A LIVE SERIES OF INTERVENTIONS FOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS

LEADERSHIP UNDEVELOPMENT™

THE CORRECTION STARTS HERE

LESS, ON PURPOSE.

A live series of evidence-led interventions
for leadership teams.

01 THE PROBLEM

Academics have spent the best part of half a century trying to establish a reliable link between leadership development and organisational performance. They haven't found one. Not for want of trying: thousands of studies, hundreds of models - and the reliable evidence has simply never materialised. Because the whole industry rests on self-reported views: perception surveys, 360-degree ratings, post-course happy sheets - people describing how leadership feels, not measurement of what it changes.

You might expect that to give the industry pause. Instead, most leadership programmes are additive. They pile more frameworks, models, acronyms and 'stuff' onto already overwhelmed people. The result is cognitive bloat, not capability - leaders who can recite five models of change and still can't get a decision made.

But the deeper problem isn't volume. It's foundations. The leadership development industry is built on biases and belief systems that don't survive a critical lens:

The cult of the heroic leader. We pin complex, system-wide outcomes on one individual - what researchers call the 'romance of leadership.' Great year? Brilliant CEO. Bad year? Get a new one. Yet the measurable leader effect is modest; most of what we call performance is industry, timing, system and luck. We keep crediting the captain for the tide.

The halo effect. Once an organisation succeeds, we retrofit the story: the leader becomes visionary, the culture becomes strong, the strategy becomes bold. The narrative is written backwards from the outcome - then sold forwards as a recipe.

Post-rationalisation through the lens of accepted wisdom. Whatever happens, we explain it with the frameworks we already hold. Success proves the model worked; failure proves it wasn't applied properly. Received wisdom gets confirmed either way - and a belief system that explains everything predicts nothing.

Survivorship bias and circular research. The classic leadership study asks winners to describe what they did, then packages the answers as best practice. Nobody asks the failures - who, inconveniently, were often modelling the way, inspiring shared visions and encouraging the heart too. Without a counterfactual, it's not evidence; it's autobiography.

Single-cause attribution and logical fallacies. Correlation dressed as causation. Post-hoc reasoning. One variable extracted from a thousand and declared decisive. The genre runs on causal claims its methods cannot support.

A complete failure to acknowledge context, complexity and serendipity. Most variation in performance sits in the system, not the individual - Deming said so decades ago, and the evidence hasn't budged. Performance is relative: you can improve and still fall behind. And luck is real, powerful, and unmentionable - no framework has ever shipped a module called 'be fortunate.'

And the returns on all this? Judge the industry by its scoreboard. Decades of spend - tens of billions a year globally - have coincided with the overwhelming majority of the world's employees reporting they are not engaged at work, by the engagement industry's own numbers. A growing share privately doubt their job needs to exist at all. 'Transformations' routinely fail to deliver what they promised. And work-related stress, anxiety and burnout sit at record levels - a workforce mental-health crisis presided over by the most leadership-developed generation of managers in history.

No other multi-billion-pound investment would survive results like these. Yet practitioner confidence in leadership development consistently outstrips what the research actually supports - and organisations keep buying, because doing *something* feels safer than asking whether the something works.

'We keep crediting the captain for the tide.'

02 THE PREMISE

Leadership Undevelopment™ does the opposite. This is not a training course, and it is not a reading list. It is a live series of surgical interventions designed to strip away outdated models, management fads, and performative busywork - delivered in the room, with your leadership team, one belief system at a time.

It uses evidence-led provocation to challenge the deep-seated corporate conditioning that prioritises compliance over judgment. We don't teach leaders how to add value; **we show them how to stop subtracting it.**

WHAT WE CRITICALLY EXAMINE

One intervention per belief system. The current series:

01 Why we fall for nonsense - the evolutionary biases that make leaders easy prey

02 The pseudoscience of success - what the airport business book gets away with

03 The heroic leader myth - how much does the person at the top really matter?

04 The role of serendipity - how much of success is simply luck? And can we create more of it?

05 Corporate culture - does it exist? Can it be defined, measured or designed?

06 Power and powerlessness - the real roots of organisational dysfunction?

07 The Sinek effect - why soundbites sell and evidence doesn't

08 The hidden cost of efficiency - where the joy in work went

09 The dark arts of consulting - how to spot them, how to resist them

10 AI and the Turing Trap - why automating the nonsense makes it worse

HOW THIS STARTED

This is the case *Magnetic Nonsense: A Short History of Bullshit at Work and How to Make it Go Away* made - and the book started a conversation. Leaders, practitioners and academics who had reached the same conclusions independently began asking the same question: so what do we do about it? Leadership Undevelopment™ is what that collective is now developing together - not another book, but a live series of interventions built on subtraction rather than addition. This document is a starting point for that conversation, not a finished product.

03 THE EXPERIENCE

Facilitated, live, and deliberately uncomfortable in the right way. Each intervention takes one piece of received wisdom, holds it up against the peer-reviewed evidence, and asks the question nobody in the room has been allowed to ask: *is this actually true?* Run the series end to end, or start with the belief system doing your organisation the most damage.

We interrogate the claims together - including using AI to test the research organisations have been sold - then have the honest conversation about what to stop, what to keep, and what to rebuild on solid ground.

FORMAT OPTIONS

Deliberately flexible, and still being shaped with the collective. The current thinking:

01 THE PROVOCATION

A single intervention - one belief system, one session - for a leadership team or event. The lowest-commitment way to experience the format and gauge your organisation's appetite for it.

02 THE SERIES

The full programme, one intervention at a time, spaced over months so each unlearning has time to take hold before the next begins.

03 THE INTENSIVE

The strongest material compressed into one or two days - for teams that want the full reckoning in one sitting.

04 THE PILOT

Run early versions with your leadership team and help shape the content, the format and the delivery. Co-development, not consumption.

WHAT LEADERS LEAVE WITH

Less, on purpose. A shorter list of things they believe - and far more confidence in the things that survive. Sharper judgment about the next framework, guru or consultant that lands in their inbox. A repeatable method for asking ‘where's the evidence?’ without becoming the office cynic. And the recovered time and attention that performative busywork was quietly consuming.

WHO IT'S FOR

Senior leadership teams who suspect that much of what they've been taught doesn't hold up - and are curious enough to find out. Executives tired of initiative theatre. Boards and CPOs who would rather check than trust.

WHERE YOU COME IN

The concept is deliberately unfinished. The collective is shaping the content, the format and the delivery - and testing it with real leadership teams. If the premise resonates, there's a seat at the table: challenge it, sharpen it, pilot it, or simply tell us where it's wrong.

Your leaders don't need to learn anything new. They need to unlearn the corporate conditioning that makes them less effective.