

Certainty: How Great Bosses Can Change Minds and Drive Innovation

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*To help leaders cultivate certainty and growth mindsets in their organizations, the business guide *Certainty* shows how scientific and psychological insights can be leveraged toward success.*

Mike Mears's science-minded leadership guide *Certainty* is about workplace innovation via surpassing the autobrain's impulse toward safety.

Knowing that people still have Stone Age brains that operate on survival instincts, this book addresses common psychological barriers in the workplace to foster understanding about how human nature impacts people's output in their organizations. The brain is programmed to resist change, it notes, but employees will still accept change so long as it's carried out in a way that does not trigger uncertainty. Its broad sections cover topics like the evolutionary underpinnings of the brain, the way the mind works, and problem-solving. Its chapters home in on particular concepts with clarity—for example, showing how habits beat platitudes because habits are an efficient use of brain energy.

Suggestions for dispelling uncertainty, fear, and resistance to change in the the workplace are shared with an eye toward practicality. There are also suggestions for saving time, giving feedback, and empowering one's employees. Tools including storytelling, rewards, bonding, and visual prompts are introduced in turn to help leaders cultivate certainty and a growth mindset in their organizations, inspiring loyalty, trust, and a sense of fulfillment in their teams.

The book's guidance aims to maximize creativity and productivity and to engineer organizational change. Its arguments are grounded in neuroscience, psychology, and career stories at workplaces including General Electric and the Central Intelligence Agency. An anecdote about a union leader's speech at GE CEO Jack Welch's retirement dinner is used to illustrate differing leadership philosophies. And concepts like inclusion are made tangible via stories, such as how Toyota boosted its productivity by shifting assembly lines to focus on team production. Teams became responsible for particular processes, ensuring that each worker's mind was being engaged.

The prose is sophisticated yet clear, distilling academic insights into approachable terms. It is sometimes clouded by jargon but is engaging on the whole thanks to its creative turns of phrase: "Mistrust is baked into the human-nature cake," it intones. And its conclusion, about leaving a legacy, reemphasizes how its tools may be used to improve organizations in a lasting manner. Its story of a leadership academy graduate's career successes models how its guidance can bring out the best in people and companies.

Filled with psychological insights, the perspicacious leadership guide *Certainty* is about harnessing human nature to win people over and foster innovation.

JOSEPH S. PETE (February 1, 2025)

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