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A ZEALOUS LEADER WITH BRILLIANT ABILITIES TO DELIVER IT SOLUTIONS

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A PROFICIENT PROFESSIONAL IN EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY BUSINESS PROCESSES, FINANCIAL PROCESS STANDARDIZATION, MODERNIZATION, AND IMPROVEMENT



Linda
Coughlin

FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT
GREAT CIRCLE ASSOCIATES

AN EMPOWERING *EXECUTIVE*

LIN COUGHLIN'S UNCONVENTIONAL LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

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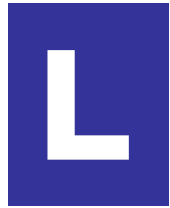
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LEADERSHIP JOURNEY



Linda (Lin) Coughlin: Speaker, author, board director, Founder and President of Great Circle Associates, and a positive disruptor -- reflects on how her path to leadership began in the equestrian world. At 17, she threw herself into a professional career, training and showing hunters and jumpers while coaching riders of all ages. For her, the thrill was in the pursuit of mastery—continuously learning, refining, and improving. However, a serious fall cut her career short after five years, forcing her to pivot.

She tapped into typing skills she learned in high school and landed a role as an executive assistant to the CEO of an electronic switch importer and distributor. During this stint, she sharpened her organizational and communications skills. Lin also juggled two additional part-time positions at a law firm and an insurance company, using her natural ability to connect with people and her client-first approach to rapidly build a strong pipeline of prospects.

These early experiences, marked by resilience, adaptability, and trust building, echo the sentiments of Oprah Winfrey, "The world's most

prominent women leaders show the importance of honesty, courage, impact and decisive action in leadership." Such values set the foundation for Lin's impactful leadership in corporate America.

This sagacious entrepreneur possesses a rare blend of wisdom, drive and warmth. Lin is proud of her ability to nurture meaningful connections, whether guiding executives at inflection points in their careers or enabling teams to coalesce around shared Missions, Visions and Values. She creates environments of trust, candor, mutual support and accountability, inspiring individuals

to embrace and leverage their unique talents.

Lin has spent more than 15 years advising and mentoring leaders and leadership teams in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors on five continents. She is known for her 'just-in-time' strategic investments into the development and advancement of leaders for whom the achievement of breakthrough results is most at stake. Collaborating with executives to craft visionary plans that depart from the status quo and propel them toward extraordinary outcomes, she thrives in high-stakes environments, helping changemakers unlock their potential.

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Success on Her Terms: An Evolving Definition

Accomplishment isn't merely a trophy on a shelf for her. Ranked among the "Top 10 Most Inspiring Women Leaders to Watch in 2025," Lin perceives success as more than just hitting career milestones. For her it's a dynamic, ever-evolving pursuit of impact, growth and personal fulfillment. It's about aligning goals with passion, driving meaningful change, and continuously redefining what truly matters.

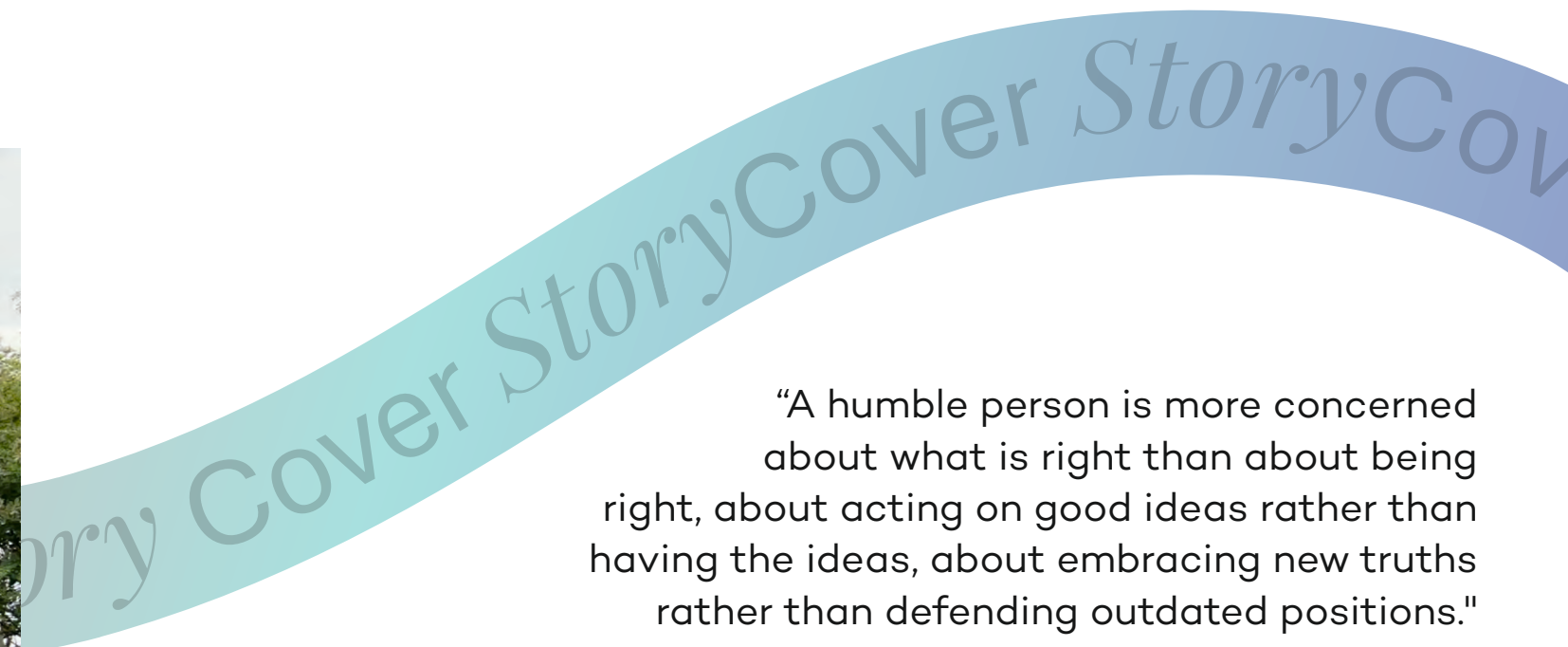
Lin constantly shifts between professional ambitions and personal priorities with intention. Lifelong learning and skill development ensure she continuously evolves. Staying true to her values and acting with integrity are non-negotiable. She honors individuality and diverse perspectives and recognizes that real impact comes from collective effort.

Generosity, both in spirit and action, energizes her approach, while humility keeps her grounded. She leads with authentic transparency and values reciprocity in every interaction. When she pushes past

conventions, it's to spark creativity, innovation and forward momentum benefitting all stakeholders.

The Crossroads of Professional Ambition and Personal Sacrifice

Once on a usual day, Lin walked into the boardroom with a storm raging inside her. She had a high-stakes proposal to deliver—one that would reshape the company's entire operations. But that morning, as Lin was leaving home, she caught a glimpse of her children's eager eyes, inviting her to stay for breakfast. However, time wasn't on her side.



"A humble person is more concerned about what is right than about being right, about acting on good ideas rather than having the ideas, about embracing new truths rather than defending outdated positions."

She powered through the meeting, presenting a bold plan to consolidate several operations centers. Just when she thought she had navigated through the most sensitive aspects of the recommendation, a board member launched into a verbal attack. As Chair of the board Lin had a choice: back down or stand her ground.

Reminiscent of a quote by Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "**Fight for the things you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you,**" Lin defended her vision with grace and aplomb; won over the room; and walked out with the proposal approved by the board. Yet, even as her CEO checked in on her later that day, she couldn't shake the feeling that something was off.

The real battle wasn't in that board room. Wrestling with feelings of being an "imposter mom," she questioned whether she was sacrificing too much. The weight of that morning's goodbye, her children's fleeting disappointment and the years of believing she had to perform perfectly at work while silently wondering whether she was failing as a mother came crashing down.

It took time, self-reflection, and a trusted support system to help her rewrite her narrative. She ultimately learned, among other lessons, that professional ambition and motherhood were not at odds—that they powered each other! Today, the evolved Lin stays deeply connected to her clients and her four grown children and ten (soon to be 12!) grandchildren. Her passion for competitive





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ballroom dancing serves as a personal outlet, bringing a creative and physical dimension to her life and leadership journey.

Defining Moments in a Trailblazing Career

Balancing a family and a full-time job with her full-time studies, Lin achieved the impressive feat of graduating summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Economics from Fordham University – a defining moment that helped to legitimize her career status as a high potential senior manager at American Express Company.

A powerful voice for change, Lin also published *Enlightened Power: How Women Are Transforming the Practice of Leadership*. This book, which became part of numerous Women's Studies Programs, advocates for the full partnership of men and women leaders. It also cemented her reputation as a thought leader, influencer and positive disruptor, together with her essays and blogs on best practice approaches to planning for and implementing significant strategic departures from the status quo.

With a 30-year career dedicated to learning how to envision, plan for and execute enduring positive change, Lin has spent the last 18 years *enabling leaders to spearhead such initiatives*, challenging traditional practices. Her

coaching and advisory work have sparked high levels of innovation and growth opportunities and have led to sustained improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.

Unlocking Leadership Potential: A Purpose-Driven Approach

Lin believes challenges foster growth and development. She nurtures this transition through a coaching approach that blends systematic reflective exploration with practical action toward the creation and implementation of purpose driven development plans.

Embodying the value of professional and intellectual humility, Lin is laser focused on *enabling* her clients to achieve breakthrough outcomes in their businesses and in their journeys as leaders. She puts the priority of their learning and success above her own, manifesting Stephen Covey's statement, **"A humble person is more concerned about what is right than about being right, about acting on good ideas rather than having the ideas, about embracing new truths rather than defending outdated positions."**

Lin's executive coaching clients' journeys begin with a structured deep dive into the heart of their inner compass. Through insightful conversations and employing several types of assessment tools, she enables them to uncover their unique leverageable strengths, values, leadership and communications styles, challenges, etc. An example is the "Leadership Timeline." It is a visual journey highlighting clients' most defining life and professional milestones, revealing patterns and hidden positive and negative triggers.

Outcomes for this first phase of the engagement --The Discovery Process -- include increased levels of self-awareness, insights into leadership behaviors in stressful and non-stressful situations; an enhanced understanding and appreciation for the work style of others and a more effective communications style focused on strengthening influencing skills.

The second phase of Lin's clients' experience involves the creation of Development Plans ("work/life maps"), beginning with the articulation of Purpose Statements. The plans speak to the question of *why* one has chosen their calling and that which one is dedicated to accomplishing in service of their stakeholders. Greatly informed by the findings in Phase I -- The Discovery Process -- Purpose Statements capture and celebrate individuals' key values, major passions and outstanding talents, and gives a hint at expected outcomes.

The work-life map is further populated with statements of intention that speak to the practical ways individuals live their Purpose and the outcomes they expect to achieve. The focus then moves to "What's Working" and What's Not Working" - typically including strengths, values, weaknesses, stylistic norms, business, personal and organizational enablers and deterrents, etc.

"Promises and Commitments" are next, e.g., positive thinking, taking measured risk, exercising, standing by their plan, etc.; and that which an individual will not settle for, e.g., micromanaging, the status quo, falling back on excuses, etc. in pursuit of their Purpose. And, finally, "The Personal Journey" section is completed where specific actions that

"True belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world."

will be taken in the near-term are identified to include quantitative and qualitative measures of success on the way to actualizing their Purpose.

Lin encourages leaders to share their work/life maps with their managers and their teams. This is more than a good leadership practice. It helps to build healthy cultures that promote trust, mutual respect, inclusiveness, responsibility, commitment, transparency, operational excellence, and sustainability. Safe environments are organically created where innovation thrives. The result? A ripple effect—teams become more engaged and committed to each other, the possibilities and their achievability.

Breaking Free from Imposter Syndrome: A Leader's Mission

As a transformational leader, Lin believes imposter syndrome shackles countless executives, preventing them from realizing their full potential. This pervasive feeling of intellectual fraudulence plagues even the most accomplished figures. Leaders like

Michelle Obama, Sheryl Sandberg, and Howard Schultz have openly shared their struggles with self-doubt. Research suggests that over 70% of high-achieving individuals battle these feelings at some point in their careers.

Determined to ignite clients to break through, Lin shares her own experiences and equips leaders with practical tools to combat Imposter Syndrome. Through mentorship and dialogue, she encourages leaders to embrace vulnerability, celebrate strengths, and challenge limiting beliefs. As Brené Brown eloquently puts it, **"True belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world."**

Women in Leadership: The Future Is Now

For too long, the conversation around women in leadership has focused on breaking barriers. Lin sees it differently—it's about building partnerships between men and women leaders. She advocates for

collaborative leadership, believing men and women must work together to harness the unique strengths women bring to the table.

"In today's volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world," Lin argues, "many more 'change masters' are needed—leaders who have the vision, courage and emotional intelligence to disrupt the status quo and drive transformation." To accelerate progress, Lin stresses the importance of spotting high-potential women early—especially at the mid-career level—and giving them a platform to lead bold initiatives. Women are natural collaborators who rally teams around a shared vision, aligning values, goals and strategy.

She underscores that large-scale change often necessitates shifts in cultural norms and core competencies, especially during periods of rapid growth or restructuring. As an executive coach and leading voice on organizational change, Lin remarks, **"High-impact departures from the status quo often require change at core™ or**

departures from deeply embedded mindsets and mature, entrenched cultures, structures, business processes, ways of making decisions, problem-solving approaches, and conflict resolution processes. This type of change is the most challenging to anticipate, plan for, and masterfully execute. It is always accompanied by strain, whether on individual leaders, employees, customers, or infrastructure. The risk of consequent destabilization and loss of business momentum is high and must be aggressively managed."

Beyond leadership, execution matters. Lin points out that real change doesn't happen in isolation; it requires a unified network of passionate champions—those at all levels of an organization who drive initiatives forward with technical expertise and commitment. And the best leaders? They empower these champions to step aside at the right time to let others take ownership while ensuring the vision stays on track.

Women also communicate fearlessly, breaking down resistance to change while inspiring confidence in stakeholders—employees, customers, investors, and beyond. And when setbacks arise, they stay laser-focused on lessons learned, achieving results and leading with tenacity.

Lin's mantra is to lead by example. Quoting Gandhi, Linda reminds aspiring leaders: **"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."**

Shaping the Future: A Legacy of Empowerment and Transformation

At Great Circle Associates, Lin envisions more than just a consulting



practice; she considers her enterprise a launchpad for those destined to redefine themselves as leaders and difference makers. Her mission is to equip leaders for make-or-break moments, steering them through career-defining transitions, bold decisions, and the uncharted waters of change.

As Niccolò Machiavelli astutely observed, **"There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more**

uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things." Lin deeply understands this challenge. By helping organizations maximize their greatest asset—their people—she enables them to achieve exceptional results and redefine what's possible.

