

# **Preview of: Confessions from the Heart of an Executive Coach**

**True Stories behind Closed Doors—Why Some CEOs  
Win Big, While Others Crash and Burn**

**Dan Foxx**

**CEO, Unlock Your Leadership**

## **Praise for *Confessions from the Heart of an Executive Coach***

“Dan Foxx has been my coach for fifteen years spanning three companies and is always ‘in my corner.’ His passion for making a difference in people’s lives has been amazing, and he has consistently been successful with me and my executive teams. His book is a must-read for anyone trying to make a difference in their own lives.”

Dave Zabrowski  
CEO, DataCore Software, Inc.  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

“A timeless trove of semi-recent Silicon Valley history, life lessons learned, and spiritual insight. Because Dan truly loves his work and his fellow man, he can pass along to us the reasons for success and failure that both hinder and help managers in their careers like few others can. If you are in a career or a life that is not going as you’d like, Dan’s book is a true masterpiece at raising awareness of what propels us and prevents us from achieving what we truly want. This is a book that I’ll buy and pass on to others whom I really care about when mentoring on how to get what you want in life, love, and happiness.”

Wes Brewer  
CEO, ProGrade Digital, Inc.  
San Jose, CA

“This book, like its author Dan Foxx, is energetic, authentic, and on the field right where leaders play. The stories and case studies are sure to resonate with leaders looking to form impactful relationships with everyone they work with! Part business, part self-leadership, but wholly about the personal journey that delivers business success. Dan’s book makes you feel he’s right in the room with you coaching you to win.”

Daniel A. Chen  
Head of Business Development  
Quicken, Inc.  
Menlo Park, CA

“As a past executive coaching client of Dan’s, I thoroughly enjoyed reading *Confessions from the Heart of an Executive Coach*. The book is an outstanding encapsulation of his unique approach to executive coaching and achieving success both in business and in life. Dan takes us on a deeply personal journey into ourselves, where he so aptly points out how love and the human connection are foundational to our success. He highlights the importance of authenticity, personal passion, commitment, selflessness, and humility in our lives. I highly recommend this reading to anyone interested in acquiring and applying the wisdom of one of the very best executive coaches in the business and one of the finest human beings on the planet.”

Bart Freedman  
CEO, Barlen Associates

“Dan worked with me and my management team during a key period when the company was undergoing a drastic change in product strategy. He’s different—very different. If you are truly open to learning some radical things about leadership, and changing the way you think, read this book!”

John Harte  
Retired CEO

“I had the good fortune of meeting Dan in the early 2000s during the start of my CEO career. He is a very passionate coach who greatly influenced my approach to leadership. Helping me to dig deep down inside to identify what I am truly passionate about and using that passion to motivate my team.”

Tom Waechter  
Former CEO and Board Member

## When Your Life Fits Like a Glove.

When a major piece of the puzzle of your life falls into place, it usually comes from personal epiphanies—breakthrough insights of brilliance and hard work over an extended period of time. It's times like these when you just know the planets are aligned. What you are doing and who you are fit like a glove. This feeling is often a surprise, always a gift. As if your whole life is a treasure map with a clear X over the buried gold.

It was late summer of 1997. I had just opened my executive coaching practice. I probably had three CEOs as clients at that time. One weekend I was in South Shore, Lake Tahoe walking around an outdoor festival replete with candles, artwork, essential oils, and kettle corn. The environment was ideal for people watching.

As I was wandering about, I saw someone who startled me. I couldn't believe my eyes. Dr. Leo Buscaglia. I recognized him from his photo on the back of his books I had read, and from his extensive interviews on television.

Dr. Buscaglia was a professor at USC. He had written fourteen books. Five of them were on the *New York Times* best-seller list at the same time. In my heart I always thought of him as a rock star when it came to love, relationships, human transformation, and connection. Something about his work was incredibly special to me. It seemed to be his ability to reach through the pages or the television screen and authentically transmit his emotion to the point that I was moved. He was charismatic, naturally inspiring to listen to, and completely authentic in who he was as a man and what he stood for in the world.

Looking back at that day, I clearly see what it was that I respected so: his pure and complete love for people. When you listened to, or read Leo, you could tell he was holding nothing back, and you just knew he

was talking directly to you.

Maybe three seconds after I recognized him, I moved in for the meet. His back was to me when I said, “Dr. Buscaglia, my name is Dan Foxx.” As he turned to face me, my hand was already extended toward him. A big and genuine smile lit his face and, without hesitation, ignoring my outstretched hand, he raised both arms, took one step toward me, and gave me a full embrace hug. It wasn’t one of those halfhearted “bro” hugs with one arm and a pat on the back. No, it was a full, arms around me, tight hug, with much of our torsos touching.

As he encompassed me, he lowered his head warmly into the pocket of my neck. It was the kind of hug a proud dad would give a service-member son at the airport when returning from a war.

The Hug, as I now refer to it, lasted a good three seconds. As he pulled away, his hands gently slid down my arms to each elbow, where he gently retained a light grip.

Staring deeply into my eyes, he said the craziest thing: “Dan, it’s so great to finally meet you.” He said it with compassion and authentic meaning.

I instantaneously knew it was his truth. But I couldn’t understand how he meant it. Now please realize he didn’t know me from Adam. I was no one in his world. But I felt, in the depths of my soul, that he completely meant what he just said. I was aghast and unprepared for that. We were not ten seconds into our meeting each other, and I knew he loved me. And I had no idea why.

It felt like he was saying, “Oh, my goodness, where have you been? Here, let me take a look at you.” It genuinely felt like home, as if Norman Rockwell had painted the moment. His eyes were completely fixed on mine. I think a bomb could have gone off nearby, and he wouldn’t have noticed.

For the next few minutes, no one else existed in the world to him but me. I noticed that a small group of people, maybe twenty, were starting to circle us, because they recognized him too. But he was oblivious to their presence. He asked me what I did in the world. I told him that I

had just started an executive coaching business. He then asked me, “And how’s that going?”

I spoke 90 percent of the time, while he just occasionally asked me a clarifying question. He had no interest in himself. There was no one in the world but me in those ten minutes.

He asked me how the coaching business was going, and I told him I was struggling a bit with one aspect of my work.

“My clients will tell me about an issue they’re facing and ask for my help. I will offer my advice and my coaching, which I know will work as a solution. But they often respond with something like, ‘Well, Dan, I hear what you are saying, but I would argue that, with what these VPs are getting paid, they ought to be mature enough to get along.’”

With compassion in his eyes, he nodded in the affirmative and quietly said, “Ahhh, yes. Dan, you first have to show them the need.”

That was it. Nothing more. I had no idea what that meant, but I knew it was the powerful answer I was looking for. In my awestruck moment, I didn’t dare tell him I didn’t understand. Heck, I was an enlightened executive coach. But I wanted him to think that I thought his advice was powerful, so I nodded like I completely understood and thanked him.

In that moment that he was Master and I was Grasshopper, or he was Yoda and I was Luke Skywalker. But I knew I would figure out what he said if given a few moments to process. I memorized his advice: “Dan, you first have to show them the need. You first have to show them the need.”

We chatted for a couple of more moments and got ready to go our separate ways. As our conversation came to an end, he reached out and hugged me again. With a genuine smile on his face he thanked me for introducing myself to him. I didn’t want to move. I didn’t want the meeting to end, but I knew it must. I wanted to spend two whole days with him, but I was enormously grateful for that ten minutes.

I have never experienced such complete love and acceptance from anyone in my entire life. I truly felt that he was excitedly happy to

finally get to meet *me*. He made me feel like I had just made his day. For those ten minutes, no one else mattered and nothing else existed in Leo's life but me. But it was the hug that changed my life. There is a dopamine hit that our body produces with human contact, and when you couple loving words with the hug, the combination is incredibly powerful.

## **Put the Pieces Together**

As I drove the three and a half hours back home to the Bay Area, I was rolling his words over and over in my mind. "Dan, you first have to show them the need. You first have to show them the need." What did that mean? Uhhhh. I had no clue. I broke that one sentence down.

Dan, you "*first—*" Okay, before anything else first. "*Have to—*" It's not an option. It's a necessity. "*Show—*" So it's not speaking, training, coaching, telling, teaching, or advising, it's showing. For something to be shown, it would have to be a quality already present inside me in order for it to be naturally revealed or shown to others. It would have to be something that just emanates outwardly from my eyes and the pores of my skin. I can't show something I don't already have.

And then "*the need.*" What is the need? It must be something they don't have, maybe something they don't even know they don't have, or maybe something they don't even know they should want. What is their common need? All my clients are so different, so the need would have to be really basic, like at the core of human desire. It would have to be something that is not tied to the diversity of their personalities.

I made a list: They all want success. But why? Because they want to be respected? They want to give money to others, like their spouses and children, mom and dad?

Maybe they think that their success would cause them to be better loved and more respected. Heck, I didn't know what each of these diverse people wants that is common to all of them.

I wrote a list based on my experience so far.

Clients want people to want to follow their leadership, which means,

as leaders, they want to help their team and be loved for the helping. But I realized that is not necessarily so. Some CEOs deploy commander authority and threats to get obedience, so they don't care about being liked.

Maybe their common need is to matter in their world.

Maybe they all want to be accepted, appreciated, and loved.

Maybe they want to feel that they are enough.

I got a little tired trying to unravel the riddle, and my mind began to wander. It gravitated back to the hug and Leo's genuine smile—eyes fixed on mine. My heart warmed all over again when I reflected on my meeting, and I thought, boy, I *needed* that hug. Then it hit me. I just spoke the word *needed*. I had this instantaneous, bold epiphany. I needed to be loved and accepted for exactly who I am. And while I was with Leo, I was. And that is the primal need for every one of my clients.

It's a primal/basic need for every one of us to be loved and accepted. No one wants to admit it, but that's what we all really want and have always wanted. Some think that success and money will bring love and acceptance, but they don't realize that's a fool's errand. Because one of the downsides of success is the response of friends. Some friends will abandon you because you are successful. The friends can become jealous, or they just assume you won't have the time for them anymore. The successful person's friends want to matter in this world, too, and they want to matter to you.

And then it hit me again. I thought my mind was going to explode. His advice to me was exactly what he exemplified and showed to me during our meeting. He was doing exactly what he was telling me to do. When he looked at me, he was thinking, "Leo, you first, have to, show Dan, the need." He showed me the need I didn't recognize that I deeply wanted. He knew that I, like everyone else, desperately needed to be loved and accepted, and he wanted me to experience the lesson he was showing me.

He didn't teach. He *was* the expression of love, and I got it in spades. He was his advice to me. And I didn't need success or riches that

afternoon. I had respect, love, acceptance, and his undivided attention. All what I thought success would provide, I received in that ten minutes. I mattered in those moments to someone I didn't even know, and I needed nothing else to feel complete.

As I look back on that sunny afternoon, I feel so grateful for that providential meeting. Sadly, Leo passed away just a few short months after our meeting at the festival in that casino parking lot in Lake Tahoe. But I am left with profound gratitude for the gift and blessing of meeting him before he moved on from this earth. Even today, I feel like the luckiest man in the world. Even today, all over again, as I write this story, I am deeply moved.

That afternoon, I got something like eight college semesters of valuable breakthrough emotional quotient training in ten minutes. Not only that, I was addicted to what I had learned. I was now on a mission.

## **The Big Business Transformation**

Thanks to Leo's hug, I stopped entering my clients' offices to help them with their problems. I wasn't there to advise them or give them my opinion. I was there to love them and make sure they knew they were enough, and that they were completely accepted by me. My goal was to make sure that I was truly glad to see them. Then, and only then, would I offer my coaching. And then, and only then, I would find that they would seek my guidance and take it into their lives.

I don't know who the original author of this quote is, but I love it. "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Yes, the pieces of the puzzle Leo gave me all fell into place.

Now I needed to discover how to authentically love my clients before starting each coaching session. This became even more challenging when I was meeting a client for the first time. How was I going to love someone I had never met? How did Leo do it? I created my own solution.

I pictured each client as a four-year-old child. I imagined that all this child wanted was to have fun and be loved and accepted. I pictured

them in my heart and mind as having no evil thoughts and doing no evil deeds. They were all too young and innocent. I then pictured all the kinds of feelings they must have felt over the years since growing up. I know they must have felt

- loving
- fearful
- proud
- betrayed
- jealous
- excited
- sad
- disappointed
- rejected
- jubilant
- passionate
- longing
- victorious
- frustrated
- compassionate
- giving
- impatient, and more

I realized that I already knew my clients intimately because I, too, have felt the same feelings. Now, I don't know which feeling they are experiencing at a particular moment, but regardless of what emotion they are feeling, I have felt it also. I don't know the stories of what happened to make them feel each emotion, but I could find out.

The main point was not the events that caused the emotions; it was the emotion itself that we have in common. I have felt every emotion they have felt. I completely knew everyone I met because we have shared exactly the same feelings over our lifetimes. This empowered me to enter every meeting with a deep love for my clients. I could genuinely say, as Leo did to me, "It's so great to finally meet you."

My coaching business exploded overnight.

Within the span of one year I was coaching thirty-one CEOs each month. That was a tenfold increase in business in twelve months. Executive team offsites had to be held on Saturdays, because I was swamped during the week with one-on-one coaching sessions. There was a time I was charging \$5,800 per session, and each session lasted only an hour and a half. Executive team offsites were billed at \$20,000. I was flying all over the country. Eventually I coached in Amsterdam, Paris, and Mumbai. But I recall that all this was ignited because of a ten-minute experience with Leo Buscaglia. True transformation can occur in just moments. Leo's hug truly changed my life.

My business transformation came because I discovered how to love my clients. They understood that I wasn't there for the money, or to tell them what to do. I accepted them for exactly who they were and where they were. This allowed them to be vulnerable, to tell me authentically what was on their heart.

After years of studying this concept, I have found that vulnerability is in fact highly contagious. Have you ever told someone something that required deep vulnerability on your part, only to find that, after they listened, they told you something really sensitive about their lives? My clients have told me stuff about their lives that I knew they never told anyone, even their spouse. It was uncomfortable for them, but they did it. Many of my clients over the years have become dear friends. I have since realized that this statement, attributed to various others through the years, remains true: "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

If you love all the people in your life, they will risk being honest and vulnerable in return. They will trust you when you love them and be willing to love you back. They will do this because they know you care first about them. Without love, they feel like a pawn, a thing to be moved about on the chessboard of life so you can reach your own end game.

When you get off yourself and your self-centered thoughts and just

focus your attention on loving others, everything, with a little time, will just fall into place. Getting off yourself and completely focusing on others is the most important part of our work together in the coming chapters.

## **Takeaways**

- Dr. Leo Buscaglia perfectly models the principles in this chapter. He was completely unselfish, came from love, and focused on me. This instantly created deep human connection between us.
- Human connection creates willing listeners, engenders trust, and moves the human heart.
- Something powerful, beyond our understanding, happens when we are loved and accepted for who we are without any judgment.
- This kind of instantaneous connection that can be created can change people's lives forever.
- We can love others even before we meet them, because we know all the emotions they have felt. The same ones you have experienced. This can create empathy and understanding. It is through this connection that we can come to love the next person we meet, before we meet them.
- It is this kind of human connection and caring that shows up in your career as causing massive success.
- The key is to be so okay with yourself that you can focus on others first.

## 2

### The Promise

Let's get into the meat of how success works and reengineer or deconstruct how to get there.

Almost everything you have probably learned about success may be a contributor to the quest for success, but what you learned misses the mark completely about the foundation that creates success. A fundamental spark ignites the inferno of massive success that almost all academic training completely misses. That foundation is the human heart. With that in mind, I promise to empower you here in these words to show you how and to ignite that spark in the human heart to create success in your business and personal life. Period.

Some of the principles I offer you are as old as humanity walking the face of the earth but explored in a new way. While others will be new to you. Written here are the tools for you to ignite success in relationships, which you will discover is the first necessary step toward success everywhere—at home and in the workplace.

The dilemma is that while we think we know the principles of success, often we are way off base. If what we were previously taught was all we needed, then we would all be massively successful already today. My job is to reveal to you these principles, through real stories of CEOs and VPs—clients that I have worked with over the past twenty-two years. It is my deep desire that, through the stories of my work with them, that you discover your blind spots and begin to see success in a totally new light.

If you are willing to set aside your previous learning and beliefs of yourself and your world, then you will want to shift your belief system. It is your belief system that drives your attitudes, words, and actions to deploy this power into your life. This is not a “what to do and how to do it” book. This is a book about introspection, personal shifting of

beliefs, and growth, so you show up as a more whole and complete person—who happens to also make a great leader.

You really can have a spectacular life. One that is fulfilling, successful, and full of joy. Yes, *you*. It's okay if you have already dropped any previously held aspirations of a grand and fulfilling life. We can pick up from right where you are and change your trajectory. It's sad today that positive affirmations are little more than empty platitudes or just sayings on a motivational poster in the breakroom.

But here is why my promise is different: I am personally committed to you. Starting right here and now, I desperately want you to live fully, whole, and complete. And I know you can succeed at a life much bigger and bolder than what you may be experiencing now. I am just asking you to believe, just a bit, that what I am promising is true—for you. And keep reading.

I want you to be the author of your life, not just a reporter covering the story of your life. I want you to play on the field of your life and take bold action to create a life truly worth living.

Now here is where I need you to just trust me for just a bit. I am about to make a crazy statement: I love you. Sounds crazy to read that, I know, because we don't know each other. But I will explain that crazy comment in such a way that you will come to truly believe me.

Now at this point, your ego and self-protection mechanisms are probably screaming, "Yeah, right. Not me. This guy must be all about the soft and squishy stuff. I don't feel like that's possible. What he's said so far is just too good to be true. No one I know lives like that."

But I still mean what I wrote. I don't care about judging your past, or what you consider to be your capabilities. I still believe completely in you and your future, even if you don't. How can I say this? I have worked with over 4,500 people during the last twenty-two years in my work as an executive coach and uncovered and encouraged their brilliant potential, and I will do the same for you.

Look, you have purchased this book, and here we are. All I ask is that you believe in yourself, even if you have to believe, because I

believe in you.

Over the last two decades as an executive coach, I know what it takes to succeed. I'll take you there. But then we are going to dive deeply inside who you are, including your heart, and your beliefs of self and this world, so you can change. You do want to change your outcome in life in some way, right?

It's like a skyscraper in New York. No one wants to talk about the foundation, the rebar, and geology tests of the soil to make the building stand strong. They want to see the skyscraper already up and watch the flag pole triumphantly mounted on the top. Fair enough. We'll start with massive success and take the elevator down to bedrock upon which we will build the necessary foundation to make your skyscraper or, in this context, your success and your life, grow with stability and structural integrity. By the time we get to the foundation, you will be fascinated with reengineering the inner workings of your heart and mind.

When I am coaching a client. I listen carefully to what is bothering them. And, yes, right away we tackle the immediate issues with solutions, strategies, and tactics. But once that is accomplished, we go deeper. I want to know what dynamics were in place to allow the issue to arise in the first place. Often it's their leadership, which is the result of who they are as humans.

Your leadership is the manifestation of who you are. Deeper still are the personal issues that led to the scenario even occurring under your watch, not to mention the wounds that initiated the personal issues that often continue to haunt you. Solve those underlying issues and you are on your way to better leadership and more integrated and effortless success as a wholehearted leader.

Follow this train of thought down to the bedrock:

- Your success—your search for peace, success, joy, fulfillment, and contribution—is a direct result of the quality and investment you make in all your relationships. Success, a promotion, or growing sales are all predicated on your relationships. Adventure

and peace will come from the relationships with your peers and direct reports. Happiness and joy are rooted in your relationships with your family and friends.

- Life and leadership success is all about relationships.
- Relationships are dependent on your ability to “get off yourself” and make an emotional investment in others, through love and vulnerability.
- Love and vulnerability will require that you overcome your fear of how you are seen by others. This will involve facing your fear and putting yourself at risk to make these investments.
- In order to overcome your fear, you will first really get to know yourself and become grounded. This confrontation will enable you to love yourself with healthy self-love and solid self-esteem.
- Knowing and loving yourself will require you to become reconciled with your past, so you become free from the negative influences of wounds and resentments. It’s this past emotional baggage that has caused you to be exactly where you are today.
- These principles are tough to address, but your future is at stake. Is it worth it? Hell yes. Is it easy? Hell no. But realize that if nothing changes, then nothing changes.

To summarize these bullets, when you are free from your past wounds, resentments, and self-protection mechanisms, you can then feel a sense of love for others. Through this love you will find yourself able to show up as vulnerable to people, which is attractive because you’re now authentic. It is through your ability to express vulnerability that you will find the keys to open the doors to everything you want in your life like mammoth,-meaningful relationships. If you want success, what you need is empowered relationships.

You will come to see that relationships are your life. Take a moment and see for yourself. I say that your life consists of spouse or partner, children, friends, the people in your church, golf or fishing buddies, boss, peers and direct reports, and even the lady at the cash register at

the last store you visited. Each one contributes to your life through relationships. The goal is to empower all these relationships to work for you, not against you. I am not being slimy here, like manipulating them in some way. I am saying the way we make relationships work for us is to contribute unconditionally out of love for them first.

Your success is an inside job. Success in the material and emotional world starts with you, your heart, beliefs, and thoughts. Success is a place we come from, not a place that we get to. When we come from an authentic, loving place in our hearts, and because we are free from the anchor of past emotional wounds and resentments, we are a magnet to all people. They will want to come alongside us and be with us, and just naturally want to help us win. Conflict mostly goes away. And whatever remains doesn't really matter to you anymore, because you are so grounded in who you are that no one can mess with you. I call this state being un-messable.

How many thousands of emotional traumas have occurred in your life? Instead of being shared, processed, and let go of, they were buried and affected how you showed up in the world.

It is critical to authentically know yourself. But this insight requires that we need to be courageous enough to look behind the scenes and see what we are feeling and discover why those feelings are there. Only then can we choose to act, or react, on purpose.

When I have a wound or resentment, it causes me to not like myself. When you are clean from the emotional baggage of the past, you will fall in love with you. I mean that in the most humble way. You finally get to become your own best friend. You can actually like spending time with yourself; nothing needs to be added for you to feel whole and complete.

It was that kind of moment for me when I experienced the intense love and acceptance of Dr. Leo Buscaglia. During our ten-minute spontaneous huddle, Leo was moved and inspired, and so was I. In those moments in the parking lot of a festival, nothing needed to be added to make us feel quenched.

## Takeaways

- Here, I am giving you a macro blueprint of this work.
- You must believe in yourself. Believe in your dreams. If that's not possible at this moment, please at least trust that I believe in you. I have gone deep with over 4,500 people. That experience has taught me to authentically believe in the human potential. That potential is you. Let that be enough for now.
- If you are human, and I know you are, and you are older than eighteen, then you have emotional wounds. They will need to be addressed a little later to find the freedom and belief in yourself. Especially your belief that you can and deserve to win at life.
- Everything you want in life will come from your relationships. Relationships are built when we are able to get off of our self-centeredness and focus on others.

## Read on...

*Confessions from the Heart of an Executive Coach* features twenty-six chapters, the first two of which you just read. If you've liked what you've seen, be sure to grab a print or Kindle copy of the book from Dan's website at [UnlockYourLeadership.com](http://UnlockYourLeadership.com) or from Amazon at [amzn.to/2OcLQur](http://amzn.to/2OcLQur)

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## About the Author

Dan Foxx has been an Executive Coach to CEOs, VPs, and Director-level executives for the past twenty-two years, working with over 400 CEOs and 4,000 VPs. He began his work as an Executive Coach in 1997 and has worked with such household-name companies as SanDisk, JDSU, and SAP.

Early in his career, he was a salesman, a VP of Sales, VP of Marketing, and President of a manufacturing corporation. Dan started and built a full-service advertising agency in the late 1970s and worked with over 300 clients.

Dan is a sought-after keynote speaker. He speaks to executive leadership groups, employee groups, and sales associates with motivational topics such as relationships, leadership, passion, the power of commitment, and corporate strategy. His most recent speech in 2019 was for management-level executives at Calvin Klein in Amsterdam.

His work with clients has been featured in *Inc* magazine as far back as the year 2000.

Dan and his wife, Kathleen, live in Grass Valley, California.