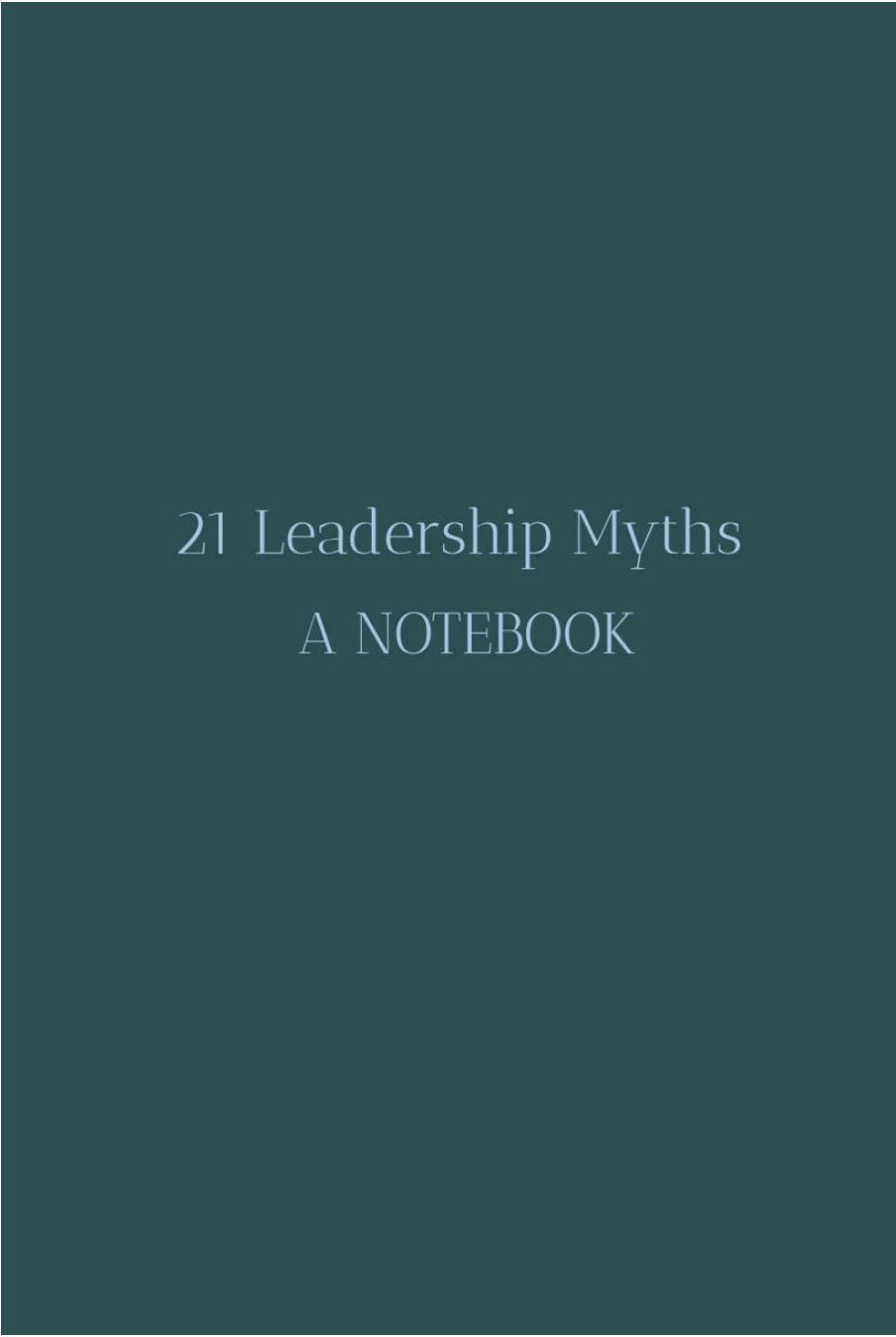


A dark teal, solid-colored rectangular area representing a book cover. Centered on this area is the title '21 Leadership Myths' in a large, white, serif font. Below it, the subtitle 'A NOTEBOOK' is written in a smaller, white, all-caps serif font.

21 Leadership Myths

A NOTEBOOK

© 2025 Julia Warner, Karin Wilhelm & Martina Pfister-Kraxner

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THIS
NOTEBOOK
BELONGS
TO:

About the Authors

Meet the three women behind this book:



Karin Wilhelm

Karin's career spans more than 40 years, from leading call center and customer service operations with up to 300 team members for major American multinationals to serving on the DHL leadership team in Brussels, where she guided the integration of customer service employees from three business units across Europe following Deutsche Post's acquisition.

Since 2006, she has worked internationally as a consultant, trainer, and interim manager, supporting organizations in developing their leadership talent.

A firm believer that clarity is the cornerstone of effective leadership, Karin continues to inspire others with her commitment to building leaders who thrive.

"Vision without execution is hallucination."

Henry Ford



Dr. Martina
Pfister-Kraxner

With more than a decade of experience as an independent leadership coach and trainer, Martina brings expertise in executive coaching, team development, and leadership growth. Earlier in her career, she held senior HR leadership roles at Danone, Samsung Electronics, and T-Mobile International, where she led leadership development and organizational transformation across several European countries.

Holding advanced degrees in Work and Organizational Psychology and certifications in Business, Hypno-systemic, and Neuro-somatic Coaching, she combines academic insight with practical experience. Today, Martina focuses on empowering leaders, fostering personal growth, and strengthening team dynamics.

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."

John F. Kennedy



Julia Warner
BSc, MAEd

Julia took on her first leadership role at 31, successfully building the teaching department of a newly founded language institute in Vienna. She then established her own in-company language training and coaching business before moving into academia, where, in cooperation with the British Council and Oxford University's Department of Education, she supported internationalization projects in higher education across Europe and Latin America.

Moving then into systemic coaching and mediation, she embraced conflict management as a powerful tool for personal and professional development — an insight that shaped her path into leadership training, where she designs and facilitates programs in which conflict resilience and confident communication play a central role.

“You can’t do anything brave if you’re wearing the straitjacket of what will people think.”

Brené Brown

You can find us all on LinkedIn; feel free to connect!

How to Use This Book

A short guide to make the most out of your journey with this notebook.

This book is built around 21 myths about leadership that we believe every manager should know. Each is based on real situations we've encountered in our work as trainers and coaches with leaders at all levels. We wanted to shed light on these common misconceptions to support managers who strive to lead their people with greater awareness and impact.

Each chapter explores one myth, beginning with a brief anecdote from real workplace experience that highlights the gap between illusion and reality. It concludes with insights into the underlying dynamics followed by practical guidance on what good leadership requires in this situation.

To help turn insight into action, each chapter ends with five reflection questions connected to the lesson in the anecdote. Their purpose is to encourage you to look at your own experience from different perspectives. These questions are gentle prompts — designed to spark awareness, challenge assumptions, and reveal how the insights might apply to your own leadership. You may reflect on all of them, or focus on the few that resonate most with you.

We've also included space for notes, so this book can double as a journal — a place to jot down ideas, capture examples from your daily work, or outline steps you want to take toward change.

And there's no single best way to use it: you can read it cover to cover or dip into the chapters that speak most to what you may currently be confronted with. What matters is taking the time to pause, reflect, and apply what is valuable to you and will work in your circumstances — turning insight into action.

Growing as a leader is a deeply rewarding journey — not only professionally, but personally as well.

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Myth #2: Leaders Should Have All The Answers

Illusion:

Susanne's expertise is what got her promoted to team lead. Countless hours of studying, research, and seeking information gave her an air of authority when it came to solving problems in the team. Those in her environment admired her ability to provide answers to even the most challenging of situations, and came to rely on her as a source of knowledge and wisdom.

Reality:

More and more, Susanne's team members stopped contributing at the regular weekly meetings. Discussions turned into monologues with Susanne giving lengthy lectures. Tasks were carried out as instructed, but less initiative and engagement were being shown. If a problem popped up, the team waited for Susanne to tell them what to do.

Since taking over the team, Susanne has been reluctant to take any time off. She is worried that the team can't function without her, and in the meantime, she's right.

What's going on:

In her new role, Susanne is afraid of appearing incompetent and, therefore, weak in the eyes of her team. She feels a rigid weight upon her shoulders, and she believes if she doesn't always have all the answers, the team and her colleagues will lose their confidence in her.

The pressure to maintain a certain image or reputation of expertise drives her towards an autocratic type of leadership style, where decision-making and problem-solving are centralized in her hands.

What now?

- **Recognize** that effective leadership involves leveraging the collective intelligence and expertise of your team.
- **Encourage** a culture of shared decision-making to enable team members to actively participate in a combined effort.

- **Empower** employees to take over responsibility for their own tasks.
- **Understand** that a leader is responsible for creating an environment where the work can be done, not doing the work themselves.

Elon Musk said: "I didn't go to Harvard, but the people who work for me did."

Reflection Questions

Question #1: Self-awareness

On a scale of 0–10, to what extent do I nurture my own need to feel indispensable by solving problems my team could handle themselves? (0 = not at all, 10 = very much). What would help me move lower on the scale?

Question #2: Observation

What examples have I witnessed when a leader (including myself) unintentionally discouraged initiative by always providing the answer. What happened as a result?

Question #3: Impact

How can I nurture my team's confidence, creativity, and ownership in solving problems on their own, while still providing support and guidance?

Question #4: Perspective

If I stepped into the shoes of my peers, my team, or my boss, what would they say about how I delegate and hand over responsibility?

Question #5: Action

What is one concrete way I can empower my team this week to make decisions, contribute ideas, or take responsibility—perhaps even by using the powerful phrase: “I don’t know. What do you think?”

date _____

N O T E

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NOTE

date _____

A large grid of dots for note-taking, consisting of 30 columns and 40 rows of small, light gray dots.

Myth #2: Leaders Should Have All The Answers