

RIP OFF YOUR BLINDFOLD

SEE HOW SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE SEE

Dr. Dele Ola

The Prowezz Company

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Seeing Clearly Is Not What You Might Think It Is

My family had an unexpected experience in December 2019. We had planned to spend a few days shopping in Fargo, North Dakota, before the new year. It was in the dead cold of winter, the day after Boxing Day, that we set out on the highway for our three-and-a-half-hour journey south. This wasn't a new adventure for us as we had embarked on the same trip at the same time of year many years in a row. The weather was fair in Winnipeg, only about -5°C with a relatively cloudless sky. There was, however, a bit of windchill caused by wind gusts somewhere around 35 km/hour, and a few snowflakes were drifting across the highway as a result. Nevertheless, it was not weather we had not experienced many times before. We were so comfortable with the conditions that we didn't even bother to check the weather forecast for Fargo. That was our fatal error.

Shortly after crossing the Canada-US border at Emerson, we saw a thick cloud ahead. We didn't think it was anything serious until we drove right into it. It was the densest fog I had

ever seen in my entire life. I had seen thick fog in the city in the past, which always made it difficult to drive with the low visibility, but all the fog I'd experienced before couldn't compare to this time. Within about ten minutes, we were right in the middle of the fog with zero visibility. It became difficult to keep going, yet turning back was also hard. The situation was complicated by snowdrifts and crosswinds. We were in the middle of both a dense fog and a snowstorm. Driving became arduous and terrifying. Parking on the shoulder to wait for the weather to clear out would also have been a bad option as other vehicles could run into us. So, there we were, driving with zero visibility and not knowing how long the weather would last. Even taking an offramp was a risk as there were heavy piles of snow on the roads branching off the highway. What were we to do?

The lack of an ability to see clearly slowed our journey. Progress was difficult without visibility. We lost speed. We were in danger. Would we make it to Fargo? We were on the road for much longer than needed, risking our lives and losing our excitement of the road trip while trying to just make it to Fargo alive. In the end, we decided to keep driving, but slowly, despite the extreme weather conditions. It took many additional hours of risk and guesswork to push through until we arrived in Fargo. The highway was eventually closed shortly after we arrived.

My family was fortunate to have reached our destination in the soupy fog, but we knew many others did not. While still on the road, we came across many vehicles already in the ditch. We saw lots of accidents on the way, with some vehicles

even turned on their sides and others stuck in the snow drifts. The weather had dealt a blow to many truck drivers too, whose trucks had also rolled over. What turned out to be a three-day snowstorm wreaked havoc over the city. Our family was stranded in our hotel room for days as the whole city of Fargo was locked down due to the heavy snowstorm and foggy weather. What should have been a day trip turned into an extended stay in a dreary hotel room.

Have you ever tried to drive in heavy fog? Well, most people do—every day. A vast number of the world's almost eight billion people, perhaps 80 to 90 percent, drive through an internal fog every day as if they're blindfolded. After years of observation, dissection, and analysis, I've determined that this blindfold is the reason we have a serious abuse of authority and power in corporations and politics. It is why society does not function optimally, the reason there is dysfunctional leadership at all levels. Many people are given authority over others through power, money, or deception but cannot see the true essence of the very authority they have been given. The dense fog of the inner blindfold they wear obscures their vision. They make decisions without the discipline of clear-sightedness. This blindfold is even responsible for the lack of success many people experience in their personal and professional lives. Most people just keep driving on, day after day, without a full view of the road or the landscape around them. They coast on in mental obscurity, making personal and business decisions without clear-sightedness. What a misadventure!

Over many years, I've watched people go through their careers and personal lives with such difficulty—and I've come

to see why. We tend to see the world with our *eyesight*, seeing it only through the lens of our personal experience, interpreting life through the spyglass of our limited understanding and allowing our individual interpretations to becloud our judgment. Many people find it hard—if not impossible—to see beyond what they can see. It's like there's a kind of blindfold that covers most people's eyes. In fact, I'm quite sure most people aren't even aware they're wearing a blindfold, even the smartest and most educated of us.

When you look at the world, what do you see? Hmm ... let me ask that question more correctly. When you look at the world, *how* do you see? What you see is a function of your *eyesight*, whereas how you see is a function of your *insight*. Going through life without clear-sightedness of the mind is like driving through the fog. Leading people without clear-sightedness is like leading a tribe through a zero-visibility

What you see is a function of your eyesight, whereas how you see is a function of your insight.

snowstorm. Running a business, an organization, a family, or society without clear-sightedness is like navigating through

pea-soup fog with no option of stopping, pulling over, or changing direction. It amazes me every time I see people just continue driving ahead at full speed, deeper and deeper into the fog, even though they cannot see clearly. Somehow, they don't seem to feel the danger, the risk, as they zoom through their fog with no thought for the safety of themselves or others. What a catastrophe!

Do you feel like you lack complete clarity when making decisions at work, in your business, at home, or in your personal affairs? Does it seem like you are coasting onward but sometimes guessing your way through major life experiences? Do you feel like you do not always have the answer? You are not alone. Most of us do not always have the answer. Yet it is still our responsibility to see clearly to avoid major pitfalls, for ourselves and others.

Again, *what* we see outwardly is a function of our eyes. It's called eyesight. *How* we see though is a function of the eyes of our minds. It's called insight. We must start seeing clearly through the lens of our minds. We must acquire the clear-sightedness needed for success in various aspects of our lives. Successful people, leaders, those who make great strides in their lives, those who leave a mark in the world and become notable, those who have personal fulfillment, and those who change the world for the better see with their insight rather than their eyesight. The mind sees much more, and much farther, than the eyes can see. You can see the world clearly through your mind without eyesight, but you cannot see the world clearly through your eyes without insight. Anyone who does not see clearly with their mind is driving through fog.

What do I mean by that? The concept is still vague, I know. Let me explain with a story that shows that it is not *what* people see that holds them back, it is *how* they see.

Let's discuss Erik Weihenmayer, a renowned mountain climber, adventurer, and speaker.¹ Erik was diagnosed with retinoschisis as a child and started losing his physical vision in his early teenage years, but he rejected the idea of being

sidelined because of physical blindness. So, as a wrestler in high school, he made it to the National Junior Freestyle Wrestling Championship in Iowa, representing his home state of Connecticut.

Thereafter, Erik graduated with a double major in English and communications from Boston College and became a middle-school teacher and wrestling coach at Phoenix Country Day School. As the years passed, he became passionate about rock climbing, having discovered his natural ability to tactically scan rocks with his hands and feet for a hold. In 1995, he began a quest to conquer the world's most formidable mountains after reaching the highest point in North America: Denali, as it is known as in the native Inuit language. Erik eventually became the first physically blind person to conquer Mount Everest, a feat he achieved on May 25, 2001, and the details of which were published in his honor in a *Time Magazine* cover story. He later conquered the Seven Summits—the highest point on every continent—and climbed Puncak Jaya (Glorious Peak), or Carstensz Pyramid, on the island of Papua New Guinea. With his indefatigable spirit of adventure, Erik, in 2014, even kayaked the entire 277 miles of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon.

The story of Erik Weihenmayer teaches us that one's true experiences are not so much about what they can see with their eyesight but about how much they can see with their insight. Blindness is not only defined as having less than 10 percent normal vision in the more efficient physical eye, but it is also defined as the inability to discern or judge, having no regard for rational discrimination, guidance, or restriction, and doing

things without the knowledge of facts that could serve as guidance or cause bias.² Therefore, the true definition of blindness is a lack of insight, perception, or judgment. Humankind's greatest flaw is to be possessed of physical sight but lack clear-sightedness of the mind, to be devoid of the ability to see the world clearly through a lens of sound principles and intuitive understanding. We must become open-minded, learn compassion, show empathy, and determine to make a difference.

I wrote this book to help you learn how successful people see. I aim to help remove the barriers to clear-sightedness, the dense fog that prevents people from effectively leading, running successful businesses, accomplishing great things, reaching personal goals, and fulfilling their personal visions. I intend to ignite your curiosity and provoke you to use clear-sightedness in life and leadership.

So throughout, I'll use thought-provoking personal stories, true stories from research, and fictional stories to high-

Humankind's greatest flaw is to be possessed of physical sight but lack clear-sightedness of the mind, to be devoid of the ability to see the world clearly through a lens of sound principles and intuitive understanding.

light the central message of this book: how to see the world clearly through a new lens. Each chapter is a piece of literature that may stand alone yet is interconnected to the other chapters in principle. I hope you enjoy the stories while picking up invaluable lessons as you navigate each chapter. Let us begin the journey.

About the Author

Dr. Dele Ola is an award-winning author, an accomplished professional engineer, and a change leader with a profound level of experience in corporate circles and a strong voice in the leadership development community. He started his career with Accenture, a global Fortune-500 company, before transitioning into the Canadian polytechnic applied research system.



Dr. Ola is the director of the Technology Access Centre for Aerospace and Manufacturing at Red River College Polytechnic, serving as a major contributor to applied research leadership. He earned his Doctor of Philosophy in mechanical engineering from the University of Manitoba. He has held many leadership positions and served on the board of several prominent organizations.

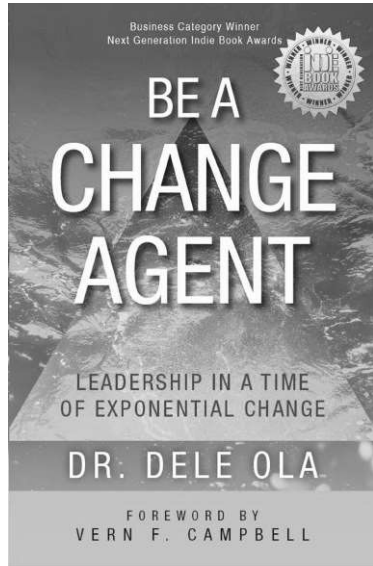
Dr. Ola's book, *Be A Change Agent: Leadership in a Time of Exponential Change*, won the business category of the 2021 Next Generation Indie Book Awards and has a growing readership around the world. His second successful book, *Pursuit of Personal Leadership: Practical Principles of Personal Achievement*, was released in February 2022.

Dr. Ola is passionate about corporate leadership, personal growth, skills development, and technological innovation. An active leader in innovation and applied research, Dr. Ola continues to lead change in his work and the world. His vision is to develop change agents to challenge the status quo, take charge of the future, and evolve into what they are meant to be in life.

About Dr. Dele Ola's Award-Winning *Be a Change Agent*

Are you painfully aware of the mismatch between outdated approaches and our rapidly evolving world? Dr. Dele Ola looks unflinchingly at the problem of resisting change and offers a wealth of expert guidance on how to embrace positive growth and foster development.

Be A Change Agent is a comprehensive examination of change leadership: the need for it, the qualities of change leaders, and the importance of having great change teams. Dr. Ola first guides the



reader through stories of fearless leaders and explores the Veritas qualities that made them successful. Then he discusses building collaborative teams that work well and have the independence to innovate without overt bureaucratic control. Dr. Ola's years working with high-performance teams helped him develop an insightful tool for looking at three spectrums that cause tension in teams:

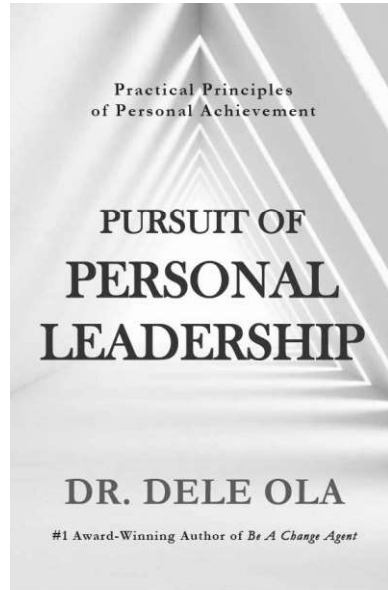
- The Systems Spectrum-Structure versus influence
- The Reaction Spectrum-Reflection versus action
- The Perspective Spectrum-Reality versus idealism

And the Tensions Equalizer tool will change how you view the balance of members in your team. Finally, the book culminates in a discussion of the future of work, learning, enterprise, and innovation.

Complete with insightful questionnaires and reflection questions, *Be A Change Agent* offers a practical toolkit for both emerging change agents and seasoned influencers to evaluate their leadership qualities and become the very best they can be.

About Dr. Dele Ola’s Pursuit of Personal Leadership

The definition of success and personal achievement is not universal as success comes in different shapes and sizes and at different life stages for everyone. For those looking at where they are and where they want to be and wondering how to get there, do not look any further. Using real-life examples, Dr. Dele Ola presents proven, practicable, and timeless principles to guide you on your journey to great achievements, a journey he calls, “the pursuit of personal leadership.”



Dr. Ola has learned that you can only attract great achievements and make great impacts through a process of personal change and imbibing the culture and discipline of successful people. The world must make room for someone who has discovered, and has the desire and determination, to develop and exploit their gifts, talents, and abilities to establish themselves in what they have determined to be their exact purpose and calling in life.

In *Pursuit of Personal Leadership*, Dr. Ola highlights a missing piece in leadership literature, which is the discovery of one’s personal identity. He explains the need for a personal blueprint for success and how to develop your blueprint. Learn how to cultivate the necessary personal leadership attitudes, exploit your creativity, discover and establish your life’s

work, explore the world of possibilities, and understand the five seasons of personal leadership every successful person experiences.

Most importantly, all successful agents of change should understand and embrace the responsibilities of role modeling success and leaving a legacy.