

PROTECTED ARTEFACT — Paul’s words, sacrosanct. Revised — Ewan [name held] corrected. Naula placeholder added.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a handful of people whose fingerprints run quietly through this book. Some taught me directly. Some believed in me when they had no particular reason to. Some trusted me with parts of themselves that few people ever get to see. All of them, in one way or another, helped shape the thinking that fills these pages.

Before Jean Bond, there was Naula.

[PLACEHOLDER — Paul to complete. Naula was the course facilitator at Tarmac who handed Paul Jean Bond’s Behind the Masks in 2006. She had herself completed the PGCEE with Jean prior to becoming the Tarmac facilitator. She is the true catalyst — the person whose action set everything in motion. Paul to write this dedication in his own words.]

And Jean Bond.

Jean has been my guide, teacher, challenger and, in many ways, my “O Captain.”

Listen to her. Cherish her.

So much of what sits inside this book carries traces of her thinking, her compassion, her standards and her humanity. Jean’s influence did not stop with the people she personally met. It travelled through them, beyond them, into families, workplaces, relationships and lives she would never directly see.

Without Jean Bond, I genuinely believe tens of thousands of people on this planet would not be as good as they are.

I remain deeply grateful for her wisdom, her patience, and the example she set.

Then there is Bob Mills.

Bob stood quietly in the foothills of many of my life experiences and simply believed in me. Sometimes that is far more important than people realise. No grand speech. No performance. Just belief, support and presence when it mattered.

That deserves its place in this book.

Thank you, Bob.

There is also Andy Makeham.

Very little of the last thirty years of my professional life would have happened without Andy.

Andy was the CEO of K3 and the person who gave me the opportunity to step fully into senior leadership and make proper use of whatever talents I possessed. By strange timing, I had completed my Emotional Education studies immediately before joining K3, and somehow those two worlds — commercial leadership and emotional understanding — collided at exactly the right moment.

Andy believed in me completely. Not cautiously. Not conditionally. Completely.

He backed me in ways few people ever experience in a career. At times, he felt less like a CEO and more like another father figure quietly standing behind me saying, “Go on then. Let’s see what you can do.”

I still struggle to fully articulate the scale of his influence on my life and career. His fingerprints are everywhere across my professional journey.

Thank you, Andy.

Thank you also to Ewan [name held].

Ewan’s work in NLP training shaped much of how I learned to listen, observe and pay attention to people.

NLP attracts criticism in some circles, and debates around its academic standing will no doubt continue. But whatever labels people choose to apply, many of the practical techniques, observations and ways of hearing what sits beneath words became part of my work because of that training.

Some of the deepest listening I have ever done began there.

Thank you, Ewan.

There is also Dr. [name held] and the surgical team around him.

At one point in my life, a group of skilled people undertook eight hours of monstrous surgery on my throat to give me the chance to speak again.

That sentence is easy to write and impossible to fully comprehend.

Dr. [name held] sat me in a chair for the very first time and dealt with me in the same manner I have always tried to deal with others — directly, honestly, clearly and without unnecessary theatre. He guided me through some of the most painful moments of my life and has continued to do so for years since.

Even now, when we meet, we still revisit those memories — how painful they were, how frightening they were, and strangely, how joyful they eventually became.

Somewhere in that experience I learned something profound: deep pain and deep gratitude can exist together.

Without that surgery, there would have been no more therapy clients. No more coaching. No more lectures. No more teaching. No more words. And certainly no book.

So this thanks is not only from me, but in many ways from every client, every audience and every reader who encountered me afterwards.

Thank you, Dr. [name held].

My professional life itself also deserves acknowledgement.

There were the early years at Blakebridge and the friendships formed there — some of which still quietly continue decades later. Then came the technology years, the airports, the hotels, the long projects, the pressure, the humour, the exhaustion and the privilege of travelling the world alongside talented people whose names and faces still sit somewhere vividly in my memory.

Then came K3. I worked incredibly hard there. We all did. We built relationships, solved problems, fought battles, won business and created moments that still stay with me now. I remain enormously proud of much of what we achieved together.

Then LinkFresh — another remarkable chapter, another remarkable group of people. To watch that business eventually become part of Aptean and grow into what it is today has been genuinely extraordinary to witness.

And then there is the work since — particularly Martin [name held], who has been both a valued client and trusted presence over many years, alongside countless others I have coached, worked beside, advised or learned from.

To all of you: thank you. You are woven throughout this book far more than you may realise.

And then there are the hundreds of people I cannot name.

My clients. Coaching clients. Therapy clients. Customers. The people who sat in rooms with me and entrusted me with their stories, fears, grief, shame, hopes, identities and pain.

Many of you arrived carrying levels of emotional suffering that human beings should never really have to endure alone.

To be trusted with such intimate truths is not something I will ever take lightly.

Your courage, honesty and vulnerability have left a lasting imprint on me, and this book would not exist without what I learned sitting alongside you.

For reasons of privacy, confidentiality and simple practicality, I cannot name you individually here. But you know who you are.

Thank you.

Finally, to the people I may never meet.

During my studies in Emotional Education, Jean and I spent time imagining the future — projecting ourselves forward into old age, into meaning, legacy and reflection. I once imagined my eightieth birthday in a castle in Scotland, surrounded by tens of thousands of people who somehow knew me, even though I did not know them.

I have no idea whether that vision was prediction, metaphor, wishful thinking or simply imagination doing what imagination does best.

But I understood something important inside it.

Work travels.

Ideas travel.

Kindness travels.

Understanding travels.

Long after the original conversation has ended.

So to anyone reading these words — now or years from now — this book is, in part, for you.

I hope somewhere within these pages you find something useful. A thought. A challenge. A moment of recognition. A different way of seeing yourself, other people, behaviour, belief, grief, leadership, AI, or the space that exists between what we know and what we actually do.

If it helps even slightly, then the work was worth doing.

And finally, to my grandchildren — [name held], [name held], Erin and [name held]:

Here is my life's work, dedicated to you.

Paul Roebuck — Warwickshire, May 2026

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