

Katharine McLennan

Executive Coach and Leadership Advisor

Katharine McLennan is a highly accomplished professional with a diverse background spanning various industries. With over three decades of experience, she has worked with more than 50 organisations across different sectors. As a keynote speaker, thought leader, People & Culture executive, consultant, coach, and psychotherapist, Katharine brings a unique blend of expertise to her work.



In her role as a People & Culture Leader, Katharine has held prominent positions at renowned companies such as Commonwealth Bank of Australia and Cochlear, where she oversaw global operations. Additionally, she founded the Global Leadership Academy for QBE Insurance Group, further demonstrating her commitment to developing leadership capabilities.

Katharine's ability to integrate strategy and psychology sets her apart as a trusted advisor. She has collaborated with esteemed consulting firms like Booz & Co, Heidrick & Struggles, and PwC, providing impactful solutions to a diverse range of clients. Her visionary thinking and practical execution skills were honed during her tenure as Head of Operational Planning for the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

Academically, Katharine has achieved impressive credentials. She holds a BA with highest honors in Neuroscience and History from Duke University, an MA in Political Science from UNSW, and an MBA with highest honors from Stanford University. This blend of knowledge allows her to approach her work with a multidisciplinary perspective.

Beyond her professional achievements, Katharine is deeply concerned about the mental health of leaders. As a clinical psychotherapist, she brings a unique understanding of the challenges faced by individuals in high-pressure roles. This combination of expertise in both business and psychology enables her to provide holistic support to her clients.

Katharine's extensive experience, academic achievements, and commitment to mental health make her a highly sought-after professional in her field. Her ability to anticipate the future, translate visionary thinking into practical solutions, and integrate strategy with psychology sets her apart as a valuable asset to any organisation or individual seeking guidance and support.

Katharine McLennan Talks About

The Leader's Choice in an AI World

Beyond the Information Age with the arrival of AI... now what?

The Isolation World or The Inspiration Age

The way we led in the Information Age no longer applies. AI has arrived, posing a critical choice for leaders. Will we enter an Isolation Age, where technology deepens, divides and purpose fades?

Or can we create an Inspiration Age, where AI enhances human potential, fostering purpose-driven and connected organisations?

The skills that once defined leadership are no longer enough.

AI is reshaping every facet of business – automating tasks, optimising supply chains, personalising experiences, and predicting shifts with precision.

So what remains uniquely human? To lead toward the Inspiration Age, we must cultivate qualities beyond AI's reach.

- Imagination to reshape the future
- Intuition to sense new paths
- Integration to connect complex insights
- Integrity to ground actions in ethics and
- Inspiration to unify teams with purpose

Creating Brain Friendly Workplaces for the Imagination Age

Imagine a future where our workplaces are more human-centred and we can tap into our full cognitive potential – optimising our brain, our creativity and our potential. Why do our Industrial Age organisations threaten our serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, centred brain waves, and the clarity of our prefrontal cortex? What about our gut, our sleep, and our breath? It is time for a new workplace – but how?

AI meets Human Wisdom: Navigating Leadership in the Integration Age

The Information Age has passed. Knowledge and, therefore, strategy quickly become commodities that can easily be discovered and passed between competitors across the world. The precious combination of AI, human creativity, customer enthrallment, employee activism, and laser-like continuous improvement is an outcome of getting the right talent to love what they do, whom they work with, and where they work.

The Second Most Powerful and Paid Person is not the CFO, COO, CIO . . .

The Chief People Officer needs to be the right hand of the CEO and the second most paid and powerful person in the organisation. This position will also be the final stepping stone to the CEO position. The AI Age will force us to recognise that talent and culture are the two “assets” that cannot be copied. They have the potential to grow in value exponentially—if we know how to do it

and focus on it.

The Neuroscience of Fearless Leadership - overcoming anxiety at work

Fearless Leadership: How do we develop our brains to deal with the stress of the 2020s: A Neuroscientific Perspective to dealing with everyday workplace situations that can derail us. We reflect on a four-part model of how the brain gets so easily fooled that we're facing a death threat at work — and what we can do to retrain the mind. This includes an explanation of how the brain works in stress

Planning the Sydney Olympics: What it Taught me About Leadership & Culture

From 1996 to 2000, Katharine was head of Operational Integration Planning for the Sydney Olympics 2000. Over four years, she led in translating vision to strategy to implementation and operations. Her consulting and executive experience in strategy, talent, organisation, and leadership were built on these foundations. These insights are pragmatic and applicable today to any organisation.

Culture: Not a buzzword but the reason you can't wait to come to work

What exactly is "Culture" - a frequently used term that remains vague and unactionable for most executives - so how do we define it, measure it, and improve it in the most down-to-earth way so that we love coming to work? We can't wait to contribute our potential. An engagement score from a survey taken online won't cut it.

The Intuitive Edge: how executives can relearn what we've lost long ago

How to develop intuition—we are not born with it—we can develop it. We need it more than ever in a world that no longer makes sense. Our ancient peoples had it, and we lost it in the hours we worked and the technology that has fascinated us. We can relearn it if we partner well with artificial intelligence.

Quantum Physics Applied to Leadership - Harnessing the Possibility

Applying Quantum Physics to Leadership and Culture—Quantum physics offers extraordinary and understandable insights into how to think about today's workplaces. We reflect on abstract theories like the uncertainty theory, the observer effect, potential and possibility, and more. We turn them into everyday English and then apply them to the workplace.

Reclaiming Connection: The Lost Arts of Dialogue and Storytelling

Discovering two long-lost arts in our society and our organisation: dialogue and storytelling. Going past the "crucial conversation" mechanics and into the heart-heart meets mind-to-mind. It is high time we let AI do its thing and let us reclaim our ancient wisdom through the power of our word-and allow connection of our people

Vertical Leadership: Evolving from Intelligence to Wisdom in the age of AI

Vertical Leadership: Growing into IQ and then Emotional Intelligence, then Systemic Intelligence and then Wisdom. Why our Leadership Development programs are failing us and how we transform how we develop leaders in this AI Age. We see this in our leaders, and we now have a way to describe the strength of their leadership. Hint: it is not IQ.

Spiral Dynamics: Navigating the Shift from Chaos to Clarity

What worked for the Information Age will not work in the emerging AI Age. How does the philosophy of spiral dynamics help us see the next stage in societal and organizational evolution? What will be our role in this change? What will be our responsibility?

From Thought to Action: The Unseen Power of Mindset and Intention

We underestimate the impact on others and the results of the way we use our minds, the way we talk to ourselves, and the way we focus the “washing machine” of our thoughts. How can we quiet the mind, choose the thoughts we want to listen to and stay clear on the intention we want to have?

Breaking the Silence: Mental Health in the Workplace and My Own Story

Katharine provides an honest story of her journey in mental health, and how this story has inspired so many other executives who have faced the same challenges in all that they do. The rapid deterioration of mental health in the workplace inspired me to train into a clinical psychotherapist, weaving this capability into my coaching in strategy, execution, culture and team.

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