask the wrong question. They ask, what strategy am I missing, what should I be doing next. The deeper question is this: what's actually stopping me from doing what I already know?

After years of this I've noticed something consistent. People don't lack information. They lack alignment. You already know the conversation you need to have, the decision you've been delaying, the person you need to move. Something underneath keeps you from moving, and it's almost never laziness. It's belief.

So a new framework gets bought, a new consultant gets hired, and the same decision waits another quarter. The strategy was never the problem. That decision was waiting for a settled person to make it, and you didn't feel like one that week.

IN THIS CHAPTER

The tell

You've read the book, taken the course and hired the coach, and the same decision is still open.

The question underneath

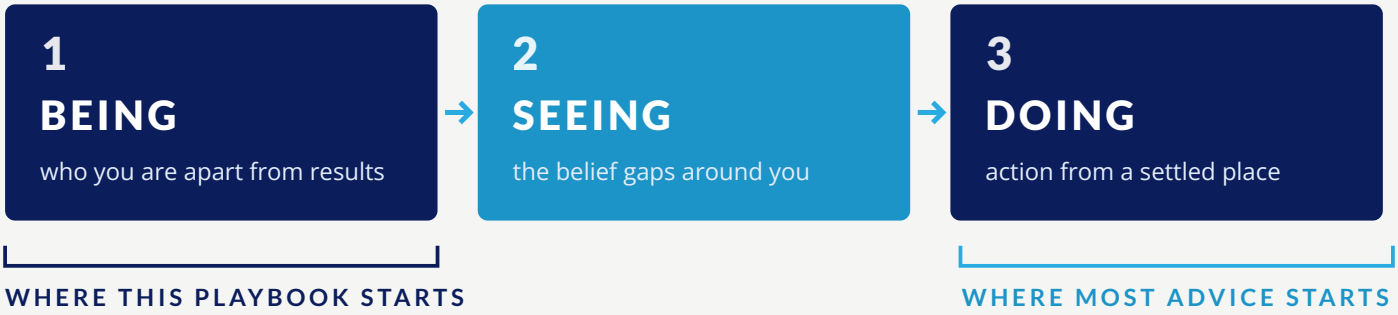
What am I afraid would be true about me if I make this call and it goes wrong?

The reorder

Being, then Seeing, then Doing. The decision belongs to the first one.

CHAPTER 1 · CONTINUED

THE ORDER THE WORK RUNS IN



Here's the order my work runs in. Being is who you are apart from your results. Seeing is noticing what's actually going on around you, the belief gaps and the discouraged hearts and the potential nobody has called out yet. Doing is the action that flows from those two.

Most leadership advice starts at Doing, the tactics and the habits and the systems. That holds up right until the person running it has nowhere steady to run it from. Settle Being first and the other two stop being exhausting, because you're no longer treating every decision as a test of whether you're enough.

Try this before you buy the next strategy. Write down the one decision you've been circling. Then write the sentence you're afraid would be true about you if it went badly. Nine times out of ten that sentence is the real ceiling, and no plan in the world moves it.

> *A settled person makes the call in a week. An unsettled one buys another plan and waits a quarter.*

CHAPTER 2

Confidence borrowed from the last result

There are two ways to carry confidence, and from the outside they look identical. One is built. The other is borrowed against the last good quarter.

Borrowed confidence works beautifully while the numbers are up. Then one soft month arrives and it turns out you weren't confident, you were current. Now you're rereading a report at eleven at night looking for evidence that you're still the person you were in the spring.

I know that lane well. I ran a company for twenty-one years and could not read its contracts. Every good year felt like a stay of execution rather than proof of anything.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Borrowed

Rises and falls with the last result. Needs a win this month to function.

Built

Comes from reps of courage, not from outcomes. Survives a bad quarter intact.

The test

When the number misses, does your sense of yourself miss with it?

CHAPTER 2 · CONTINUED

THE GOALPOST MOVES

PERFORMANCE SAYS

Prove it.

Conditional. As good as the last result.

IDENTITY SAYS

You already are it.

Constant. Does not move with the quarter.

Confidence is born out of courage. Not the other way round. A lot of reps of courage give you sustainable confidence, the kind that's there in the moment you need it, and there's no shortcut that skips the reps.

A rep of courage is small and specific. Saying the true thing in the meeting instead of the smooth thing. Making the call you've deferred twice. Telling one person the truth about where the company actually is. None of those feel brave while you do them. They feel uncomfortable, which is the point.

Here's the reframe that matters most for an owner. Failure isn't the opposite of this. Failure is the tuition. I failed at ten businesses before one worked, and what I learned in those ten is the only reason the eleventh went anywhere. As an entrepreneur you signed up to fail. Somebody should have told you that at the start.

> *Borrowed confidence needs a win this month. Built confidence is still standing after the month you didn't get one.*

CHAPTER 3

A company that has outgrown its founder's self-image

Companies grow in steps. Self-image grows much more slowly, and almost nobody notices the gap opening up.

So the business turns into something substantial while the owner is still quietly running the operating system he wrote at the start, when he was proving he belonged. The company is at one level. The story he tells himself about who he is sits a level or two below it.

You can see it from the outside. Decisions get made at a scale the owner's self-image can't quite hold, so they get made anxiously, or late, or twice.

IN THIS CHAPTER

What grew

Revenue, headcount, complexity, the weight of what one decision now affects.

What didn't

The story you tell yourself about whether you're the person who should be making it.

The cost

Good decisions made from a small place, which is how a strong company stalls.

CHAPTER 3 · CONTINUED

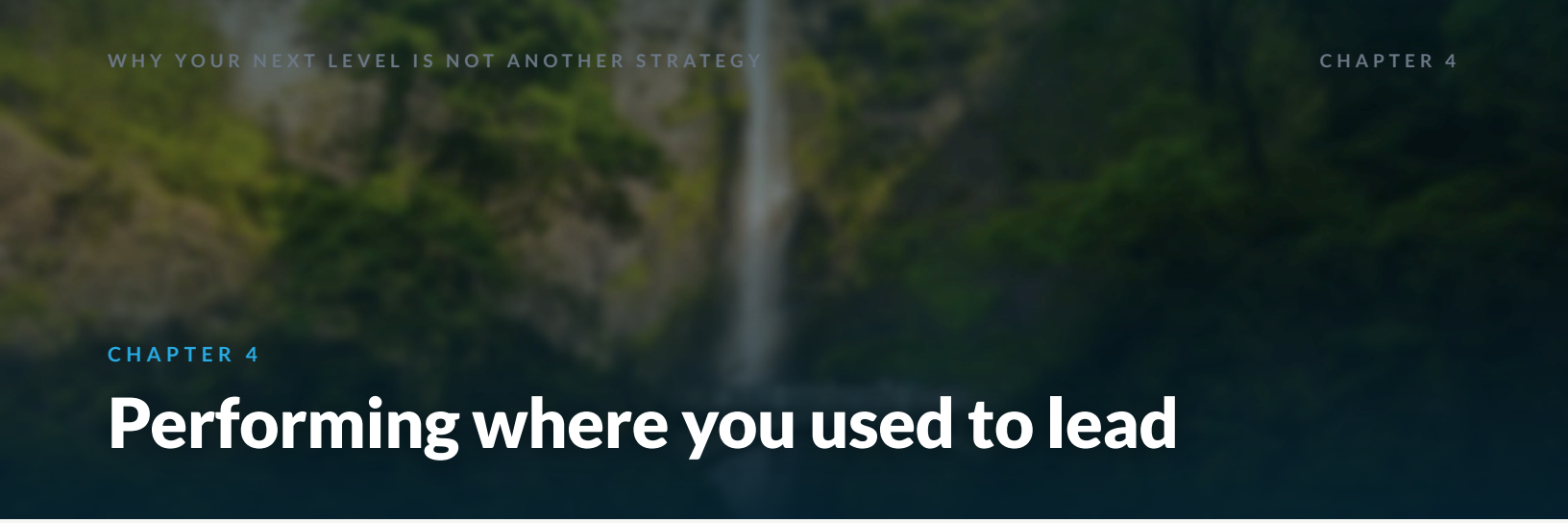
THE COMPANY AT YEAR ONE AND YEAR TEN, AND THE PICTURE IN THE MIRROR

This is the one I lived. For twenty-one years I ran a company across forty-two states with four thousand people, and nobody in it knew I was severely dyslexic. I hid it. And because I hid it, I never used my full ability. I was leading a large company from the self-image of a kid who'd been told he was stupid.

I've since worked with CEOs running multi-million dollar companies who are still, underneath it all, one bad quarter away from being exposed as a fraud. That isn't a confidence problem you fix with better tactics. It's an identity problem, and it's solvable, but only by going back to where the story started.

So name the gap out loud. What is the company now, in plain numbers? And what is the version of yourself you're still leading it from? Write both down. The distance between them is the work.

> *The company grows in steps. Your picture of yourself only grows when somebody makes you look at it.*



CHAPTER 4

Performing where you used to lead

There's a point where leading turns into performing and the calendar looks exactly the same. You still run the meeting, still say the right things, still get the reasonable outcome. But you can feel the gap between saying it and meaning it.

Striving says I have to keep moving or I'll lose ground. Standing says I'm already rooted, now I get to move from here. From the outside both people are working hard. Inside, one is running from something and the other is running towards something.

The difference shows up in the building before it shows up in the numbers. Striving leaders build striving cultures, because a team never quite measures up to a leader who never quite measures up to himself.

IN THIS CHAPTER

Striving

I have to. Energy goes into managing anxiety.

Standing

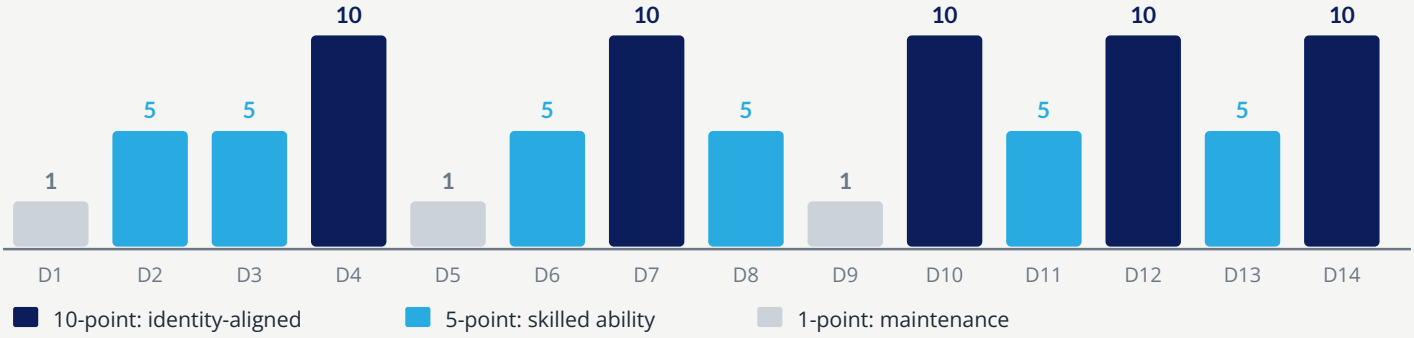
I get to. The same energy goes into the actual work.

The weekly check

Which one did this week run on?

CHAPTER 4 · CONTINUED

TWO WEEKS ON THE BELIEF MOMENTUM SCORECARD



A lot of owners are afraid that resting in who they are will make them soft, that the edge they have is fueled by insecurity. What I've watched happen over and over is the opposite. The edge gets sharper when it isn't also carrying the weight of proving something. You make cleaner decisions. You take healthier risks. You recover from setbacks faster, because a setback stops being a verdict and goes back to being information.

Two tools my clients use for this. The first is the Belief Momentum Scorecard: at the end of the day you score one to ten on whether the day's actions came from who you say you are. It's ordinary and it works, because it turns identity from a feeling into evidence you can look at.

The second is the Grace Multiplier, and it's for the people around you: patience, benefit of the doubt, second chances, understanding, forgiveness. Pick one a week and use it deliberately on someone. Do that for a quarter and watch what happens to the room. Doing flows from being, and it flows outward faster than you'd expect.

> *You were never meant to strive your way into who you already are.*

CHAPTER 5

Nobody left who gets to ask you the hard question

This is the loneliest work there is. Everyone in the building brings you their doubt. Very few people have anywhere to take their own.

The higher you go, the more carefully people speak to you. Your leadership team tells you what you want to hear, because they'd like a promotion, or a raise, or your job. That isn't cynicism, it's structure. And it means the one person in the company who most needs a straight answer is the one least likely to get one.

So the real question isn't whether you're getting good advice. It's whether anyone in your life is still allowed to ask you something you don't want to answer.

IN THIS CHAPTER

What you provide

Belief, direction and steadiness, to everyone, all week.

What nobody provides you

One honest question with nothing riding on your answer.

Who qualifies

Someone with no stake in your approval.

CHAPTER 5 · CONTINUED

THE GRACE MULTIPLIER: FIVE HABITS, ONE WEEKLY RHYTHM

- Weekly grace log
- Multiplier chain prompt
- 90-second grace check

What I'm known for is asking the question nobody else will ask you. That's uncomfortable, and it's where all the growth is. My conversations aren't for the faint of heart, because I'll keep going until we get to the truth of the matter. Clients have told me they hated a session and thanked me eight hours later.

Telling the truth is how all progress begins. Until you can tell it to yourself, nobody can help you, including me. So the questions I start with are simple and hard: what do you really want, not what you're supposed to say. And then, what's actually stopping you. Almost every time, what's stopping you isn't out there.

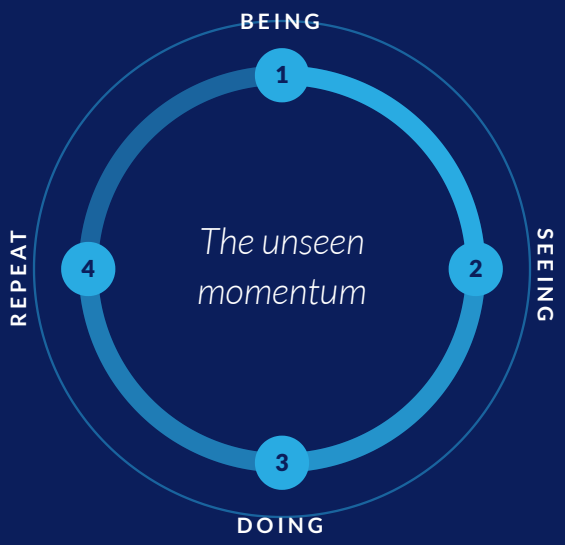
One thing I tell every client at the start. I'll be the one person who walks in when everybody else walks out. I can't guarantee you a number or a result. That one I can guarantee, and after twenty-one years of running something where nobody could ask me anything, I know exactly what it's worth.

> *Advice is cheap at the top. An honest question with nothing riding on your answer is the rarest thing you'll be offered.*

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Being, then Seeing, then Doing

Every chapter here is the same move made in a different room. This is the whole sequence, the way I walk a client through it.



1

Being

Settle who you are apart from the results. Name the lie you've been leading from and the truth that replaces it. I call that the great exchange, and it's where everything else starts.

2

Seeing

Look at your people the way you've now learned to look at yourself: the belief gaps, the discouraged hearts, the ability nobody has called out yet.

3

Doing

Act from that place. Hold the belief, say the true thing, make the decision that's been waiting. Keep score of the days that came from who you actually are.

4

Repeat

A weekly grace, a daily score, and one person who's allowed to ask you the hard question. The momentum is unseen, and it's the internal advantage of the company.

When you lead your business from your true identity, and you see your team in theirs, you create an unseen momentum. That momentum is the next level. It was never going to come from another strategy.

IS THIS FOR YOU?

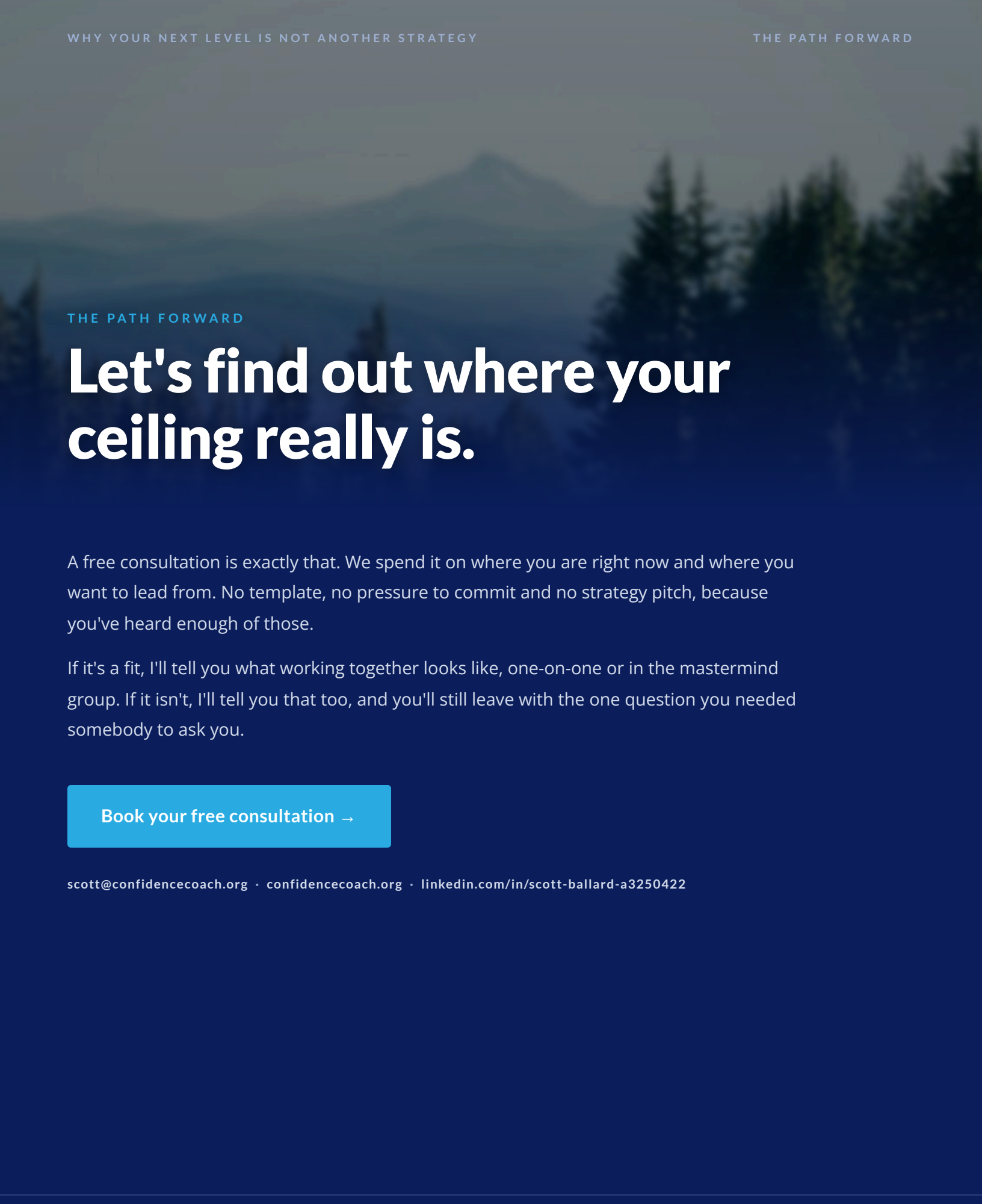
Who this work is for

I work with a specific kind of leader, and I'm not for everybody. If most of these sound like you, we should talk.

- ✓ You own or run a company of real size and you've carried it for years. You've already proven you can build.
- ✓ You're successful on the outside and, on the inside, less certain than anyone around you would guess.
- ✓ You've bought the strategy more than once, and the same decision is still open.
- ✓ You have a big problem you're serious about solving, or a goal in a timeframe that looks impossible.
- ✓ You want the question nobody else will ask you, even when it's awkward.
- ✓ Faith matters to you, or you're at least curious why it matters to me. You're welcome here either way.

SCOTT SPEAKING AT A LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP.

If that's you, the next page is the only strategy in this playbook.



THE PATH FORWARD

Let's find out where your ceiling really is.

A free consultation is exactly that. We spend it on where you are right now and where you want to lead from. No template, no pressure to commit and no strategy pitch, because you've heard enough of those.

If it's a fit, I'll tell you what working together looks like, one-on-one or in the mastermind group. If it isn't, I'll tell you that too, and you'll still leave with the one question you needed somebody to ask you.

Book your free consultation →

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The short version: Scott coaches business owners, entrepreneurs, CEOs and marketplace leaders to lead from their true, God-given identity instead of fear, pressure or somebody else's belief system. He has done that since 2009 through one-on-one coaching, a mastermind group, leadership training and keynote speaking, built on the Being-Seeing-Doing framework and tools like the Belief Momentum Scorecard and the Grace Multiplier.

The long version: A dyslexic kid who was told at seven that he would never be anything, Scott failed at ten businesses before building one from his kitchen table with a hundred dollars, in an industry he knew nothing about, that became one of the top three sellers of that product in the country across forty-two states. He ran it for twenty-one years, sold it, and has been a business owner for forty-seven years. He is the author of The Biggest Disability Is a Bad Attitude, and his work has been featured on CBS, FOX, NBC and ABC.

Who he works with: Hundreds of leaders: founders scaling a first company, executives leading established teams, owner-operators in healthcare, construction, professional services and education, and public-agency leaders, across the U.S. and Europe.

Away from work: Scott and Orlena have been together forty-eight years. Three married kids, seven grandkids, all in Oregon. Hiking, traveling, sixty-three countries so far, and a faith that sits at the center of all of it.

READY TO TALK? scott@confidencecoach.org | calendly.com/scott-ballard

OWNERS IN THE ROOM AT ONE OF SCOTT'S LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS.

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