



THE

THRIVING MINDSET

Tools for Empowerment
in a Disruptive World

GERRY VALENTINE

TESTIMONIALS

I met Gerry Valentine many years ago when we worked together at Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. I was always impressed with the integrity of his leadership style, so I was delighted when he launched his executive coaching business. I knew he would bring that same integrity to his clients. I was even more delighted when he published a book, *The Thriving Mindset—Tools for Empowerment in a Disruptive World*, because it was the next step in delivering that integrity, and at a time when we need it more than ever. Two important values I live by in my own life are “be your authentic self in every aspect of your life” and “to whom much is given, much will be required.” Gerry exemplifies those values in his book. By sharing authentic stories from his personal and professional journey—both the triumphs and the setbacks—Gerry provides an essential guide for anyone looking to overcome disruption and challenges (things we will all face), or allowing them to find, as Gerry puts it, the “advantage that is often just on the other side of the adversity.”

— Vivian Armstrong, Vice President and
Head of Corporate Technology,
New York Life Insurance Company

“Authenticity and empowerment from within are central to every lesson Gerry Valentine teaches, especially in *The Thriving Mindse—Tools for Empowerment in a Disruptive World*.

Through a wide array of easily digestible narratives and studies, Mr. Valentine has crafted an essential guide that can help everyone, from startup to C-Suite, leverage lessons learned from disruption to achieve new success.”

— *Jonathan Lovitz, Business & Public Policy Advocate;
Senior Vice President, National LGBT
Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)*

I am Odell Mays, Principal and Founder of Mays2 Consulting, a specialized practice working with nonprofits on organizational sustainability issues. I am also an adjunct faculty at Columbia University. Gerry and I met in 1986 at NYU Graduate School of Business, and we have remained close friends and confidantes ever since. Gerry has an amazing, prescient ability to make connections between “life events” and “life actions.” His clear-headed, and analytical mindset really defines the concept of thriving, and he shares that mindset in a most generous way.

I have had the privilege of watching Gerry embrace and embody the ideas set forth in this well-written, accessible, practical book. More than ever, we need authors and speakers who can help us make sense and make a plan for thriving during these disruptive and difficult times. This book is a must-read!

— *Odell Mays II, Principal and Founder,
Mays2 Consulting*

When I first met Gerry nearly 20 years ago, I was a consultant, and he was a client. I was immediately struck by his thoughtfulness and equanimity under pressure. A few years later, I ended up leading that same organization and promoted him.

He quickly proved to be the most natural manager I ever saw, guiding his reports to improved performance. When he became an executive coach, I naturally started referring clients to him. Not surprisingly, they described him as a lifesaver. Should you read this book? Obviously, my answer is yes.

— Tony Fross, *Partner and Co-lead Organization
& Culture Practice, Prophet*

“In *The Thriving Mindset*, thought-leader Gerry Valentine connects the dots on how our pace of change is disrupting the calm in our society, inciting fear and radicalized behavior. If we don’t learn to embrace change, we have a very dangerous chance of being left behind in a rapidly evolving landscape. Gerry’s just the dot-connector our country needs to help us navigate through these tumultuous times. I will be recommending this book to many.”

— Tamara Palmer, *Founder Greyzone
and published Fiction Writer*

Gerry Valentine’s book, *The Thriving Mindset—Tools for Empowerment in a Disruptive World*, is an essential guide for anyone looking to make positive change in the world. As a Partner at LIFT Economy, a company that is dedicated to creating an inclusive economy that works for the benefit of all life, I know how demanding true change-making can be. It takes courage and insight, the ability to see beyond knee-jerk urgencies of the moment, and the ability to take on the bigger issues in the world around us. Those demands are more daunting than ever before, as we face a global pandemic, ever-increasing economic inequality, a long-overdue

reckoning with racial injustice, the climate crisis, and more. This book provides invaluable tools for people who want to make a positive difference in the world—tools to tap into their best selves, to lead in authentic and value-based ways, and to inspire the best in others.

— Ryan Honeyman, *Partner at LIFT Economy,*
Co-Founder at Force for Good Fund,
Co-Author of “The B Corp Handbook”

The Thriving Mindset—Tools for Empowerment in a Disruptive World zooms out to look at the big picture of why and how to turn adversity into advantage, as it also provides a close, in-depth, highly practical guide to addressing these challenges. Valentine highlights how the work of disruptive, empowered leadership is continuous, requiring an honest consideration of one’s own strengths and areas of improvement in order to seize the opportunity and support growing teams and companies. Gerry Valentine is a renowned TEDx speaker, global business advisor, and executive leadership coach, with deep expertise in the Fortune 500 and technology sectors impacted by a disruption. The thoughtful management practices Valentine shares ripple outwards to improve teams, companies, and communities. This book is a highly valuable resource for anyone interested in becoming an empowered disruptor and thriving during adversity.

— Sarah E. Brown, *Head of Marketing at Intricately,*
Founder and Co-Organizer at Flatirons Tech

I met Gerry Valentine many years ago when we worked together at Pfizer, Inc. Since then, I’ve watched and admired how he has nurtured and grown his executive coaching

practice, no doubt due to the attention he pays to others. I was especially delighted to see him publish this book. I believe that we rise by lifting others, and lifting others is precisely what Gerry accomplishes in this book. Through examining his own life-path and career—generously sharing triumphs and setbacks—Gerry allows us to benefit from his vast experience. He’s delivering this message at a critical time. Right now, many people are facing disruption and/or uncertainty in their careers and in many other parts of life. I know from my own career that, even in the best of times, we all need support and guidance on how to overcome the challenges that naturally emerge along the way. *The Thriving Mindset* provides just that.

— Niesha N. Foster, Vice President, Global Health & Patient Access, Pfizer Inc.

We are facing an unprecedented time, and business leaders are playing a critical role in finding the solutions our society needs. As the founder and CEO of Out Leadership, that’s something I know first-hand. At Out Leadership, we help global companies innovate, transform, and reap the business benefits of inclusion—we call it “*Return on Equality*.” That means tapping into the immense talent the LGBTQ+ community can bring to organizations, especially at the senior leadership level—talent that helps companies transform and innovate at critical moments. That’s exactly what Gerry Valentine epitomizes in this book. Drawing on his own background as both a Fortune 100 leader and a person belonging to multiple underrepresented groups—a gay man, an African American man, and a person who grew up in poverty—Valentine taps into those experiences as a source of insight,

innovation, and inspiration. This book is an excellent guide for all of us as we navigate what lies ahead.

— *Todd Sears, Founder and CEO, Out Leadership*

I met Gerry when we were colleagues at Pfizer. I was in Commercial Operations, and Gerry was my Business Technology partner. For the team I was on to be successful, we needed to be able to partner with Gerry's organization. Gerry spent a tremendous amount of time redirecting discussions and activities towards common goals and what could be accomplished; in other words, he helped us identify our opportunities. As a result, we were able to make progress. The mindset of identifying opportunities in the face of challenges or things we do not understand is essential, and a book like this is the key. The world needs positivity.

— *Debbie Reynolds, Vice President,
Analytic Tools and Platforms at Pfizer Inc.*

"I was incredibly inspired while looking through the manuscript, and as a small business owner and homeschooling parent, I am definitely part of the audience demographic. The timing for this book is perfect, with the entire world reeling from the disruption of COVID-19. Mr. Valentine's book will help people in leadership roles make important cognitive shifts necessary to be successful during this turbulent period."

— *Gail Marlene Schwartz, Founder, Gail Writes
Copywriting and Editing*



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in a Disruptive World

GERRY VALENTINE



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Publish Your Purpose Press
141 Weston Street, #155
Hartford, CT, 06141



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Ordering Information: Quantity sales and special discounts are available on quantity purchases by corporations, associations, and others. For details, contact the publisher at orders@publishyourpurposepress.com.

Edited by: Hunter Liguore and Emily Austin
Cover design by: Nelly Murariu of PixBee Design
Typeset by: Medlar Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd., India

Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN: 978-1-951591-34-2 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-1-951591-35-9 (ebook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020920842

First edition, March 2021.

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DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to my husband, life partner,
and soul-mate, Daniel Blausey. Daniel, I love you
with all my heart, and I am grateful every day for the
amazing journey that is the life we have built together.*

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FOREWORD

As an author, speaker, and consultant, I'm always looking to connect with innovators in the field of business. It has long been my goal to empower others to make beneficial changes in their lives and to support self-reinvention. That goal of inspiring positive change is what led me to write my books—*Stand Out, Reinventing You*, and *Entrepreneurial You*. It's also what has brought me to meet Gerry Valentine and to recommend his important book, *The Thriving Mindset*.

I first met Gerry at a time in his life when he was working to reinvent himself. He had already completed a long and successful Fortune 100 corporate career, but he believed he had something more to offer the world. Over the years we've known each other, I've seen how his message has emerged—one that's not just about his professional career, but also about who he is, his values and beliefs, and his deeply personal and courageous reflection on his life's journey. In the pages that follow, you'll see that Gerry's path was, in many ways, an extremely unlikely one. But it was also one that yielded critical lessons in how to, as Gerry puts it, "turn life's adversities into advantages." Gerry breaks these lessons down into specific steps and tools that anyone can use to overcome setbacks and thrive in disruptive times.

This book comes at a critical time. Many of us are feeling overwhelmed by disruptive forces coming from many fronts—the COVID-19 pandemic, social and political unrest, and environmental disasters, just to name a few. This book offers a message of hope. Gerry explains how disruption—even the extreme disruption we’re facing—also brings opportunity. He provides a guide for how people can learn to navigate past the challenges of the moment and find the opportunities that are inevitably on the other side of the disruption.

There have been times in my own career when I’ve been faced with obstacles and uncertainty—and I’ve had to learn to adapt and change my mindset in order to overcome them. Gerry’s book, *The Thriving Mindset*, offers real, tangible methods and thought-provoking exercises that will guide readers through even the most overwhelming and uncertain times, and offer them clarity in a world barraged by disruption.

Dorie Clark
September 2020
New York City

LETTER TO THE READER

Dear Reader:

I've been thinking about the word *crucible* a lot over the last several months. A crucible is defined as a “*severe test*” or “*a situation in which concentrated forces interact to cause change.*”

As I completed writing this book—a book on thriving through disruption—we were in the eleventh month of the COVID-19 pandemic, arguably the most significant disruption in a century. More than 410,000 people in the U.S. have already died from COVID-19—that's more than the number of Americans who died in World War II. By the time you read this letter, the COVID death toll will be higher. But, the disruption caused by COVID is much broader: 30 million Americans—roughly one in five people—have lost their jobs because of COVID; food pantries across the country report surges in hunger—because many people who lost jobs were already living on the edge; economists warn of long-term economic damage and a recovery that may take years. And, at the same time, we're forced to reckon with societal ills that have festered for far too long: racial injustice in the U.S.; police violence against innocent Black and Brown people; climate change that's causing record-breaking wildfires and

storms; the continuing impact of economic inequality—just to name a few. This is truly a time when *concentrated forces are interacting to cause change*.

For me, part of the *crucible* has been testing whether the ideas I put forth in this book are equal to the challenges of this moment. When I began writing this book, almost two years ago, I had no idea humanity would be facing disruption at the scale of COVID-19 when the book went to press, and so, this book is not about the pandemic. However, I've also come to believe that the ideas in the following chapters are extremely relevant to the disruption and uncertainty of this moment.

One of the most important principles I put forward is that disruption is always accompanied by opportunity. Some of the greatest achievements are, in fact, the response to some kind of disruption. I hope the tools I provide for cultivating *The Thriving Mindset* will help you find those bright spots of opportunity amid the disruption, no matter what the coming months bring.

Sincerely,
Gerry Valentine



CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING *THE THRIVING MINDSET*



Why does change, uncertainty, and disruption cause some people to break and others to break records? This is a question I've been drawn to for most of my life—a question that has become more important than ever before.

We're living through one of the most disruptive periods in human history. We're witnessing rapid change that's impacting virtually every aspect of how we live and how we work. It's not just the scale of change, but also the pace of change, that is causing a lot of anxiety, fear, and even pessimism. Entire industries become obsolete virtually overnight, companies struggle to evolve and adapt, and even highly-educated professionals can feel under threat as they struggle to keep pace.

However, there's a different perspective on disruption, one that embraces it as a source of opportunity. People who take this perspective are able to turn the anxiety into excitement. They respond to disruption with hope and innovation, rather than descending into fear and pessimism. And they

utilize change and uncertainty as an advantage. They are the ones who often go on to break records.

For almost thirty years, I've worked at some of the world's most prestigious Fortune 100 companies—companies that were not only successful but also faced tremendous upheaval and disruption. I've coached leaders in a broad range of organizations—from scrappy start-ups to global giants—all of which needed to navigate disruption and change. My personal life experience has also required me to negotiate a tremendous amount of disruption and uncertainty. I've learned something important about what it takes to succeed in the face of disruption, and about what sets the people who succeed apart from everyone else. I call it *The Thriving Mindset*.

People who cultivate a *Thriving Mindset* see change, disruption, and uncertainty as a source of opportunity. They prepare themselves so that they are ready to take advantage of opportunity—when the time is right, they seize opportunity. People who cultivate a *Thriving Mindset* suffer setbacks like anyone else, but instead of just surviving, they learn, adapt and grow, and ultimately become better because of—not in spite of—whatever disruption they've experienced. That's what allows them to go on to break records, rather than being broken.

This book provides the skills and day-to-day practices needed to develop *The Thriving Mindset*. It is written as a hands-on guide for successfully navigating disruptive change and for finding the opportunities to excel that disruptive change often presents. In the following chapters, you'll find stories and case studies from my own experience; the companies I've worked with, known, or studied; and the many talented individuals I've had the very great privilege to coach

and advise. For the sake of confidentiality, I've substituted fictional names and altered any identifiable details to keep the anonymity of those mentioned. Equally, I will share a set of proven assessments, tools, and frameworks I've developed over my career and personal life that will give you the ability to thrive through disruption.

Collectively, if we create more people who, rather than being broken by disruptions, can become the ones to break records, we can create a better world.

WHY THE THRIVING MINDSET IS CRITICAL

To understand *The Thriving Mindset* and why it's so critical, we first must understand two different perspectives on today's world. From one perspective, we're living in a time of unprecedented opportunity, and there's evidence that many companies have ridden that wave: innovative new enterprises like Zoom, Netflix, Slack, and many others are making their mark, defining entirely new markets, and displacing long-standing incumbents. Technology, remote work, and globalization have made it possible to perform many jobs from anywhere in the world, allowing many people to become free agents—liberated from being shackled to a single employer. Innovative technologies have also created entirely new, in-demand, and well-compensated professions—jobs like big data analyst, social media manager, and SEO specialist didn't exist a decade ago. And because technology continues to erase barriers to entry for start-ups, many people have found there has never been a better time to become an entrepreneur. If you have an idea for the next great widget, you can literally create a website on Squarespace tonight and start

selling on Amazon tomorrow. That's how many of today's most successful billionaires started—people like Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, and Jack Dorsey.

But many people in the U.S. are facing a very different reality: they are being left out. They are being left behind. They are at the breaking point. They feel overwhelmed by disruption, and they are unable to keep up with the pace of change. Put plainly, they spend most of their time frightened about the future. Every time an innovative start-up disrupts a long-standing industry incumbent, the people who work for that incumbent (typically numbering in the thousands) are also disrupted. The same pace of change and disruption that has led some to innovation, opportunity, and success is taking others to the breaking point.

Here's the big problem we face, both as individuals and as a society: we do a very poor job preparing people for a changing world, especially for the kind of disruptive change we have now. In my executive coaching practice, I frequently meet individuals who are desperately searching for a place where they'll be "safe" from change and disruption. Sometimes, they think safety can be found through a career change or getting in with a particular company. Often, they long for the kinds of careers their parents had, where you could get a job with a "good company," work hard and do the right thing, and expect to move up along a set career path until retirement.

I've seen the same dynamic in organizations. I've worked with many companies (both large and small) that found themselves facing some significant disruptive change in their business. It might have been the entry of a new competitor, the loss of exclusivity on a patent, or a new technology that

made their core product obsolete. In many cases, leaders at those organizations desperately try to return to the safety of a past that no longer exists. It's a dangerous pursuit that generally ends in disaster.

My answer to those seeking safety is always the same: *The career expectations our parents had are about a past that will never return. There are no safe companies or careers. The only safety you will find is the safety you create for yourself.*

UNDERSTANDING TODAY'S PACE OF CHANGE

Ultimately, *The Thriving Mindset* is about understanding the change we see in today's world and preparing for the pace, scope, and complexity of that change.

Here are several key elements I'm witnessing:

- **New technology is emerging quickly and impacting very large numbers of people.** Social media is perhaps the most dramatic example of how this rapid rise is changing social norms. Today, there are approximately 3.5 billion social media users worldwide (Clement, Number of global social network users 2017–2025, 2020); that's 45% of the global population. For the first time in history, almost half of humanity has the ability to instantly connect with one another. The three biggest social media platforms are each enormous—Facebook: 2.5 billion monthly active users (MAUs); YouTube: 1.9 billion MAUs; and WhatsApp: 1.5 billion MAUs (Lua, n.d.). To put these numbers into more perspective, consider this: there are more Facebook users than Christians (Hackett and McClendon, 2017)—and consider that it

took Christianity over 2,000 years to reach those numbers. Facebook did it in just 15 years. Together, these new social media platforms, along with other new technologies, have had a dramatic impact on how we live and interact with one another.

- **New technologies have created entirely new (previously unimaginable) companies, and they are decimating long-standing incumbents.** The smartphone is less than 20 years old, but it has enabled companies like Uber, Airbnb, and Amazon to become dominant forces that have disrupted long-standing industries. Airbnb now books more hotel nights than the top five hotel chains (Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide, Intercontinental Hotel Group, Wyndham Worldwide, and Accor Hotel Group) combined (McDermid, Airbnb's number of listings surpasses rooms held by top five hotel brands combined, 2017).
- **The rise of big tech, and the start-ups it has helped build, has caused companies to turn over faster than ever before.** More than 50% of the companies that were on the Fortune 500 list in the year 2000 are no longer there (Bonnet, Buvat, and KVJ, n.d.). That's because they've been replaced with newer companies with more innovative ideas.
- **Advancements in technology have already displaced many low-skilled workers, and there's more displacement to come.** Manufacturing in the United States has been in decline since the 1970s, shrinking from 28 percent of total employment in 1960 to eight percent in 2017 (DeSilver, 2017). There's a popular narrative about manufacturing "repatriation" since 2008, but the true picture is more

nuanced. The manufacturing that has returned is highly automated, meaning far more work can be done with far fewer workers. Industrial robots are now burning welds, painting cars, assembling products, handling materials, and packaging and shipping things. This trend toward automation is accelerating. For example, Amazon started exploring the use of robotics in 2012 with the purchase of a young robotics company called Kiva Systems, giving them ownership over a new breed of mobile robots that can move freely around factories by reading barcodes placed on the floor. Today, Amazon has deployed more than 200,000 factory robots (Del Rey, 2019) and credits the devices with improving both speed and efficiency in the company's operations (Amazon Staff, n.d.).

- **Better-educated, higher-paid workers will be the next to be impacted.** A new study by the Brookings Institute (Muro, Winton, and Maxim, 2019) projects that high-skilled professionals like radiologists, legal professionals, optometrists, sales professionals, management analysts, computer programmers, and many others may be the most impacted by new technologies, like Artificial Intelligence (AI). We've already seen signs of this shift. For example, there is already AI technology that is better at identifying cancer on test results than a human radiologist (Grady, 2019). This is a dramatic departure from the prior perspective that only low-skilled workers needed to worry.
- **The future of work will look very different from today.** Some have estimated that up to one-third of the U.S. workforce could be displaced by automation by 2030 (Manyika, Lund, et al., Jobs lost, jobs gained: What the future of work will mean for jobs, skills, and wages, 2017).

In the future, there will be far less manual work, and people will be required to work in tandem with computers. For example, no one currently expects the aforementioned AI technology to completely replace human radiologists, but rather that doctors and other professionals will use these types of technologies to improve productivity. This also means that workers at all levels will need to rapidly learn new technologies in order to keep pace with each successive advancement.

- **People are feeling more pressure.** Companies that have spurred the “gig” economy (companies like Uber, Handy, and Lyft) have moved many people into an unpredictable lower-paying, less secure lifestyle. Recent college grads often struggle to find employment, and many people still have not recovered from the losses of the “Second Great Recession” of 2008/2009. The Baby Boomer generation was especially hard hit by the last recession, and many are finding that they’ll need to work to a much later age than they had anticipated (Thompson, 2011). This means that they’ll retire *much* later than expected (if they retire at all) and be exposed to even more change and uncertainty through their careers. Moreover, the fact that Baby Boomers are not retiring means that many Generation Xers are finding it harder to progress in their careers because Baby Boomers haven’t exited, compounding the impact of the Great Recession on the younger generation (Urban, 2019).
- **We’re seeing unanticipated negative consequences from technologies that were supposed to connect us.** In theory, creating the ability for vast portions of humanity to connect with one another offers an incredible opportunity

for mutual understanding and collaboration. That was the anticipated benefit of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and others. In reality, social media has also provided a forum for misinformation, hate-speech, and fomenting discontent and social anxiety. Here are just a few examples: social media has been used by foreign government to interfere in national elections; the lack of fact-checking and journalistic integrity (as exists in traditional media) has opened the door for online disinformation campaigns; and social media platforms have become a forum for hate groups and white supremacists to gather followers.

- **It's more than just technology-driven disruption: widespread financial disruptions are also causing tremendous distress.** Technology-driven change is not the only source of anxiety. It's not even the biggest. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), financial stress is the number one cause of anxiety in the United States. At the beginning of 2020, the United States was in the longest economic expansion in history. However, large numbers of people were in financial distress. That's because most of the economic gains were going to the ultra-rich. The middle class was actually shrinking, and poverty rates were on the rise. Some economists estimate that half the American population is living under what is called "financial distress," meaning that they are living paycheck-to-paycheck and have very little (if anything) in savings. Some studies have shown that 40 percent of Americans would struggle to cover an unexpected expense of as little as \$400; so, a disruption like a lost job or medical emergency could quickly land them in a desperate

situation. (Gabler, 2016). Then came the COVID pandemic which, at the time of this writing, had plunged an additional eight million Americans into poverty. (We'll talk more about personal finances in Chapter 9, Understanding Wealth and Creating Financial Health.)

WE'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR DISRUPTIVE CHANGE

As daunting as the pace of change may feel right now, there is a historical precedent. The industrial revolution that started in the 1700s brought a similar level of widespread disruption. In fact, some have called what we're witnessing a "fourth industrial revolution" (Schwab, n.d.). I believe we can gain insight into what's happening now by examining the prior waves of disruptive change—the three prior industrial revolutions—each of which has important lessons.

The first industrial revolution began in Great Britain in the early 18th century and spread to other parts of the world from there (The Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). It was spurred largely by the invention of the coal-fired steam engine, which led to the automation of factories and a shift from manual production processes to machine-powered manufacturing. The second industrial revolution happened in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (The Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). It was characterized by a growth in global technology, like the introduction of mass electrification, the electric motor, the incandescent lightbulb, and electric communication like the telegraph. The second industrial revolution also included rapid expansion of many of the inventions of the first, including railroads, the steam locomotive, and the steamship.

Together, the first and second industrial revolutions had a massive impact on economies and living standards. They are credited with lifting millions out of poverty, enhancing the quality of life, and expanding human lifespans. For example, the average life expectancy today in the developed world is more than double the 37-year average life expectancy in the early 1700s (Roser, Ortiz-Ospina, and Ritchie, 2019). But, if you look at what was going on at that time, it was a story about disruption and struggle.

The early industrial revolutions decimated the agricultural and handworker economies that had preceded them. Rural communities were destroyed, and the people who lived in those communities were displaced as populations migrated toward urban centers in search of work. Skilled craftspeople—many of whom had spent decades in apprenticeships—found themselves out of work because similar goods could now be mass-produced at much lower costs. Prior to the rise of the trade union movement in the mid-19th century, industrialization created dangerous work environments, sweatshops, child labor, and long hours for subsistence wages. All of these unanticipated consequences are similar to some of the struggles we’re experiencing today.

The third industrial revolution, which began in the 1970s, included the rise of the semiconductor, the beginning of digitization with mainframe computing, and the automation of manufacturing. It was the beginning of globalization, with new technologies that allowed companies to disaggregate manufacturing and produce their goods virtually anywhere in the world. The combination of computerization, manufacturing automation, and increased globalization has meant increased opportunities in many developing countries. It also

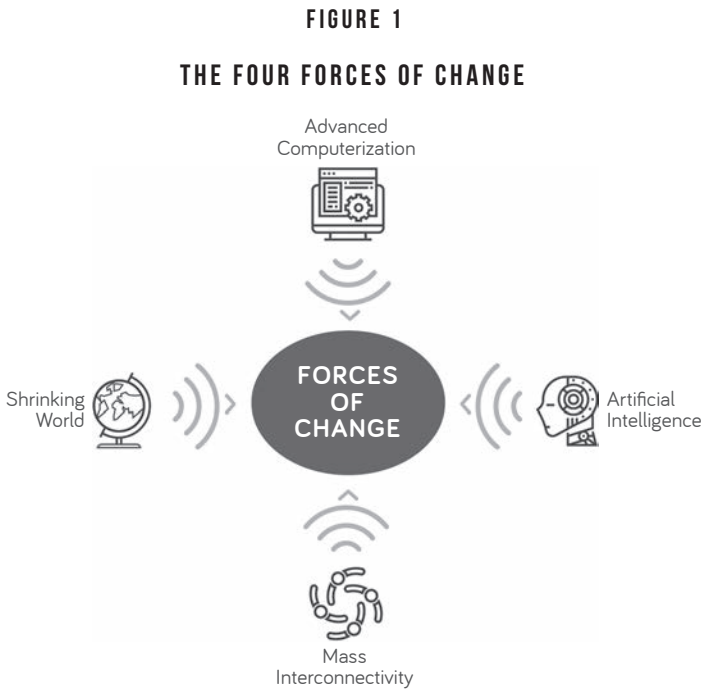
led to the rise of many high-skilled jobs in the United States, and is thus sometimes referred to as the emergence of a “knowledge economy.” However, it also led to the decline of manufacturing in the United States, the loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs, and an economic decline across much of middle America.

A FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND THE FOUR FORCES OF CHANGE

We are now in a “fourth” industrial revolution. It is further accelerating and expanding some of the trends we’ve seen in past stages. It is also introducing entirely new dynamics. I believe we can think of this fourth industrial revolution in the context of four forces of change:

- *Advanced Computerization*
- *Artificial Intelligence*
- *Mass Interconnectivity*
- *A Shrinking World*

Advanced Computerization is the rate at which computer technology has improved and is becoming integral to human society. Consider how many tasks we do on our smartphones every day, and often without a second thought. The apps you use on a daily basis to browse your Twitter feed or Instagram, update your LinkedIn profile, shop on Amazon, watch your favorite Hulu or Netflix show, and post to Facebook all require far more computing power than NASA used to send the Apollo spacecrafts to the moon. Today, the smallest computers perform tasks that would have been unimaginable



just 20 years ago, and our mobile devices provide access to a massive amount of human knowledge.

But computers are continuing to get faster, better, smaller, and cheaper. Newer technologies are on the horizon, and they have the potential to be millions of times more powerful—they’ll make our current devices look even more antiquated than the punch card machines of the 1960s. On October 23, 2019, Google announced a major breakthrough: the world’s first “quantum processor.” (Gibney, 2019). Quantum computing is an entirely different approach to computing and one that promises to be millions of times faster and more powerful than the fastest machines we have today. The device that Google built took just minutes to perform a calculation that would take today’s largest

supercomputers 10,000 years to complete. Quantum computing is still in its infancy, and there are many technical challenges to overcome, but the technology is on the way. In the foreseeable future, computers will be even more integrated into our lives, accomplishing far more complex tasks—things we currently can't even imagine.

Artificial Intelligence. It's not just that computers are getting faster and better—they're getting "smarter" too. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has enabled computers to accomplish tasks that were previously thought to be uniquely human—unimaginable for machines—and computers are outperforming humans on some of these tasks. IBM's Watson supercomputer came to notoriety several years ago when it beat the world champion at Jeopardy! Since then, IBM scientists have focused on far more serious tasks, like oncology. Watson now has an accuracy rate of 90% in diagnosing lung cancer; the average accuracy rate for a human physician is only 50% (Steadman, 2013). That's because Watson is able to assimilate millions of patient records and other medical data—far more information than any human physician could review in a lifetime. Watson then develops its own understanding of how to identify cancer—a process called *machine learning*, which allows the computer to out-perform a human.

AI technology and machine learning are now being applied to a vast array of tasks—things like translating languages, autonomous self-driving vehicles, lip-reading, and facial recognition. Microsoft is even working on AI technology to help deliver certain types of psychotherapy (called cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT) to improve outcomes for people suffering from conditions like depression and anxiety

disorders (Belgrave and Thieme, 2019). One entertaining example of AI's rapid growth and vast potential is the Boston Dynamics autonomous robot, Atlas. Three years ago, Atlas could barely walk. In late 2019, Boston Dynamics released a video of this humanoid robot performing a gymnastics routine, including tumbling, splits, and twists, that a human gymnast would require decades of training in order to master (Porter, 2019).

As Google's CEO, Sundar Pichai, has said, "AI is one of the most important things humanity is working on," and that AI has the potential to be "more profound than electricity or fire." (McCraken, 2018)

Mass Interconnectivity. The third major force of change is about what the advent of technology has meant for how humans interact. Many people believe that technology has made people more isolated and lonelier. While that's true in some ways, there is another perspective: Thanks to the Internet, and our handheld web-devices, humanity is more interconnected than ever before. This interconnection has a host of ramifications, both good and bad. If you have a smartphone, you can make direct contact with anyone else on the planet who has an Internet-enabled device. As of the writing of this book, there are approximately 4.6 billion Internet users; that is almost 60% of the global human population (Clement, Global digital population as of July 2020, 2020). This means we can now share ideas more readily and with more people than ever before. But those ideas can also include things like fake news and hate speech. And there's another unanticipated outcome: those who don't have Internet access (40% of the world's population) face a serious opportunity gap (A. Wong, 2018).

Mass interconnectivity has already enabled entirely new business models, like Uber, Airbnb, and the self-publishing industry. It has caused the collapse of barriers to entry in countless industries, and it's enabled many entrepreneurs to bring novel ideas to market and compete toe-to-toe with industry giants. It has also caused tremendous disruption in long-standing industries (like taxi cab drivers, hotels, and traditional book publishers). As mass interconnectivity continues to increase, there will be an even greater impact on society.

A Shrinking World. One additional outcome of mass interconnectivity is that the world's geographical barriers are disappearing, creating a phenomenon known as "a shrinking world." This process began in the third industrial revolution (during the 1990s) when the advent of project management software, along with the early Internet, allowed complex projects to be disaggregated in smaller parts, so the work could be distributed across large geographies, possibly around the world. That provided economic opportunities for many poor regions of the world who had previously been shut out by geography. It also led to downward pressure on wages (and resentment) in rich countries like the United States. Today, the world is smaller than ever. Software platforms like Fiverr, 99designs, and UpWork™ allow freelancers from around the world to compete head-to-head in ways never seen before. The world of tomorrow will be even smaller.

THE BIG DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TODAY AND THE PAST

At the time of the first industrial revolution, the average human life-span (in the United Kingdom, the epicenter of

the industrial revolution) was approximately 37 years. The next major wave of change, the second industrial revolution, happened a century later. This meant that people living in that era had three human life-spans to adapt to the disruption. At the time of the second industrial revolution the average human life-span was still only approximately 40 years. It would be another 80 years before the next major wave of change (the third industrial revolution) so people still had multiple life-spans to adapt.

Today, with the fourth industrial revolution, things are very different. Change is happening at a much faster pace, there are simultaneous and overlapping waves of change, the average life expectancy in the U.S. is now 79 years (Center for Disease Control & Prevention, n.d.) and, as mentioned previously, we're working much longer. This means that people now need to adapt to multiple waves of disruption within a single human life-span. That's a major reason why today's disruptive change feels so daunting. It's also why cultivating a *Thriving Mindset* is critical.

RESISTING CHANGE IS UNPRODUCTIVE AND DANGEROUS

In the early stages of the first industrial revolution (between 1811 and 1816), a group of textile workers—known as the Luddites—sabotaged factory machines and burned mills in resistance to the advancement in manufacturing. The Luddites were skilled artisans and craftspeople who blamed mechanization for forcing down wages and threatening their livelihoods. They also objected to the fact that factory looms allowed unskilled, unapprenticed workers to take over their

jobs, thereby devaluing the skills they had spent years developing. The Luddites feared that industrialization would ultimately destroy their communities and way of life. The parallels between the Luddites' plight and the concerns many people have about current-day advancement are striking.

The Luddites were correct about the threat, and their fears and grievances were, in some ways, justified. The early stages of the industrial revolution ushered in barbaric and exploitative labor practices and industrializing destroyed much of the craft-based artisan economy the Luddites depended on. However, their resistance to advancement was unproductive—and ultimately self-destructive. The act of “machine-breaking” was criminalized by the British Parliament and sometimes carried a death penalty (The Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.). The British military intervened on behalf of mill owners, many Luddites were killed, and the rebellion was violently crushed.

The cautionary tale from the Luddites' story is that, throughout human history, once the genie of advancement (and advancing knowledge) has been released from the bottle, there's no going back. This has applied to advancements like the wheel, fire, the steam engine, electricity, the computer chip, and, most recently, AI technology.

The Luddites were a case of an active, violent, and ultimately dangerous resistance to change. There are also more passive examples of resistance to change, and they too carry peril. These include people who might resist a corporate change initiative; or refuse to learn a new technology tool; or long to turn back the clock to a simpler, less tech-enabled way of life. The peril is that the rest of the world will continue to move forward (to learn, adapt, and evolve), while you remain

mired in the past. People who are staunchly resistant to change ultimately find themselves left behind. Rather than meeting change with fear and resistance, a more productive perspective is to recognize that disruptive change always brings challenges. There are opportunities for people who can see past those challenges, thrive through the disruptions, and potentially come up with creative solutions to those challenges.

WHY THE THRIVING MINDSET IS CRITICAL AT THIS MOMENT IN HISTORY

As in the past, the changes we see today are causing enormous pain for a lot of people. Some are responding to that pain by going down a dark path—one that’s based on fear, and that taps into some of the worst parts of human nature. Luddite-like actions and reactions are surfacing again in today’s environment, in a very dangerous way.

American manufacturing—which once formed the foundation of the American middle-class—has been on the decline since the 1970s. Many middle-American, “rust-belt” communities have been devastated by the decline. Workers in these areas grew up believing they’d have access to steady, good-paying jobs that don’t require extensive education, just like their fathers—and perhaps grandfathers—had. Instead, they have watched helplessly as the factories that supported their communities for generations have abruptly closed. The economic damage is often permanent because there’s typically no way to recover the scale of economic activity that has been lost. People in these communities—areas that comprise large swaths of the country—are left feeling abandoned, frightened, and angry.

That's what happened in Lordstown, Ohio, a community with a story that's become typical in middle-America. A small community in the northeastern part of the state, Lordstown was formerly home to a large General Motors (GM) assembly plant, which had been in operation since 1966. It was the largest employer in the county, at its peak, employing over 10,000 workers. However, the plant had been in decline (and reducing headcount) for two decades, as GM sought more cost-effective manufacturing solutions. In November 2018, GM announced that it would be eliminating all remaining jobs and closing the plant permanently (Tavernise, 2019). The plant closure was devastating to the community. It's estimated to have had an \$8 billion impact on the local economy (Kalfman, n.d.), as the GM plant—even after years of downsizing—was still the largest employer in the area.

In 2020, there was some good news: a new company purchased the defunct GM plant—Lordstown Motors, a startup that builds electric pickup trucks (Domonoske, 2020). But the news wasn't all good: the jobs would not be returning at anywhere near the previous scale. The electric pickup truck was much simpler to manufacture, and the plant had plans to modernize to include far more automation.

The story that unfolded in Lordstown Motors (e.g., factories returning, but using fewer workers) is a typical story for modern-day manufacturing: production processes have been optimized to be much simpler, and therefore require fewer workers; much of the work is automated, and many of the jobs that are created are highly technical and require a college education. Studies have indicated that the vast majority of manufacturing job losses in the U.S. (approximately 85%) are due

to advancing automation; only 15% are due to outsourcing and globalization (Hicks and Devaraj, 2015). Even though there has been a steep decline in factory jobs, manufacturing output in the U.S. has grown (Hicks and Devaraj, 2015)—that’s because automation has allowed companies to produce more while employing fewer workers.

Despite the increase, there is still a false popular narrative that American jobs have been shipped to Mexico, China, and other global developing economies. That false narrative is a huge problem. It’s a big part of what has led to a wave of resentment and a demand to restore a way of life many Americans viewed as their birthright—a way of life with the easily-accessible, good-paying factory jobs their parents and grandparents had. The resentment has unleashed some very dangerous forces—hyper-nationalism, racism, tribalism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia are all on the rise (Hassan, 2019).

Just as with “machine breaking” by the Luddites two centuries ago (who resented the undermining of artisanal craftwork), the current day resentment (with the accompanying dangerous forces) is an ineffective response to disruptive change. It’s misguided and self-destructive.

As history has shown, factory jobs weren’t lost to Mexico, so much as they were lost to a microchip. We have vast portions of the American public who have been left behind by technological advancement, and who now lack the skills to be productive in an advanced 21st-century economy. In the coming years, there will be more pressure. By the year 2030, an additional 20 million jobs around the world could be displaced by automation (Oxford Economics, 2019). The four forces of change will also impact more middle-class

workers, and even upper-middle-class workers, as technology becomes even smarter. The jobs of the future will require more knowledge, more sophisticated ways of thinking, and the ability to evolve and keep pace with change. (We'll talk more about this in Chapter 10, Building Intellectual Capital.) At the same time, American students' performance continues to decline in comparison to their international peers, especially in critical "fourth economic revolution" areas like science and math (Khalil, Jeff and Thompson, 2019).

We have some very big challenges ahead. We need to ensure that people are prepared for our ever-increasing technological prowess (e.g., the ever-increasing expansion of human knowledge), and ensure that those advances improve quality of life across society—not just for a privileged few. Descending into resentment, hate, racism, hyper-nationalism, tribalism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia will not provide the solutions we need. Those dark forces are actually a trap that will prevent us from finding solutions. They are an example of the kind of trap that prevents people from thriving; something I call the *Adversity-Fear-Paralysis Cycle*, which I discuss in Chapter 2.

It's also important to note that the complex problems we face require solutions in many domains—business, politics, economic policy, and social justice—most of which are beyond the scope of this book. (Some excellent titles that delve into these broader domains include, *Arguing with Zombies: Economics, Politics, and the Fight for a Better Future*, by Paul Krugman; *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century*, by Thomas L. Friedman; and *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, by Isabel Wilkerson.)

However, cultivating more people who have a *Thriving Mindset* is an essential part of the answer, which is what I will focus on in this book.

When people develop *The Thriving Mindset*, they can become part of the solution. That's why *The Thriving Mindset* is so critical at this moment in history.

We need individuals who can face up to the kinds of challenging and frightening problems we face, without descending into the dark side of human impulses. We need leaders who can guide people through the kind of disruption and uncertainty we face by appealing to the best within people, rather than by stoking fear and pessimism. And, we need to create a society that recognizes what unites us—our commonalities and interdependency—rather than being divided by difference.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

The time is clearly right for building the skills to thrive in the face of disruption and change, but that's not the only reason I felt called to write this book. Thriving through disruption is very personal for me because it is also the trajectory of my own life's journey. If you read my bio, you'll see that I run my own executive coaching business and that I've also had a long and successful corporate career at multiple Fortune 100 companies like Pfizer and American Express. You'll also see I earned an Ivy League undergraduate degree from Cornell University, as well as an MBA from New York University. But these accomplishments belie something else that is equally important. My bio doesn't talk about how I started out, which was as an African American man, born to a single

mother, and in a very low-income New York City neighborhood in the 1970s.

It was a neighborhood where we were often afraid to walk the streets. Despite my mother working extremely long hours, we struggled financially and we frequently couldn't afford things like heat or electricity. In fact, sometimes we worried about losing our home altogether and winding up on those streets that we feared so much. It was an existence defined by disruption and uncertainty, to say the least.

According to a study by researchers at Stanford, Harvard, and the Census Bureau (Chetty, Jones and Porter, 2018), a young African American man, growing up in the circumstance I did, has approximately a six percent chance (Bradger, 2018) of moving on to the life that I've been fortunate enough to have (Bradger, 2018). When people hear this story and those odds, they often want to know what was the exact moment that things changed for me. In truth, there was no "magic moment." Things changed because of a lot of hard-won lessons in dealing with uncertainty, what it takes to overcome adversity, and ultimately, what it takes to thrive in the face of an extremely disruptive environment—lessons in cultivating *The Thriving Mindset*.

I tell this story because I would later find that those same lessons were also what made me successful in some of the most challenging corporate environments. And, I found that I could craft those early lessons, and many others throughout my career, into a set of tools and everyday practices to help others thrive.

The executive coaching business I now run focuses on sharing those tools and practices. This book is a compilation of the tools and techniques I've developed for cultivating a *Thriving Mindset*. They are based on my own experiences

working in organizations that were going through disruptive change, and my experiences with the many individuals and companies I've had the privilege of helping in my executive coaching practice.

A MESSAGE OF HOPE IN A TIME OF FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY

This book is intended as a message of hope. The coming years will bring many types of disruption, both in our personal lives and in our careers. A lot of people are scared. However, when you equip yourself with the right skills—the skills to cultivate a *Thriving Mindset*—you can turn disruption into an advantage.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

People who will find the book useful include:

- Corporate leaders in organizations or industries undergoing disruptive change
- Entrepreneurs who need to lead businesses in the highly dynamic and uncertain start-up world
- Professionals whose companies are going through disruptive changes like mergers, acquisitions, re-organizations, or others kinds of change
- People taking on new job responsibilities that come with challenges, like a significant promotion
- People facing (or contemplating) a career change
- Professionals in a job search, and who face uncertainty about the future
- Business leaders who want to improve their organization's ability to thrive amid disruption, change, and uncertainty

- Anyone in a leadership position who needs to inspire others through changing or uncertain times
- Parents who want to provide their children with the best skills to navigate the changing and disruptive world they will inherit
- Educators at all levels who want to help their students better understand and thrive in an uncertain world
- Community leaders who want to help their constituents get past the fear and divisiveness that have become prevalent in today's world and to find their way through to courageous, real solutions

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

The book breaks the ability to thrive into specific principles or “dimensions” of a *Thriving Mindset* and explains how these dimensions can support personal and career development, as well as other basic parts of life. I provide case studies to demonstrate the power of each *Thriving Mindset* principle—real-world stories about successful people thriving through disruption, and those who weren't, and what makes the difference between them. I also offer personal perspectives from my own background and career. Here's a sample of what you will gain from this book:

- An understanding of what is at the root of thriving through disruptions, why some people are successful, and why others aren't
- A perspective on the kinds of disruptive change we're facing right now, what they mean, what's similar to disruptive changes in the past, and what's different now

- An understanding of the self-defeating cycle that traps a lot of people, why it prevents them from operating at their best, and how to break out of the cycle
- How to set a clear direction for yourself, one that will act as a North Star during the most uncertain times
- How to cultivate the resources that are needed for success
- How to think outside-of-the-box and innovate, even in the most challenging circumstance
- How to cope with failure
- How to lead others at times of disruption and uncertainty

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS BOOK

There are eleven dimensions of *The Thriving Mindset*—each one detailed by a chapter in this book.

FIGURE 2

THE 11 DIMENSIONS OF THE THRIVING MINDSET



The Adversity, Fear, Paralysis Cycle & Courageous Leaps: Chapter 2 explains the self-defeating cycle that many people fall into: *The Adversity-Fear-Paralysis Cycle*. This cycle acts as a kind of trap, and it prevents people from taking the steps necessary to thrive in the face of disruption. The chapter also explains what it takes to escape the cycle—a process I call taking Courageous Leaps.

Understanding Courageous Leaps: Chapter 3 goes deeper into what it takes to make a Courageous Leap. The chapter looks at the five stages of a Courageous Leap, and why some people get derailed—why they prematurely abandon opportunities, even after they took the first steps toward a promising opportunity.

The Power of Persistence: Chapter 4 explains a critical ability that we all can leverage, the Power of Persistence. You can think of the Power of Persistence as a force that catches you after a setback, and that supports you through struggles. The key is learning how to tap into that power within ourselves.

Creating Your Path: Chapter 5 explains one of the most important parts of thriving—understanding where you want to go. The chapter discusses a process I call “creating a path,” and it explains why understanding your path is more productive than creating the “personal mission statements” that are so popular. The chapter also discusses why your path is not static, but rather something that evolves over time as you learn and grow.

Trading in The Currency of Ideas: Chapter 6 discusses one of the most important things for thriving in a disruptive world; the ability to generate ideas, to think creatively,

and to innovate. I call it Trading in The Currency of Ideas. Many people struggle to think creatively, and most organizations recognize that innovation is in short supply. That's because most people are stuck in what I call "inside the box thinking." This chapter discusses what it takes to break out of that box, why outside-of-the-box thinking is so critical in the world that is emerging, and why most people get stuck "inside of the box" in their thinking.

Building a Practice of Self-Care: Chapter 7 explains why caring for yourself is a critical part of *The Thriving Mindset*, and why self-care is especially important at times of disruption and uncertainty. The chapter dispels some of the myths about self-care, explains why many people find themselves on a slippery slope of very poor self-care (especially at times of disruption and uncertainty), and outlines three important components of good self-care.

Thriving Through Failure: Chapter 8 discusses an important reality—when we stretch ourselves and strive to excel, there will inevitably be setbacks and failures. In fact, failure is almost always part of the process of achievement and growth. This chapter discusses how to persevere through the inevitable setbacks and how to cultivate a mindset that leverages failure as an asset for learning, evolution, and growth.

Financial Health: Chapter 9 discusses a topic that makes many people uncomfortable—money! The chapter dispels popular myths about money, explains the relationship between money and *The Thriving Mindset* (it's not what most people think), and examines a common pitfall that holds many people back—financial shame. The chapter presents a more

productive approach to looking at money and an approach that helps people thrive—Creating Financial Health.

Intellectual Capital: Chapter 10 discusses another critical resource for making the Courageous Leaps that enable people to thrive—Intellectual Capital. The chapter defines what Intellectual Capital is; explains why Intellectual Capital is more important than ever, in the disruptive world that’s emerging (the fourth industrial revolution); and looks at the four components that make up Intellectual Capital.

Social Capital: Chapter 11 discusses the third asset, Social Capital, that (in addition to financial health and Intellectual Capital) is critical for thriving. The chapter looks at why your social connections—or Social Capital—can make or break your ability to thrive in challenging times, and why Social Capital is especially important in today’s fast-paced, dynamic, and hyper-connected world.

The Journey to Self-Acceptance: Chapter 12 looks at the final principle of a *Thriving Mindset*, and one that many people forget: in order to thrive, we must be able to accept and value ourselves. The chapter looks at how, when we look carefully enough, we can find hidden strengths within ourselves, and how—with self-acceptance—these strengths can open the door for tremendous opportunity.

GETTING STARTED

To begin, let’s look at where you currently are with each of the dimensions that make up *The Thriving Mindset*. In the appendix of this book, you will find a copy of *The Thriving Mindset Assessment*. This tool will allow you to identify your specific strengths and weaknesses across each of the

dimensions. (You can also download a printable copy of the assessment form at the special website provided in the appendix).

After you complete the assessment, you'll know which chapters are most important for you, but I recommend you read all the chapters in the order provided. That's because the chapters are written to build upon one another. You will likely also discover helpful insights even in the areas of thriving where you are already strong.

Let's get started!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gerry Valentine inspires people to build resilience—to overcome setbacks, to look at challenges in new ways, and to turn adversity into a source of advantage. Gerry is a public speaker, executive coach, and business advisor with more than 25 years of experience as a Fortune 100 leader. As the founder of Vision Executive Coaching, he is a trusted advisor to corporate executives, business leaders, and entrepreneurs. Gerry specializes in teaching them how to use setbacks as a teacher; how to unlock creativity, imagination, and innovation; and how to use the best within oneself to inspire the very best in others.

Gerry built a career with some of the world's most respected firms, including American Express and Pfizer, where he led multi-million-dollar lines of business. But this was an unlikely path. Gerry's early life was spent in poverty, as the child of a single mother in a low-income part of New York City. He went on to earn a BS in Engineering from Cornell University and an MBA from the New York University Stern School of Management. Along the way, Gerry found that the adversity of his youth helped him develop the resilience he needed to succeed in the corporate world and that building resilience is a skill he can teach others.

Today, Gerry gives keynote talks and workshops across the country on building resilience, leading during difficult times, and finding strategic solutions to challenges. He is a TEDx speaker and a contributor to Forbes.com. Gerry has also lectured on executive leadership at Columbia University, Baruch College, and Colorado State University.

Gerry divides his time between New York City and New Paltz, New York—a picturesque town on the Hudson River Valley. He’s an outdoor enthusiast who enjoys running, cycling, hiking, and skiing. Gerry has also completed eight Ironman Triathlons, five marathons, and many shorter-distance events.

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We're living through the most disruptive time in human history and people are struggling to adapt. The coronavirus pandemic has added more fuel to the fire. How do we move forward? How can you not just survive but *thrive* in this unsettling new world? In **"The Thriving Mindset – Tools for Empowerment in a Disruptive World,"** Gerry Valentine offers a hands-on guide to turn the disruption of today's world to your advantage. Drawing upon his extensive experience, Valentine shares case studies, inspiring personal stories, and valuable lessons learned from the people most successful in the face of disruption. There's never been a better time for a book like this—one that shows you how to navigate these unprecedented times and transform adversity into opportunity.



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