

Praise for *The Vision Code*

‘Most people think vision is something you are born with. Either you have it or you don’t. But from reading Oleg Konovalov’s *The Vision Code*, you will learn that vision is a competence that you can nurture – by thinking boldly, keeping an open mind and getting out of your own way. As a CEO, I’ve come to realize from reading *The Vision Code* that vision is my single most valuable tool. It literally allows you to choose your company’s future’.

The Vision Code is a fascinating blueprint for mastering a vision and becoming a true visionary’.

Eric Schurenberg, CEO at *Inc.* and *Fast Company*

‘Vision is essential to successful leadership, but often misunderstood and poorly conceived. In this insightful guide, Oleg Konovalov lays out his own compelling vision for what visionary leadership consists of and where its value lies, presenting it as a simple yet very practical business tool. *The Vision Code* defines a new stage in visionary leadership development’.

Courtney Fingar, editor-in-chief, *FDI*, New Statesman Media Group

‘Success thrives on a clear and vivid vision that is a property of a few so far. Being able to craft an inspiring vision is what makes the difference between great leaders and conventional managers. So far, it has been thought that visionary leaders are born, that it is a natural gift for solely a few lucky ones. Yet, Oleg’s book, *The Vision Code*, proves the contrary. In a very engaging way, Oleg’s book walks us through a series of interviews and teaches us that every manager can learn how to draft a compelling and inspiring vision.

Having a vision of a vision is a superior mastery that Oleg Konovalov used for presenting vision as a practical business tool accessible to all. *The Vision Code* changes the rules of the game in today’s fast-changing world’.

Antonio Nieto-Rodriguez, a World Champion in Project Management, Thinkers50 ‘Ideas into Practice’ Award, PMI Past Chair, co-founder of the Strategy Implementation Institute and the global movement Brightline

'*The Vision Code* is a remarkable book. Thanks to Oleg Konovalov, vision is no longer a fuzzy concept. It is a powerful management tool that thrives on courage but also on relevance. Vision has value only if it is implementable and has an impact. *The Vision Code* explores how it is achieved. In doing so, Oleg Konovalov has contributed significantly to establishing the theory of vision on firm ground. You should read this book not once, but twice!'

Stephane Garelli, founder of World Competitiveness Center, ex-Managing Director at the World Economic Forum, Professor Emeritus at IMD business school and the University of Lausanne, Switzerland

'A crucial element for leadership success, vision is often tough to develop. Read *The Vision Code* for an in-depth exploration of what it is and how to achieve it!'

Sanyin Siang, Thinkers50 #1 Leadership Coach & Mentor

'*The Vision Code* demystifies the process of defining and following through on a vision, which will become increasingly important as the pace of change accelerates. The compelling stories and examples from leaders across industries and geographies underscore the importance of vision as ideal as well as practical tools to achieving it'.

Deepa Prahalad, design strategist, co-author *Predictable Magic*, Thinkers50 India

'When you have a vision, work becomes an adventure! This beautiful book will inspire the best in you to create your own vision and your own adventure. It is all here for you to discover. Don't miss the chance for a more meaningful career and life! Read, study and share this treasure!'

Chester Elton, the 'Apostle of Appreciation', bestselling author of *The Carrot Principle*, *All In*, and *Leading with Gratitude*

'In this critical, must-read book, Dr. Oleg Konovalov demystifies the practice of creating and achieving a vision, in both professional and personal contexts. His guidance is clear and pragmatic, bringing to light the knowledge that, without strong vision, our purpose cannot be fulfilled. In his search for the golden ratio of vision, he surfaced an exceptionally practical six-step model on how to create and execute vision. He is the visionary of visionaries and can help us all with our life and business destiny'.

Jennifer McCollum, CEO, Linkage, Inc.

‘Oleg Kononov is the “Whisperer of Vision”. He opens a new page in understanding vision and how to make it a reality. *The Vision Code* is an incredible contribution to the business world and to visionary leadership in particular, making it accessible to millions of modern leaders’.

Benjamin Croft, founder and Chairman, WBECS Group

‘*The Vision Code* provides a compelling framework, clear narrative and a sound framework to decode what is a real vision in organisations. Yet, the book is not only deep and fascinating but also extremely practical by providing a roadmap, examples, storytelling. Is a truly remarkable book we cannot afford to miss’.

Paolo Gallo, bestselling author of *The Compass & The Radar*,
ex-Chief Human Resources Officer at the World Economic Forum

‘Oleg Kononov is the true whisperer of vision who reveals its practical nature. In his *The Vision Code*, he offers a simple six-step business tool for creating, constructing, and executing a strong vision. The ultimate reading for all modern leaders’.

Charlene Li, founder of Altimeter, a Prophet Company, *New York Times*
bestselling author of *The Disruption Mindset*

‘*The Vision Code* is packed full of insights and great examples of the value of a clear, compelling vision. Of particular value is the section on execution – an often-neglected aspect of developing a vision: You have to make it real. The book presents a rich, multidimensional view of organizational and personal vision that will expand and enhance any leader’s perspective’.

David B. Peterson, PhD, Senior Director,
Executive Coaching & Development, Google LLC

‘Vision is a topic that we all think we know, so much so that we ignore it. Dr. Oleg Kononov does not. His new book, *The Vision Code*, is an exploration into the origins of vision and its importance to our personal and business lives. Through his comprehensive research and real-life practice, Dr. Oleg Kononov demystifies vision and presents it as a very practical business tool. *The Vision Code* is a must-read for those leaders seeking to define the future in ways that allow organisations, teams and individuals to succeed’.

John Baldoni, Global Gurus Top 30, Inc.com Top 50 Leadership Expert,
bestselling author of 14 books published in 10 languages

‘Having a detailed and compelling vision for a vision is a property of wizards capable of changing the world and helping others become visionaries. In his groundbreaking book, *The Vision Code*, Dr. Oleg Konovalov offers an ultimate and powerful practical toolkit for visionary leaders of all levels. I encourage you to read this book. *The Vision Code* is one of the most important books that can change your life and business’.

*Mohammed Naser Hamdan Al Zaabi,
Director of the Trade Promotion Department, UAE Ministry of Economy*

‘Oleg Konovalov is the “Wizard of Vision”. With *The Vision Code*, he takes the fuzzy concept of vision and turns it into a practical, versatile and essential tool that helps leaders position themselves as visionaries. I highly recommend this book. It’s rich with wisdom and full of lessons we can put to immediate use’.

*Sally Helgesen, bestselling author of *How Women Rise*,
The Female Vision and *The Web of Inclusion**

‘I love Oleg Konovalov’s book and it’s messages and teachings around vision. Establishing a strong vision is the single most important step for embarking on a change process. All executives and leaders should read Oleg’s book because it breaks down the elements and practices of visionary leadership. Visionary leaders manage their energy rather than time – which is such an important concept for everyone to understand and perhaps most importantly to respect. Everyone should strive to be a visionary leader, which will help them become aligned with their own individual goals and corporate goals, become more driven toward positive outcomes and focus core values and purpose in life. Bravo Oleg! Awesome work!’

*Louis Carter, CEO of Best Practice Institute and
author of 11 leadership and management books including
Change Champions Field Guide and *In Great Company**

‘*The Vision Code* is a masterpiece that makes you rethink the way you live and do business. The new perspectives that this book presents to you are truly unique and enlightening, and in a league of their own. It will help you find and execute your very own strong vision through the simple six-step process. I found myself wanting to change and rethink my company’s vision and at the same time start working on my own personal life vision’.

Oleg Konovalov’s *The Vision Code* is a fantastic and powerful book. Do yourself a favour and read it!’

Rene Viborg, founder and CEO, Zylinc

‘In *The Vision Code*, Oleg Kononov brilliantly demystifies vision and cracks the code for us by revealing the inner and outer anatomy of visionary leadership. This book is a must-read for leaders who see what others cannot see yet and want to lead their people on a journey of successful execution’.

Nicole Heimann, CEO, Nicole Heimann & Partners AG, author of *How to Develop the Authentic Leader in You*, Marshall Goldsmith Thinkers 50 ‘Leading Global Coach’ Award

‘In *The Vision Code*, Oleg Kononov masterfully shares how the best leaders and highest performing companies have clear and compelling visions that guide them personally as well as their organisations. He brings the concept of vision from the abstract to the tangible and actionable and shares the keys to developing a vision that is both grounded and serves as a compelling North Star’.

Robert Glazer, WSJ bestselling author of *Elevate*, *Friday Forward* and *Performance Partnerships*

‘If you think you have vision and clarity of purpose in your business, this book will shatter that notion. Dr. Oleg Kononov, in his new book, *The Vision Code*, will change the way you see things as a leader. Dr. Kononov helps us break the secret code to a positive and prosperous future by showing us how to create a strong vision that inspires and how to execute on that vision as a leader. This book is an absolute must-read!’

Rhett Power, *Forbes* columnist, co-founder at Courageous Leadership

‘In these unprecedented times, having a clear and strong vision is more important than ever before. We have a chance to recalibrate the way we live and work and make this world a better place. Envisioning the future we want to create is an important part of this process. This book provides a unique and practical approach to developing and implementing a vision and turning it into reality. I warmly welcome this long-anticipated book’.

Prof. Vlatka Hlupic, one of the most influential HR thinkers, author of *The Management Shift* and *Humane Capital*

‘It is rare in the business expert arena when one expert corners the market on a specific topic. With this book, Dr. Kononov has cornered the market on “vision”. His dissection of “vision,” its elements and the

process of creating a vision is nothing short of genius. Bravo for providing a road map for all to follow’.

Dr. Terry Jackson, thought leader, MG100 Coach, author of
Transformational Thinking

‘In *The Vision Code*, Dr. Oleg Konovalov masterfully guides us into creating our vision. This book is informative, authentic and inspirational. It is a must-read. I encourage all to read it and learn from it’.

Dr. Abraham Khoureis, PhD, author and host of *Leadership & Politics Show with Dr. Abraham*

The Vision Code

The Vision Code

How to Create and Execute
a Compelling Vision for Your
Business

Oleg Kononov

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Foreword

Over the past four decades, I have made a living coaching and educating leaders globally. In doing so, I've come to be the #1 Leadership thinker and #1 Executive Coach in the world. I do this because I have a purpose. I help others become what and who they can be. I help successful people become more successful, and this requires a convincing vision that will resonate with people.

Life does not matter without a purpose. Are you making progress, are you achieving something, are you happy, are you in a good relationship, are you doing what you love doing?

In the world of business, people tend to think that purpose is about money. Here's the dirty secret, money doesn't matter that much. It is a by-product of what you do, a tool to allow you to do more. The truth is, if you have enough money for a moderate lifestyle, money does not matter much. Once basic needs are fulfilled, money is superfluous.

So, what is purpose then? What is it that will reveal meaning in your life? In purely practical terms, it is helping others in some way. And to help others, you need a vision on how to do that.

If you have no vision, why are you here? If all you are doing is eating, breathing and going about daily tasks, you already know that is a life devoid of purpose.

You picked up this book because you know you are missing something. You are missing the thing that will make your life and business meaningful.

This feeling is shared by many, perhaps especially by leaders. Modern leadership depends on vision and direction. If we are getting better with a direction, many still struggle with vision, thinking it unnecessary or that it is beyond them.

Top global thought leader Oleg Kononov has an incredible sense of exploring new areas in leadership and management. With this book, *The Vision Code*, Oleg has proven himself as the da Vinci of visionary leadership.

The Vision Code is a breakthrough book that sets the foundations for a new school of thought. It re-evaluates and reimagines the world of corporations, not to mention our personal lives as lived purposefully. This book puts vision into the spotlight, elevating it beyond a mere mission statement to its rightful place as a fundamental part of long-term success.

With Oleg's guidance, we can understand and break the code to create and structure a clear and compelling vision, how to communicate it and lead it, and above all how to live by it with integrity.

This book presents the creation and development of vision in a simple six-step process, making it accessible to those thinking momentary and the practical, beyond the bottom line. It is a practical guide for leaders of all sorts, as well as a very effective tool for visionary leadership coaching.

Oleg Kononov does not merely rely on his sole store of experience and wisdom. He has spent months interviewing other visionary leaders from around the world and shares their insights throughout *The Vision Code*. The vision is no longer a mystery. It has been elegantly decoded by the master of visionary leadership.

The flow of the book has been carefully designed to take the reader on the vision journey leading to the final destination: from why you need a vision, to how implement it, to re-evaluating the whole process along the way.

As I read *The Vision Code*, I frequently asked myself: 'What can I do better?' Such a simple question – and yet, a question that, when you actively think about it, transforms your life. If you ask 'What can be done better in this book?' the answer is – 'Nothing!' This book decodes vision and presents the practical tools and sophisticated knowledge needed for leaders to put

it at the forefront of their businesses to make a positive, lasting difference.

This book will reinvent you and others around you. Your journey to your successful future starts here.

Life is good.

—**Marshall Goldsmith**
Only two-time Thinkers 50 #1 Leadership
Thinker in the world
#1 Executive Coach

INTRODUCTION

In Search of the Golden Ratio of Vision

We are living in a time of leadership blindness. All leaders claim to have a vision. At best, the vast majority are only pretending. In truth, about 0.1% of business, social or political leaders actually have a vision.

Modern leaders often cannot explain what vision is and how it can be made a reality. They substitute money and performance indicators for vision, forgetting that, without vision, no amount of time, money or resources can help. As Carl Jung suggested, ‘Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate’.

The reality of the Digital Age revealed that, while we mention the importance of vision daily, the majority of people have little if any understanding of it. Yet, a solid vision is a necessary foundation for any successful organisation.

We desperately need leaders of all levels to be armed with an understanding of vision as never before. Without this, there will be no long-term progress.

We desperately need more visionary leaders. Visionaries such as Lee Kuan Yew (16 September 1923 to 23 March 2015), the first Prime Minister of Singapore, transformed the country from a ‘third world country to a first world country in a single generation’; Carl Gustav Mannerheim (4 June 1867 to 27 January 1951), the President of Finland, is still voted as the greatest Finn of all time and the father of modern Finland; and Nelson Mandela (18 July 1918 to 5 December 2013), a South African anti-apartheid

revolutionary, political leader and philanthropist who served as President of South Africa from 1994 to 1999, is named ‘the father of the nation’ and ‘a global icon’. There are many others to whom we still pay tribute.

Vision as We See It

What we do really understand about vision?

Having a vision and being able to make it a reality differentiates leaders from managers. When there is no vision, no amount of effort or money can help. With vision, real change can be achieved. The world is conquered by visionaries and surrenders its advantages and opportunities to them unconditionally. Even the most sophisticated and time-tested system can be defeated by someone with a sufficiently strong vision.

Vision creates the fertile ground on which we build the future. How we create a productive and prosperous space – for all stakeholders, employees, customers, partners and future users of this eco-system – depends on visionary leaders.

Having a vision is like looking at the present from the future’s standpoint. Being a visionary is similar to putting one’s own signature on the future while being here and now. A visionary defines how soon the future reality will come. In this sense, vision is like a time machine. In looking from a desired future back to the present, one can envision all the steps needed to get from here to there.

There is only a slim chance for success, breakthrough initiatives, incredible achievements and an abundance of opportunities in a flat, two-dimensional reality. A solid vision opens up a multidimensional space in which anything is possible. Vision is the most powerful and versatile tool we have to make a difference in the world around us.

Questioning the Understanding of Vision

The future will come whether you have a vision or not. But without a vision, you will be lost. It will be a reality you don't accept as it doesn't reflect your desires. And if you don't have a vision, do any desires you have even matter?

I've been thinking about this for the past 24 years. I even remember the start of this path as if it happened yesterday. I climbed to the top of a mountain in the middle of nowhere. I sat at the top and gazed around into this great tranquil wilderness, basking in the solitude.

Suddenly I realised how little, powerless, inconsequential, imperceptible and insignificant I am compared with this world. Something whispered within me – 'what is the meaning of what I do? What do I do for the future? Who am I, and where do I want to be? How I can escape mediocrity?' Since then I've been thinking about vision from different angles.

A vision cannot be bought. It can't be merely found. It has to be created.

In this book, we will thoroughly explore the concept of vision. Why is it important, and for whom? How do visionaries define vision, and how do they experience it? What common leadership and personal traits are shared by visionaries? What is the difference between ordinary and visionary leadership? If we consider vision as a mental or psychological construction, then what elements of it are the most critical? How do these incredible leaders construct their vision and make it a reality? How do visionaries prepare or reinvent themselves to make a vision a reality? How do they act as visionaries and constructors of a positive future? What struggles and difficulties do they face, and how do they overcome them?

In searching for answers and practical solutions, I decided to talk with today's visionaries, those who are changing the way

people work and live, to open a window into how they think, act and construct their vision.

I decided to discuss these questions with 19 exceptional visionaries from across the globe, representing different industries and backgrounds:

- Marshall Goldsmith, #1 Leadership Thinker in the world
- Martin Lindstrom, #1 Branding expert in the world
- Garry Ridge, Chairman and CEO of WD-40 Company
- David Katz, founder and CEO of Plastic Bank
- Stuart Crainer, co-founder, Thinkers50
- John Spence, one of the top 100 business thought leaders in the world and business advisor to companies worldwide
- Feyzi Fatehi, CEO of Corent Tech, Inc.
- Olga Uskova, President and founder of Cognitive Technologies Group
- Mark Thompson, world's #1 CEO Coach, 30 Global Gurus and a Venture Investor
- Asheesh Advani, President and CEO of Junior Achievement (JA) Worldwide
- Adam Witty, founder and CEO of Advantage Media/ForbesBooks
- H.E. Ms. Sania A. Ansari, Chairperson at Ansari Group Ltd and Chairperson at United Refugee Green Council Canada
- Thomas Kolditz, PhD, Executive Director, Doerr Institute for New Leaders at Rice University, Brigadier General (Retired)
- Prof. Amit Kapoor, Chairman of Institute for Competitiveness, India
- Alex Goryachev, Managing Director at Cisco Innovation Centers, *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author of *Fearless Innovation*

- Noel Ferguson, founder and Executive Chairman of Institute of One World Leadership (IOWL)
- Prof. Nabhit Kapur, Psy.D, founder of PeacefulMind Foundation
- Raphael Louis, Leader and President of the National Coalition Party of Canada (NCPC)
- Dr. Babalola Omoniyi, founder and Executive Director of Pan African Leadership and Entrepreneurship Development Centre (PALEDEC)

These people are simply exceptional, and I will introduce them and their stories in the pages of this book. They enthusiastically shared their personal stories, painstaking experience, invaluable lessons and practical recommendations.

In Search of the Golden Ratio

It might seem like it is enough to find the answers to these questions by gleaning the best that these visionaries have to offer and synthesising them in to a whole. Still, my pragmatic entrepreneurial mind said – *no, what else can I offer?*

Vision holds the secret code to a positive and prosperous future. But how can we break this code?

The *golden ratio* or the *divine proportion* as a term was coined by Luca Pacioli in his book *De Divina Proportione (The Divine Proportion)*, published in 1509. This book was illustrated by Leonardo Da Vinci with three-dimensional geometric solids and templates for script letters in calligraphy, and this is why the idea of the golden ratio is often attributed to him. Da Vinci's masterpieces *The Last Supper*, *La Jaconde (Mona Lisa)* and *The Vitruvian Man* made use of the golden ratio.

The golden ratio describes the beauty sensed in the harmony and proportion in different spheres such as art, nature,

math, design and the human body. We subconsciously prefer and admire objects and shapes that properly use the golden ratio.

Luca Pacioli defined his approach as ‘a work necessary for all clear-sighted and inquiring human minds, in which everyone who loves to study philosophy, perspective, painting, sculpture, architecture, music and other mathematical disciplines will find a very delicate, subtle and admirable teaching and will delight in diverse questions touching on a very secret science’ (Meisner, G.B. 2018).

This book attempts to find the golden ratio of vision and unlock this secret knowledge.

How to Read This Book

Using the analogy of the butterfly effect that describes how small things can have a dramatic impact on complex systems, we can look at vision as a beautiful butterfly that causes enormous changes in the world. It is born somewhere inside of a visionary’s mind and soul, and the visionary decides to give it wings of a certain shape and colour. Then this beauty learns how to spread those wings and fly, creating a new reality and changing the world. As Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett wrote in *Good Omens* (2011), ‘a butterfly flaps its wings in the Amazonian jungle, and subsequently a storm ravages half of Europe’.

I structured the discussion of vision using the same principle as it reflects the four natural stages of a vision’s development. *Part One: Creation* discusses why vision is important, how it comes about and what is needed to create it. *Part Two: Making Vision Strong* sheds light on the core criteria, elements and characteristics of a vivid vision and highlights how leaders should prepare themselves for reaching new heights. *Part Three: Execution* dives into how to make vision a reality and turn it into a practical business tool. *Part Four: Visionary You* looks into how visionaries think and offers recommendations for everyday use.

Let's Break Ground

We are brought into this world as creators, and whether we fulfil our purpose or not entirely depends on our ability to craft a vision and inspire others to share in it. Vision is the core property of those who are shaping the future today, and we can't ignore it without ignoring future prospects – whether business or personal.

I invite you to join me on this journey in search of the golden ratio of vision, regardless of whether you are a mature leader or someone at the first stages of your growth. The reward will be not just a well-crafted vision, but the ability to lead others in making that vision a reality.

