I am an organizational consultant. I feel very fortunate to have chosen this profession. It is deeply fulfilling to me because every day I have the opportunity to serve others in a way that seems to matter deeply to them. I have also been blessed to work with many tremendous clients who have taught me most of what I know about leadership and organizational effectiveness. For the last ten years I have owned and operated Integrated Leadership Systems, a leadership consulting company in Columbus, Ohio. I am a psychologist with a Masters in Business Administration. I have also read extensively on the subject of organizational effectiveness. Before I started my business, I was a manager at my family's business, The Andersons, for fifteen years.

This book is the distillation of all that I have learned during my life about organizational effectiveness from personal experience and from studying this subject matter. It was written in response to myriad questions from business leaders about why ILS is so successful at transforming companies and how they can take their business to the next level. I have to be honest, when I first started my business I had no idea if the concepts I taught would draw interest in the business world. I started my company with one thought in mind, "I believe that happy, well-adjusted employees will make a company more successful." This concept, while seemingly naive and oversimplified, has worked far beyond my expectations. I once had the opportunity to interview John H. McConnell, the founder of Worthington Industries and the Columbus Blue Jackets. I asked him to tell me the secret of his success. He looked at me and said, "It's simple. Treat people with respect." He then told me that every one of the unionized firms he purchased throughout his lifetime became non-union within twenty-four months of purchasing. "Once people knew I cared about their well-being, they produced for me," he said.

I think it’s also important that you know why I have chosen this profession. Twenty-five years ago I was depressed and lost. I was in so much pain I did not know where to turn for relief. But I met and worked with a wonderful therapist, Henry Leuchter, who helped me to transform my life from depressed and broken to happy and well-adjusted. Since that time I have decided it is my mission in life to teach people what I learned about mental health and its powerful effect on organizational success. In therapy, I learned about personal transformation at a deep level. I also learned about what it means to be truly happy and fulfilled. In my experience, many people think happiness is the same thing as comfort. I would like to suggest that this notion is inaccurate. As Gandhi once said, “Joy lies in the fight, the attempt, in the suffering involved, not in the victory itself.” Also, Victor Frankl (Man’s Search for Meaning), survivor of four years in a Nazi death camp, once said, “What man needs is not some tensionless state, but rather a purpose that is worthy of him.” In striving to reach such a purpose, we simultaneously actualize our potential, serve our fellow-man, and achieve happiness.

It may seem arrogant, but I believe many consultants are not very successful because they have not yet done their inner work. They enter organizations with the attitude that they will teach their employees how to be more effective. I believe ILS is unusually successful as a consulting firm because we constantly strive to improve ourselves and we believe that the people in the organizations we work with already possess everything they need to be successful. Our job is to help them discover it. I believe that all influential teachers achieve great results by helping their students unleash their own potential. This transformational ability the best teachers
possess comes from years of courageously facing their own pain and in the process becoming both humble and powerful. I have Dr. Leuchter to thank for teaching me this great truth.

Unfortunately, many human beings avoid pain because they do not want to be uncomfortable. But pain is transformational. When we confront pain, we become powerful and wise. The making of a sword is a good metaphor for how pain transforms us. The blacksmith (our creator) thrusts the steel into the fire until it glows red hot. Then he takes it out and beats it against an anvil to both shape it and remove impurities. This process is repeated until all impurities are removed and the sword takes its final shape. Only by confronting the pain (fire) can the sword achieve its true purpose. But at this point the process is not complete. Once all impurities are removed the steel must be hardened by alternately thrusting the blade into fire and then water. Only when the sword is complete can it be put to use. Similarly, only when we confront pain can we truly serve our fellow-man and fulfill our destiny. Thus pain is the conduit we must pass through to make ourselves and our organizations great. We must allow the blacksmith to do his work with us. I believe there are three phases of life; learning, earning, and returning. I believe that in this final stage we actualize our potential as human beings and as organizations.

I promise you that this book is not just a feel-good story about how to make your employees happy. There's a lot more to it than that, but it’s a good place to start to understand how I work as a consultant. If you want some high-tech solution to your problems, this probably isn't a good book for you to read. I deeply believe in people. A company that hires good people, cares about them, and gets them all aligned to achieve the organization's goals is very difficult to beat in the marketplace. I also have noticed that once a company makes the transformation we at ILS ask them to make, all involved seem to have a much more rewarding experience going to work. Many times I have had employees in the companies I serve approach me with tears in their eyes thanking me for making their company such a fulfilling place to work. After thanking them, I tell them to thank their management. They are the ones who had the courage to change.

I decided to write this book in the form of a story. I received much positive feedback from my first book, “The Call to Authenticity”, which was written in that style. In this book there are five characters who will help me illustrate my philosophy of organizational effectiveness. They are:

**Louis** – This is me on my journey to turn my own company into a great organization. If you read my first book, you may recall; Henry, my mentor, encourages me to build my life around what I am passionate about. In this book, Louis has followed his advice and started his own company. But now, ten years later, he realizes that just having a big dream is not enough. As his company has grown, he has become increasingly frustrated. His employees are not aligned, morale is inconsistent, and turnover has become a problem. In this book, he is ready to learn how to run a great company.

**Henry** – This character is modeled after Henry Leuchter, the therapist I mentioned earlier. Henry serves as Louis’ mentor in helping him transform his company.

**Devin** – One of Louis’ college friends who he asks for advice on running his business. Devin believes that the only way to succeed in business is to cut corners.

**Dan** – Another of Louis’ college friends, Dan is a real nuts and bolts kind of a guy. He is old school. He thinks that the only reason you run a business is to make a profit. He’s more into management than leadership. He thinks people are basically lazy and you have to get tough on them if you are to be a successful business owner.

**Rick** – Another of Louis’ college buddies. A hedonist. Business is a means to an end. He lives to play and wants to be an absentee owner.

These characters present competing models of organizational structure and provide arguments for each. When Louis finds the old models insufficient to satisfy his desire to create a great company, he goes back to his
mentor, Henry, to learn the ultimate way to create a company that he dreams of running. In the end he learns, not surprisingly, that it’s all about people. But just knowing that doesn’t result in success. Creating a world-class company where all participants are highly engaged, aligned and behaving in an ethical fashion takes tremendous effort and an understanding of organizational psychology. In addition, I put a summary at the end of the each chapter for easy reference after you have read this book. I hope this book is useful to you. I also hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it.