

# THE PINOCCHIO PRINCIPLE

BECOMING A REAL LEADER



HOW TO UNLEASH GENIUS  
IN YOURSELF AND THOSE YOU LEAD

DIANE BOLDEN

*The Pinocchio Principle:  
Becoming a Real Leader  
How to Unleash Genius in Yourself and Those You Lead*

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FIRST EDITION

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# *Intention*



May all who read this book be uplifted and inspired to reach their pure potential, to see through any illusion that may keep them feeling stuck or trapped, and to emancipate their true selves and give them expression in the world.

May this work allow people to find meaning and purpose in their lives and return them gently to themselves and the Spirit that animates us all.

May it serve as a bridge that allows its readers to bring more of who they are to what they do, and unleash their unique talents and other gifts into the communities, organizations, and circles of family and friends they are a part of – in ways that bring about the greatest good.

Let this book be a conduit of light, love and inspiration.

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# Preface

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I have always been amazed by the number of people who seem to think of work as something of a necessary evil — simply what must be done in order to earn a paycheck. For so many who toil through their workday, the primary goal is to make it to the weekend so they can really live. Going through the motions, working side by side with others whose hearts and minds they seldom truly connect with, they withhold the very parts of themselves that make them come alive.

For some it wasn't always this way. Many began their careers ignited with passion and optimism, only to find that their flames began to flicker as they encountered obstacle after obstacle that kept them from achieving what they believed would be success. Succumbing to the unwritten rules of the organizations and other environments they found themselves in, which suggested they needed to act or think in a certain way to get ahead, they may have slowly sold out on their dreams and relegated themselves to quiet complacency.

Many of us were not brought up to expect that work would be fun or gratifying in any way — nor should it be. That's why they call it work, we may have been told. As a result, we may have never really expected much from our careers or professional lives. And as the saying goes, life has a way

*When we don't enjoy what we do, we only nick the surface of our potential.*

*~ Dennis Wholey, American TV host, producer and author*

of living up to our expectations. In just about every corporation, nonprofit or other organization, you will find people in jobs that do not ignite their talents and passions. Some remain dormant in those jobs because they fear that if they pursue their hearts' desires, they won't be able to put food on their tables. Many don't realize that there might be a better alternative.

Most of us have learned how to turn ourselves on and off at will, in an effort to spare ourselves the pain of disappointment or frustration — or to maintain what we have come to believe is a professional demeanor. It is not uncommon to hear people say that they are very different at work than they are at home.

*The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his information and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence at whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he's always doing both.*

~ Lao Tzu,

*Chinese Taoist philosopher  
(604 BC–531 BC)*

Those golden parts of ourselves that we think we are protecting suffer when we do not let them breathe and interact in the very realms that provide us opportunities to learn more about who we are and what we are here to do in the world. We miss the chance to become a part of something greater than ourselves. And the organizations and communities we are a part of miss out on the unique contribution each of us has the potential to make.

We can no longer afford to fragment ourselves in this way, denying the fulfillment of our secret dreams and downplaying the insights we have about what we can do to make life better — for ourselves, and everyone around us. As more and more of us feel the pain that accompanies the denial of

our spirits, we start to realize that the time has come for us to bring the totality of who we are to what we do, no matter our vocation, title or role.



We are beginning to awaken to our unique calls to service, creativity and innovation. As we find ways to unleash our distinctive talents and passions at work, we will significantly increase the quality of our own lives, as well as the lives of everyone around us. Corporations that take steps to create environments that allow people to thrive will be met with rich rewards as ingenuity pours forth in ways that lead to increased profit and market share, as well as the creation of self-sustaining cultures that inspire people to succeed by doing what they do best.

**There are people among us who have the ability  
to snap us out of our trances —  
our states of quiet desperation —  
and help us bring more of who we truly are  
to everything that we do.**

**They can do this for others because they  
have done it for themselves.  
They are called *leaders*.**

You may be one of them. *The Pinocchio Principle* is dedicated to allowing you to play a bigger, more significant and meaningful part in the world by unearthing your own leadership in ways that bring about a greater good — and showing others the way to rise through your own example.

I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have enjoyed writing it.

*It is never too late to be  
what you might have been.*

~ George Eliot,  
*English novelist (1819-1880)*

*Chapter 1*

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*Unearthing Your  
True Leadership*

*"Come to the edge," he said.*

*"No," they said.*

*"Come to the edge," he said.*

*"No," they replied.*

*"Come to the edge," he said.*

*They came. He pushed them and they flew.*

*~ Guillaume Apollinaire,  
French poet, playwright and art critic (1880-1918)*

**O**ur foundations are shaking. Corporations are going under. People are losing their jobs and having difficulty finding new ones. Frustration is finding its way into every crevice of our daily lives. The ground that so many stand upon is crumbling.

It can be a scary time. But these changes can also be an exciting time of adventure and reinvention. For years, many of us have been living in ways that are inauthentic — doing jobs that are not a match for our true talents, striving to achieve pinnacles of power, prestige or wealth. And each step has increased the chance of us falling further away from our true selves and from what truly satisfies and nourishes us. As our foundation collapses, we are forced to ponder what is left, what truly has value, and what is actually genuine and meaningful in our lives. This dissolving façade, while painful, enables something more powerful to emerge and bring with it gifts that will benefit all of humanity. We are becoming real again.

With the dramatic changes the world is experiencing, perhaps now more than ever, it is time for each of us to recognize that we no longer need to rely on others to show us the way to genuine “success” — however it is to be defined. We are wired for it. It is in our blood, in our DNA, in our spirits. We have everything we need to get there. And to find ourselves, we must become engaged in the greatest adventure of our lives. In fact, we have already begun this adventure, and through it we are reaching a place of creative tension, where the plot thickens and we are sitting on the edge of our seats to see what will happen next. We are the stars of our own shows, the heroes of our own stories.

The changes for greater peace and true prosperity and the happiness we have been praying for are coming about. Lasting change must come from the inside out. Our world is made up of many nations, many communities, and at its core, many people. The truest change must start from within each of us. We can no longer wait for something or someone to rescue us, to solve all our problems, or to make right what is not working. The greatest thing a leader can do is help us unearth our own authentic leadership so that we, in turn, can do the same for others.

**True leadership is about bringing out the best in people. We can all be leaders. And we all must be. There is something greater ready to emerge. And it is within each of us. It is the treasure we have been dancing around in our own backyards.**

The old structures are crumbling to make way for the new. And as uncomfortable and challenging as it is, this falling away is an essential part of our own renewal and liberation from whatever no longer serves us, to everything that allows us to bring to fruition our greatest visions and dreams. Seeds cannot sprout from hardened ground. The ground must first become soft and fertile. And that is what is happening now. The old protection mechanisms we relied upon may have kept away the things we feared, but they also kept us from our greatest selves. In the end, we will realize we never really needed that protection anyway. We are much stronger than we thought we were. And now is the time to truly experience that strength, that fortitude, that determination, and that grace.

In many ways our journeys are a lot like that of the legendary story of Pinocchio, a puppet who longs to become real. Like Pinocchio, at our core we too have a burning desire to become real, to bring into creation the greatness that resides somewhere within us. We are born with these impulses — to give form to our distinctive blends of talent, energy, passion and style. We come into the world equipped with far more than we are immediately able to utilize or even comprehend. And though these rich parts of ourselves are always there, they have a way of becoming latent over time. There are people among us who have found ways to tap that well, drawing forth bits of the magic we are all capable of. These are the people we love to watch and be around — who do what they do so well that it is an art. As they tap their inner reserves and unleash their own greatness, they inspire each of us to do the same. In this way, they are true leaders.

In Walt Disney's rendition of *Pinocchio*<sup>1</sup>, the puppet encounters a Blue Fairy who tells him, "When you prove yourself

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<sup>1</sup>*Pinocchio* is a 1940 American animated film produced by Walt Disney, and based on the story *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi, a Florentine children's author.

to be brave, truthful, and unselfish, Pinocchio, then you will become a real boy.” One could imagine what Pinocchio might have been thinking upon hearing these words. What are these things this fairy speaks of? How do I get them? What must I do? How long will it take? Where do I start? With the promise of a dream fulfilled, he endeavors to do whatever is necessary. And the odyssey begins. The twists and turns it takes are trials we can all relate to, and challenges that I believe are a part of our human experience.

The qualities that the Blue Fairy encourages Pinocchio to demonstrate are not things he must acquire. They are attributes he already possesses. But in order to activate them, he must endure a series of events that allow him to realize these qualities are there and to exercise them accordingly. In order to return to himself — his true self — Pinocchio must endure a journey of trials and tribulations that first lure him away from himself. And the same kind of drama seems to unfold in one way or another for each of us.

*So, what does Pinocchio have to do with leadership?*

Every one of us has within us an animating genius, which yearns to take different forms depending on who we are. Real leaders could be defined as those whose animating genius longs to create something for the greatest good, which is ultimately accomplished for, with and through others. It has a keen ability to look around, see possibilities and utilize resources in a way that brings something into existence that benefits others, whether that is a family, a community, a non-profit organization, a corporation, or the world at large. To accomplish this, leaders have the distinct charge of working with others in a way that brings out their best — that allows those we can impact to find the animating genius within them and apply it in service of accomplishing a common goal.

Many of us associate the primary meaning of “to lead” as directing something on a given course or being in charge, and this can be one of the functions of leadership. But the essence

of leadership is much more than this. The Merriam Webster Dictionary has the following entry as the first definition listed for the word “lead”: “a: to guide on a way especially by going in advance.” If one of the essential functions of a leader is to bring out the best in others, this definition would suggest that to do this, leaders must first bring out the best in themselves. This, in and of itself, is the very same odyssey our friend Pinocchio finds himself on: to discover and liberate within himself what is real—divinely inspired genius—and to courageously apply it in a way that is truthful and unselfish.

*The Pinocchio Principle* was written as a roadmap to help you bring to fruition your greatest dreams and visions and better navigate through the perils and possibilities along the way. Reading it will help you better differentiate what is true within yourself from the conditioning that would have you acting in ways that are inauthentic and self-defeating. You will learn methods for gaining clarity on your unique call to leadership and leveraging your experiences to prepare for something bigger. Navigational tools explored within the book will help you determine the extent to which you are on or off course and the direction you need to take next on your journey to becoming a real leader.

As you begin to recognize and prevent assumptions and beliefs that keep you from your greatest work, you will learn to utilize ego in service to spirit. With this vital partnership, the elusive promises of Pleasure Island that divert you from your truest fulfillment are easier to recognize and work through. And facing your greatest fears in the belly of the whale becomes a transformational experience that will reunite you with your own determination, courage and heroism. In the end, you will rediscover the power that lies within us all to create and live our dreams. You will also find ways to return to the quiet places within yourself that nurture and inform your greatest visions.

*What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.*

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson,  
American philosopher,  
lecturer, essayist and  
poet (1803-1882)

The ultimate odyssey is always that of self-discovery. Every challenge, every opportunity gives us a chance to learn more about who we really are and to utilize our inherent gifts in service to something greater than ourselves. When we give ourselves completely to the journey and find meaning in each step along the way, we will truly live. And through our example and the unique contributions we all have to make in the world, we will truly lead.

## **The Story of Pinocchio**

To fully explore the analogy of Pinocchio's odyssey to what real leaders face, we would do well to briefly recount his story. There are at least two versions of the story of Pinocchio out there — one, the original creation by Carlo Collodi, and another, Walt Disney's popularized version. Though each version has differentiating characteristics, at their core they are both about a puppet who is much more than wood and strings, and the adventures he encounters on his journey to become real. To simplify things, and since most people are more familiar with the latter version, this is the one we will explore in greater detail now, though we will make reference to Collodi's original version in upcoming chapters.

The story opens with Geppetto, a lonely clock and toy maker, who creates Pinocchio in an effort to earn some money as a puppeteer. Upon completing his creation, the lonely Geppetto dreams of how wonderful it would be if Pinocchio were a real boy. That evening, the Blue Fairy appears and speaks to the puppet, explaining that though his strings have suddenly disappeared, the true test for Pinocchio in becoming a real boy is to show that he is "brave, truthful, and unselfish, and can choose between right and wrong." She appoints Jiminy Cricket with the charge of teaching him right and wrong, and instructs Pinocchio to listen to Jiminy as the voice of his conscience.

Geppetto, who awakens the next day delighted to see that his wish has been granted, sends Pinocchio to school to "learn things and get smart," so he can be a real boy. On his way

to school, Pinocchio meets J. Worthington Foulfellow, a cunning fox, and Gideon, a clever alley cat, both who see in Pinocchio an opportunity to become rich. The two of them convince dear Pinocchio that the theater is much easier and more fun than school. Despite Jiminy's protests, Pinocchio trusts them and happily follows along singing, "Hey, diddley dee, an actor's life for me."

Pinocchio enjoys brief success as a stage performer, and then soon finds himself trapped in a small cage, where he regrets his actions and longs to see Jiminy and Geppetto. After concerted effort, Jiminy finds Pinocchio, and the Blue Fairy appears once again. In response to her inquiries, Pinocchio invents a long story about having been kidnapped by two monsters and suddenly experiences his nose beginning to grow. As he elaborates on his story, his nose becomes a long branch that sprouts leaves. The Blue Fairy explains to Pinocchio that he is telling a lie "as plain as the nose on his face is growing." Upon waving her magic wand, Pinocchio's nose returns to its original size and form, and the Fairy explains that this is the last time she can help him.

On his way home, Pinocchio again meets the fox and cat who convince Pinocchio that he needs a vacation for the sake of his health. They hand him over to a wicked coachman who "collects stupid little boys who play hooky from school," and takes them to Pleasure Island, from which they never return — at least as boys. While there, Pinocchio makes friends with a tough boy named Lampwick, who explains they can fight and wreck things, and eat all the cake, pie, and ice cream they want. They destroy things, set things on fire, smoke cigars, play cards and chew tobacco. "Being bad is lots of fun!" Pinocchio proclaims. Jiminy finds him there, and scolds, "How do you ever expect to become a real boy?" Even so, Pinocchio refuses to leave.

Jiminy then wanders to a place where he sees a coachman loading a boat with boys who have turned into donkeys, whipping them as they slowly file on board. Horrified, Jiminy returns to Pinocchio to find that his friend has grown ears and a tail, beginning the transformation into a jackass. Jiminy gets him to shore, and they swim for the mainland. They return to



Geppetto's house to find it empty. A dove drops a note at their feet that explains that Geppetto has been swallowed by Monstro the Whale, and is in the whale's stomach at the bottom of the sea.

Pinocchio decides to save Geppetto, despite Jiminy's proclamation that Monstro is "a whale of a whale," and other warnings of eminent danger. They swim until they see Monstro, and maneuver themselves into his mouth. Once they find Geppetto inside the whale's body, they get busy figuring out how to escape. The two of them set a fire inside the whale causing him to sneeze, enabling them to make their getaway. Upon seeing Geppetto and Pinocchio as they swim to shore, the whale is outraged and smashes their raft into splinters with his tail, knocking Geppetto unconscious. Pinocchio rescues his father and tries to divert the whale while Geppetto is carried safely to shore by a big wave. Pinocchio gets trapped under some rocks, but is finally washed ashore, half drowned.

Geppetto carries Pinocchio home and puts him to bed. He sees Pinocchio's donkey ears and thinks of how brave he was. Suddenly, the room turns blue, and the Fairy appears to address Pinocchio. "Pinocchio, you have been brave, truthful, and unselfish," she tells him. He sits up and opens his eyes saying, "Father, I'm alive!" Upon examining his hands, he says "And I'm real! A real boy!" Geppetto and Pinocchio hug. On Jiminy's breast appears a badge that says "official conscience," and when the cricket goes to thank the fairy, all he sees is a brilliant star winking at him. The scene closes with Jiminy singing, "When you wish upon a star, your dream comes true."

Each character and event in Pinocchio's story holds symbolic meaning for real leaders who are determined to unearth their genius and apply it in ways that benefit others. Some of you may be only beginning your journey, recognizing the call to lead, or the persistent, playful urge to create something or embark upon an adventure to new, unfamiliar territory. Others are already well onto your journeys, pursuing a dream, heading up an organization or a team, leading a charge, or creating something that will change your family, your community, or your world for the better. It is not always an easy path. Obstacles abound. And

some of them are not visible to the naked eye. Yet it is a blessed one, filled with excitement, gratification, and promise.

Are you ready to take a look at the leader's odyssey, using Pinocchio as our mascot and visionary hero? If so, let's begin where all great things begin — in the realm of desire.