

The Three Greatest Adventures

An Interview with Michael Boydell, Founder, Boydell Global

EDITORS' NOTE For 30+ years, Michael Boydell's (theadventureadvantage.com) passion has been studying and working with the unique needs of elite level performers, specifically C-suite executives, professional athletes, global organizational leaders and their teams. He is a former varsity athlete, Ironman finisher, and seasoned executive, holding positions as CEO, start-up founder, and board member with high-growth, international companies. Boydell launched his advisory business in 2009 to an



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exclusive CEO client base and quickly became a go-to expert for global leaders who want to gain more freedom and self-actualization in their busy lives. He has designed and delivered leadership programs for the International Board and global community of facilitators with Young President's Organization in Japan, Australia, Denmark, and the United States. He is an accredited Board Director, has advanced certification in the Birkman Method and Tilt365 leadership tools, and is the creator of The Fear Less Advantage™ framework for whole-life performance. His methods have been successfully utilized in one-to-one advisory relationships, experiential team offsites, board and leadership retreats, organizational growth strategies, and as part of company-wide leadership programs. He is the author of The Adventure Advantage: A Roadmap into Uncertainty, Through Fear, and Onward to Your Heroic Life. Boydell graduated with a BA in psychology from Queen's University and holds an MBA from the Richard Ivey School of Business.

How did you develop your interest in the topic of leadership in teams and organizations?

I experienced firsthand the effect both good and bad coaching and leadership had while competing in sports throughout my youth, and as a varsity basketball athlete in college and graduate school. The complexities involved in aligning a diverse group of talented, high-performing individuals toward realizing a unified goal beyond the reach of any one person fascinated me. I combined a degree in psychology with an MBA and dedicated myself to studying, coaching, and working with elite level performers – C-suite executives, entrepreneurs, athletes – to shape winning cultures, create lasting impact, and achieve bottom-line results ever since.

What was a defining moment that shaped who you are as a leader?

I believe most defining moments come through hitting an impasse or experiencing failure. My first such pivotal growth moment came in my mid-30s as a young executive after years of hard-driving to achieve those ego-seducing trappings of success – the title, the money, the accumulations. After an executive dinner at a posh London restaurant and several-too-many martinis, I found myself back in my hotel room alone, distraught, and feeling like I'd hit rock bottom.

After a long look in the mirror, I realized how far I'd become lost in proving my worth by chasing other people's definitions of who I was supposed to be. It was a powerful and challenging wake-up call – my invitation to hit the “reset” button and get back in control of the life I most wanted to lead. Looking back, that was a catalytic moment to recalibrating my priorities and launching the professional and personal life I thrive in today.

How do you continue to hone your skills as a leadership coach?

As the saying goes, “Beware the coach who doesn't have a coach.” I commit chunks of time each week, enjoy immersive workshops, and take an annual sabbatical to personally test new development modalities that level-up my approach in keeping with the demands facing passionate, driven professionals in the world today.

Regular feedback also plays a vital role in my growth as a leadership coach. Actively seeking feedback from my global network of clients, peers, and elders helps to continually expand my perceptions and shine light into my biases or blind spots. This feedback-driven approach enables fresh innovation in my business model and coaching style, and offers solutions that meet the unique needs and challenges of the professionals, teams, and organizations I work with.

For 25 years, I've been a proponent and participant in mastermind groups, YPO forums, and other forms of peer-to-peer leadership learning circles, investing time to get real with those with shared passion for living an authentic life, creating lasting prosperity, and renewing personal vitality.

What are you seeing as a critical leadership challenge facing global organizations today?

There's no question that the post-pandemic redefinition of “work” and workplace” is a massively disruptive game-changer for organizational leaders today. Any sense of “right” answer remains up for debate, depending on age-and-stage, gender, geography, socioeconomic variables, and type of work. I believe virtual and hybrid work models are here to stay, and while leaders and businesses spend countless hours in search of the ever-elusive “best practice,” there is something that will never change: people are social beings. We need in-person human connection to survive and thrive.

More and more, executives and teams working in a hybrid model are finding value in quarterly, multi-day offsites. I lead what some are calling “radical retreats” as an alternative to the traditional high-cost, low-value corporate boondoggle. This kind of high-energy, regular in-person touch points work incredibly well to hone interpersonal connectivity, foster creative problem-solving, spot new opportunities, and drive winning results – making virtual work far more effective in the time between.

In hybrid situations, I encourage leaders to make the most of the unstructured time when the team is together. Sacrificing an extra hour of productivity pays immediate and downstream dividends in the form of innovation, early-stage risk identification and mitigation, and deeper loyalty through more trusting connections. In the end, you'll have a far more cohesive team, able to produce results beyond any one person, and eager to help each other succeed.

Fully virtual work models may work well for individuals, but prove more challenging when it comes to team performance. In these situations, it's still important to connect by video from time to time for unstructured interactions – one-on-one and as a whole team. These don't have to be long, but they are essential for leaders in communicating priorities, testing for alignment, and building rapport.

How have you used technology to augment your coaching, and in what ways is technology hindering leadership development?

I always advise leaders and coaches to lean into technology rather than avoid it. Its

uses are only accelerating, so we must find ways to utilize new platforms, apps, and AI tools in our work. I personally have found Miro board, ChatGPT, and the expanded apps within Zoom to be additive in my virtual work.

Technology also has its challenges. Despite my nearly two decades as an executive in the tech sector, most of my in-person performance coaching work is low-tech by design. If I can't be effective with a pencil and a blank sheet of paper, or the right set of provocative questions during a walk outside, then I'm probably making things more complicated than necessary. Technology can become a major distraction to inviting real human connection, or may simply offer more things to go wrong.

Perhaps the biggest way I see technology hindering real performance growth and leadership development is that it often seems like a quick fix alternative to making the time for live human interaction. Instead of working with a credible professional, I often see individuals posting a question or a problem they're having on social media, or they text the group chat. They feel like they are addressing an issue and getting the help or connection they need. Unfortunately, the result is usually someone else's advice, which acts as merely a Band-Aid and rarely solves the larger issue at hand.

As we look at the next generation of leaders coming up, how do you see leadership evolving?

For the next generation coming up, authenticity is key. The main area I see that will have to evolve across leadership positions everywhere is transparency. There will be no more hiding behind fancy titles at a big corporate desk. That's not going to get a leader far, I can tell you that. And this speaks to what I mentioned earlier – now more than ever, people are seeking a real connection.

I believe leaders are going to have to really get comfortable with who they are – thus the importance of what I call the Freedom Adventure – so they can lead with their true selves. Younger people in the workforce today see through the façade.

What does the title of your book, *The Adventure Advantage*, mean?

At the beginning of my book, I assert that “change is the constant and necessary catalyst for growth of all kinds.” That means that when disruption shows up – big or small – the advantage will go to those who see change as something happening to invite growth, not something to be afraid of, steer around, or fight against. Leaders who understand how to navigate fear, evolve their own outdated mental framework, and discover the opportunity in change, will have an advantage. Leaders who learn to rely on and grow their innate abilities of vision, presence, empathy, and bravery, will have an advantage.

For me, adopting an “adventure” mindset when facing change is the only advantage you'll ever need, in our work and chosen



profession, in our most important, most intimate relationships, and in pursuit of personal meaning and purpose, over a lifetime.

In your book, you talk about the “Three Greatest Adventures.” What are they and how can leaders apply them?

In *The Adventure Advantage*, I refer to the Freedom Adventure (the path to authentic independence), the Courage Adventure (the path to collective prosperity), and the Power Adventure (the path to vital renewal) as the Three Greatest Adventures required for every leader to navigate disruptive change and realize breakthrough performance – when leading broad-reaching organizational change, high-functioning teams, or growth within themselves.

At the heart of the Freedom Adventure is discovering who you are in the world. It's about knowing yourself. This is where you establish your sense of authentic independence, master your strengths, overcome fears, and develop a mantra you can trust. Without the Freedom Adventure, leaders often remain

stuck in someone else's definition of who they should be, and never quite discover their own voice.

In the Courage Adventure, you show yourself in the larger world and learn to see others for who they are without trying to manipulate or control them. Here is where you learn to celebrate diversity, achieving beyond what you could have ever done on your own. Without the Courage Adventure, leaders run the risk of over-controlling, continually stifling the kind of lasting prosperity that comes from true collaboration.

Finally, the Power Adventure is about growing yourself so as never to become stagnant or complacent. Instead, a leader must be willing to relinquish past identities and level-up beyond mere status and titles. Stepping into new levels of intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual power renews one's sense of vitality. The Power Adventure yields the sort of potency that leaves a leader feeling born again, avoiding the slow fade to irrelevance. ●