THE VP EDIT

ISSUE 4

LEADERSHIP IN LIFE



Paula shares her EDIT of inspiring reads, listens, experiences, and learnings for the Autmun season, ideas designed to expand our thinking, replenish our energy, and inspire a more human approach to leadership and life.

VP

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL


"But who, exactly, is the system."
- Paula Leach -
VANTAGE POINTS
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A LETTER TO YOU, THE LEADER

As 2026 draws towards its close, I've been reflecting on what this year has taught me about leading well.

I have the enormous privilege of working closely with extraordinary leaders, sharing in their brilliance and vulnerability, their ambitions and uncertainties, and the challenges and opportunities that come with leading something of consequence. These conversations continually deepen my understanding of leadership, and have prompted me to think about what might be worth carrying intentionally into 2027.

Not necessarily another set of resolutions, but a moment to consider how we might lead with greater courage, clarity, connection and energy. I have three invitations for you.

Be brave about what really matters

One of the things I notice in organisations is just how much time and energy can be consumed by activities that contribute surprisingly little to what we are actually trying to achieve. Meetings, processes and established expectations that we inherit, rarely question, sometimes complain about, and yet continue to perpetuate.

We attribute these things to "the system", as though it exists independently of us and cannot be changed. But who, exactly, is the system?

If you hold a position of significant leadership, I would encourage you to challenge that assumption. Respectfully and thoughtfully, but with courage. Question what genuinely creates value and what does not. Be prepared to let go of things that no longer serve their purpose, even when they are familiar or comfortable.

There is enormous agency in choosing where we direct our attention and energy. Be brave enough to use it in service of what really matters, what creates momentum and what enables people and organisations to thrive.

Re-contract for the year ahead

We can so easily assume that the focus and expectations of one year carry forward into the next, particularly when our job title and responsibilities remain unchanged. But what is a job, really, if not the opportunity and responsibility to lead something of significance through a period of time towards a meaningful outcome?

So, as you contemplate 2027, what are you truly here to achieve? What would extraordinary look like this time next year? And with whom do you need to have a conversation to ensure that your intentions and expectations are genuinely aligned?

I would encourage you to re-contract with yourself, your boss, your stakeholders and your team. Not simply through objective setting, but through meaningful dialogue about purpose, priorities, contribution and what success will actually look and feel like.

In a world where certainty is increasingly elusive, clarity of intention becomes even more valuable. It helps us choose where to expend our energy, what we are prepared to say no to, and how to sustain ourselves rather than become depleted.

Make genuine connection central to your leadership

I sometimes wonder whether, in our determination to deliver outcomes, we have allowed relationships to become overly transactional. We connect because we need something, arrange conversations around decisions to be made, and let busy schedules crowd out the interactions that enrich our thinking and our lives.

Yet relationships are so much more than a means to an end. Trust, understanding, curiosity and genuine dialogue are fundamental to how we live and work well together. They are also some of the richest sources of energy available to us.

Think about the conversations that leave you feeling stimulated, the moments when someone offers a perspective you hadn't considered, the joy of exchanging ideas, learning something new, laughing together or simply feeling seen and heard. How might you make more room for these experiences in 2027? Not once the important work is done, but as an essential part of the important work itself.

Protect time for connection. Be curious about people. Cultivate relationships without always needing an immediate outcome.

And one final thought…

Intentionality is not something we establish in January and hope will sustain itself for twelve months. Senior leadership can be demanding and, at times, lonely. We are expected to bring clarity, judgement and perspective to others, often without creating enough space to develop those qualities within ourselves.

One of the most valuable investments a leader can make is in a trusted thinking partner: someone outside the immediate demands of the organisation who offers confidential space to explore, challenge, question and discover, and who helps us remain accountable to our intentions. At executive level, that partnership rarely happens by accident.

Whatever form it takes for you, create that space deliberately.

The real opportunity is not simply to begin 2027 with good intentions, but to build the conversations, practices and relationships that make them part of how you lead, every day.

As this year draws to a close, I wish you precious time to reflect, celebrate what has been, consider what might be, and imagine the difference you want to make. And perhaps, above all, the courage to lead in a way that feels both deeply purposeful and authentically your own.

With my very best wishes,



WHAT AM I READING ?

Rapid Reculturing | Alex Bailey and Kerri O'Neill



There are many books exploring organisational culture and the importance of how we lead human systems well. In Rapid Reculturing, as a valuable extention of this field of work, Alex and Kerri draw on their practical experience inside organisations to go beyond describing the challenges, offering tangible mechanisms for leaders who are ready to rise to them.

I was particularly drawn to the chapter on energy, an aspect of leadership which I believe holds enormous untapped potential. Their exploration of emotional, cognitive and spiritual energy, alongside Professor Pierre Casse's concept of vitality as something far greater than physical health, really resonated with me.

Understanding and consciously working with our own energy offers leaders a powerful source of personal agency, with significant implications for collective productivity, collaboration and performance. A practical and stimulating read for anyone serious about rehumanising the workplace.

The Chalice and the Blade | Riane Eisler



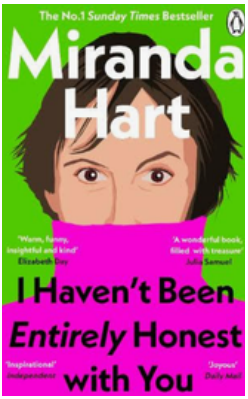
I'm a little late to this party, given that The Chalice and the Blade was first published in 1987, nearly 40 years ago! Yet reading it in today's world feels extraordinarily relevant.

We are living through a period when aspects of the world order we have known, grown with and perhaps taken for granted are shifting before our eyes. As leaders, we cannot assume a backdrop of certainty against which we operate half-consciously. We need to wake up to the choices we are making and the world we are helping to create.

I love history, and Eisler's exploration of archaeological discoveries and the possibility of societies organised around very different assumptions is fascinating. Her concept of a partnership society, balancing striving and action with nurturing and reflection, offers a profound challenge to conventional thinking.

For me, this is one of those books that deepens our understanding of human nature and invites us to reconsider our leadership philosophy. If you read it simply as a book about feminism, I think you risk missing the much deeper human choice point presented to every one of us within its pages.

WHAT AM I LISTENING TO ?



I Haven't Been Entirely Honest with You | Miranda Hart

So many of us have reconnected with Miranda Hart after years away from our screens due to ill health. We shared her joy as she galloped around the Traitors' Castle and her genuine emotion at the friendships and connections she made.

I listened to her book whilst recovering from a small surgical procedure myself, and having binge-listened to the audiobook, beautifully narrated by Miranda, I now feel as though she's my friend!

With her rare ability to balance humour and poignancy, this is an affirming and deeply human listen about relationships, kindness to ourselves and others, and finding our own way to live well and contribute to the world.

In a society seemingly obsessed with optimisation, achievement and pushing ourselves ever further, Miranda offers something refreshingly different. So many people I know and work with are searching for greater connection, meaning and permission to be themselves. It makes me wonder why we continue to behave as though the answer to becoming our best selves is always to push beyond our limits.

Warm, funny, moving and wonderfully human. I thoroughly recommend listening to Miranda tell her own story.

Finally Fabulous | a conversation with Kate McDougle



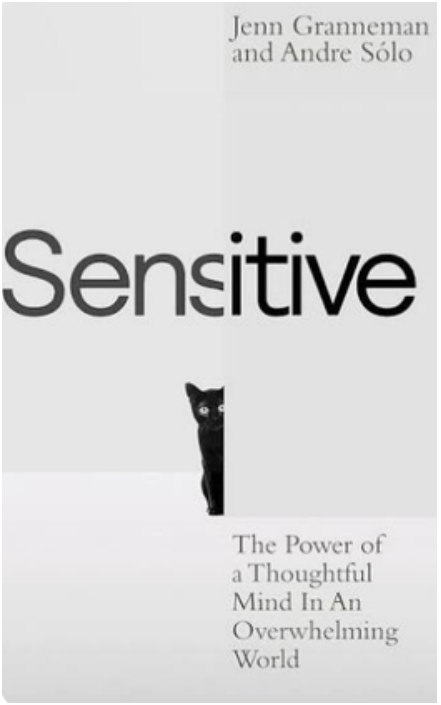
It was an absolute pleasure to be invited as a guest on Kate McDougle's wonderful Finally Fabulous podcast. We explored personal agency, recognising our unique potential, navigating self-doubt and finding our own definition of success. I also shared a few personal reflections and experiences that I haven't spoken about publicly before!

Kate is such a generous host, and I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation. Please do take a listen and see what resonates with you.

|Listen on Spotify: https://open.spotify.com/episode/4VpqsszioHYwLy2mGXsydb

WHAT AM I LISTENING TO ?

Sensitive |
Jenn Granneman and André Sólo



My second recommendation actually came from listening to Miranda's book. I'm now listening to Sensitive by Jenn Granneman and André Sólo, and it feels like a natural companion to her reflections.

If you've ever felt that you're working against your natural way of being, that you're not quite quick enough to get your point across, or that you're noticing things others don't seem to see, this book may resonate deeply.

It explores sensitivity not as something to overcome, but as a valuable human capacity, offering a different perspective on how we experience, process and respond to the world around us.

In a world that can feel relentlessly noisy, fast and demanding, I think there is something enormously valuable in understanding our own pace, our particular gifts and the ways in which we can contribute most meaningfully. Perhaps we don't all need to become louder, faster or more forceful. Perhaps we need to become more fully ourselves.

A fascinating listen for anyone interested in human difference and the potential we overlook when we expect everyone to operate in the same way.

WHAT AM I EXPERIENCING ?



Ramses and the Gold of the Pharaohs | Battersea

What an extraordinary exhibition! Far more than a collection of exquisite artefacts from the reign of Ramses II in the 13th century BC, this is a fascinating exploration of the relationship between achievement, artistry, culture and the stories through which civilisations give meaning to their existence.

The symbolism, craftsmanship and creativity tell us so much about our fellow humans and how they lived together thousands of years ago. And the jewellery alone is breathtaking. What we have been capable of imagining and creating for centuries!

I was particularly fascinated by the exhibition's exploration of Ramses as a leader, and how he used storytelling, symbolism and the communication of his achievements to shape the narrative of his reign and inspire collective belief.

It left me reflecting on some intriguing questions;

What remains of our own leadership story?
Who tells it, and how?
How do we capture the imagination of those around us?

A wonderful reminder of the enduring connection between art, culture, human ambition and leadership.

I thoroughly recommend experiencing it for yourself.

WHAT AM I EXPERIENCING ?

The Art of Being a Beginner | Glassmaking at Song Art & Craft



How often do we allow ourselves to be a beginner?

I spent a beautiful afternoon at a glassmaking workshop attempting to master the art of creating glass flowers. Needless to say, it is considerably harder than the experts make it look!



There was companionship, concentration, frustration and enormous joy at eventually producing something that resembled a flower.

Watching the masters at work was a wonderful reminder that understanding how something is created, is very different from having the skill to do it ourselves.



What struck me was the patience required to learn each stage, the willingness to start again and the belief that, with time, encouragement and practice, we can develop capabilities we never imagined.

There is something rather lovely about the metaphor for living and leading. Encouraging others, celebrating small achievements, respecting mastery and being prepared to return to the beginning ourselves.

Perhaps we should all make time to be beginners a little more often.

VP SPOTLIGHT

Sprint Coaching

Beyond a Moment of Inspiration | Sprint Coaching for International Women's Day 2027

A few years ago, a client asked me to deliver an inspirational keynote for International Women's Day. It prompted a different question: what if, instead of investing in a moment of inspiration, we invested that budget directly in the women themselves? And so Sprint Coaching was born.

Each year, I work personally with a small number of organisations to offer talented female leaders private, executive-level coaching and advisory support, focused entirely on their individual leadership challenges, ambitions and opportunities.

Two highly personalised, one-hour conversations, held at Vantage Points on Brook Street in Mayfair, create space away from the demands of organisational life to think deeply, challenge assumptions, find clarity and take meaningful action.

The impact of such a focused investment continues to inspire me. Our 2026 participants described greater confidence, renewed perspective, practical approaches to complex challenges and, importantly, feeling genuinely seen and supported.

As we look towards 2027, evolving expectations around gender equality planning offer another reason for organisations to consider how they translate commitments into tangible action. Progress requires more than awareness, good intentions or a calendar of events. It requires thoughtful investment in the people whose talent and contribution will shape the future.

Sprint Coaching is one practical way to bring that intention to life. I typically partner with just three or four organisations each year, ensuring every participant receives my personal attention and expertise.

If you are considering how to make International Women's Day 2027 genuinely meaningful for your female talent, I would love to have a conversation. Early enquiries are encouraged, as places are limited.

Contact Charlotte Ovenell: charlotteovenell@vantagepointsconsulting.com

Vantage Points Foundation

Six Years of Believing in Potential

II am absolutely delighted that we have commenced the sixth year of our very special VP Foundation, welcoming our largest cohort to date!
This year, 21 incredible young professional women, aged 20–30, from a wonderfully diverse range of sectors, professions and backgrounds, are participating in this fully pro bono programme. What unites them is their unapologetic ambition, enthusiasm and determination to build meaningful careers and make a contribution to the world around them.

The Foundation exists to provide a springboard of coaching, mentoring, networking, community and skills development, helping young women discover their potential, find their voice and, importantly, feel confident being fully themselves.

This month we hosted our first Exchange Dinner at Jamie's Catherine St in Covent Garden, bringing together our cohort and senior female leaders from different sectors for an evening of conversation around creativity. A wonderful opportunity to exchange perspectives, expand our thinking and build meaningful connections across generations and professions.

We've also begun our series of six intimate Salons at Brook Street, exploring topics including intentionally cultivating connections and designing a future that brings together professional ambition with the life we want to live and the people we aspire to become.



Vantage Points Foundation

For me, one of the greatest privileges remains the one-to-one coaching. Creating a confidential space where these talented young women can explore challenges, recognise their own power and agency, and discover practical ways forward is endlessly rewarding. Sometimes it's about finding their voice, sometimes navigating a difficult situation, and sometimes simply giving themselves permission to believe in their boldest dreams.

My heartfelt thanks to Poppy Addison Camm and Amanda Starkey, who have joined me in coaching some of our young women this year, enabling us to extend this opportunity to more participants than ever before.

Six years on, my belief in the importance of this work only grows stronger. These young women bring extraordinary talent, drive, imagination and possibility. It is an enormous privilege to play even a small part in their journeys, and to help create a community where they can truly thrive.



Applications for Year Seven of the Vantage Points Foundation are expected to open in Summer 2027. Further details will be shared nearer the time.

FROM MY WRITING

Three recent reflections exploring different dimensions of leadership: the relationships that shape our experience at work, who has access to leadership opportunities, and the change in perspective required as our responsibilities broaden.

Beyond the "Toxic Boss"

What sits beneath the label of a toxic leader? An exploration of leadership maturity, positional power and the role of compassion in understanding difficult workplace relationships, without diminishing their very real impact.

Access to Leadership

Who gets the opportunity to lead, and what might we be overlooking in how we recognise and develop leadership potential? A reflection on the assumptions that shape access to leadership and the importance of widening our perspective.

From Functional Leader to Enterprise Leader

Moving into enterprise leadership requires more than greater responsibility. It calls for a fundamental shift in perspective, from championing our own function to serving the organisation as a whole, and recognising where our leadership contribution can have the greatest impact.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2027

The VP Salons | Spring Season

Our Spring season of VP Salons will be announced in January.

The Salons are intimate, thoughtfully curated gatherings at Brook Street in Mayfair, bringing together interesting people, perspectives and ideas for meaningful conversation.

Created as a space to step away from the demands of everyday life and leadership, each Salon explores a particular theme through open dialogue, curiosity and the exchange of experiences. There are no presentations or conventional networking agendas, simply an opportunity to think differently, broaden our perspectives and enjoy the richness of human connection.

I am looking forward to sharing our Spring programme in January and welcoming both familiar and new faces to Brook Street.

Sprint Coaching | International Women's Day 2027
As I shared earlier in this edition, Sprint Coaching offers organisations a meaningful way to invest directly in their female talent for International Women's Day. Through two highly personalised, confidential coaching conversations, each participant has the opportunity to explore what matters most to her and move forward with greater clarity and confidence.

I work with only a small number of organisations each year, so if this is something you would like to explore for 2027, please do contact Charlotte for an initial conversation.

Your Thinking Partner for 2027
As you consider your intentions for the year ahead, perhaps it's also worth reflecting on who creates the space for you to think, explore and be challenged.

If you're considering the value of a confidential thinking partnership to support your leadership in 2027, I'm always delighted to have an initial conversation.

Please contact Charlotte to arrange a coffee and a catch-up at Brook Street.

Charlotte Ovenell | charlotteovenell@vantagepointsconsulting.com



Thank you for spending time with this Autumn edition of The VP Edit. I hope something here has sparked your curiosity, offered a fresh perspective or simply brought a little joy.

If you have a book, podcast or event that you have loved, please do share it with me. I would love to discover what has inspired you and, perhaps, amplify your recommendations in a future edition.

Please do pass The VP Edit on to anyone you feel might enjoy or benefit from these recommendations and reflections.

With warmest wishes,

Paula Leach

THE VP EDIT

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This is not an automated subscription. It is simply us sharing something we believe may be useful, with no strings attached.

Thank you for your time and interest.

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