

FEATURE PROFILE

Scott Abbott and the Leadership Development Experience

After 35+ years starting, building, and running companies, coaching leaders, and navigating major technological and socioeconomic shifts, Scott Abbott is bringing the experiences and perspectives of that journey together in his most personal initiative to date: the Leadership Development Experience.

By James Colistra

Long before Scott Abbott became an award-winning founder, bestselling author, business coach, angel investor, and creator of the *Leadership Development Experience*, he was in his mid-twenties and living destitute in Los Angeles. He was literally and metaphorically broke: financially, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Thankfully, at his darkest moment, he had a spark of inspiration to fix what was fractured. He packed his life's belongings into his soon-to-be-repossessed car, drove home to Indiana, found a job, and spent several months in a crummy hotel where the bed folded out of the wall. He was busted on a lot of levels, but he was not out. He still had ambition, drive, people who cared about him, and enough belief to begin again. The experience never left him. Neither did the gratitude and grit it took to move forward.

Thirty-five-plus years later, Abbott's career has moved through multiple startups, founder-led companies, major enterprises, investing, coaching, buying, selling, and building businesses. He has hired hundreds of people, worked with thousands of organizations, and logged more than 10,000 coaching sessions. Still, he pushes back on the self-made version of success. "Anybody who tells you they're self-made is wrong. I've been blessed and supported by lots of good and caring people who believed in me when I needed it. I've also failed and made plenty of mistakes. I've got the scars, stories, flowers, and gratitude to prove it."

That combination, ambition without pretending the road was tidy, explains much of what comes next. Beginning in Q4 2026 and expanding through 2027, Abbott is taking his *Leadership Development Experience* internationally. It brings together keynotes, workshops, coaching, and learning and development. The common denominator is Abbott himself, who has been in the rooms where companies were being built, capital was being raised, teams were expanding, and people were trying to figure out what to do next. The initiative is his way of bringing those skills and experiences together and making them useful to others.

Four Eras and One Question

Abbott began his career selling programming services at the advent of the enterprise computing boom, when green-screen terminals connected to mainframes and Management Information Systems (MIS) were changing how companies operated. Then came the internet. In 1995, he launched his first company from his basement, raised \$10 million in capital, acquired businesses, hired fast, and prepared to go public during the dot-com boom. Then reality hit. The bubble burst, capital tightened, the trajectory changed quickly, and he eventually got fired from his own company. Abbott describes the period through the fable of Icarus: fly too high and you can get torched by the sun. On the flip side, that experience motivated him to write his first book, *Level-UP to Professional*, to help young adults with career-centric life skills. The next big shift was around mobile and social technology. He launched another company to help organizations translate that shift into practical business use, wrote *The Co+Factor*, and was sponsored by IBM on a 28-city "Be Mobile

Work Social” tour. A decade later he founded Talevation, built in partnership with IBM, and then in 2022, his latest company, BOS-UP, that provides resources and support around tailored Business Operating Systems.

The technologies changed, but a question kept following him: what helps people and companies operate well when the environment around them keeps moving? That question now sits squarely inside the AI era. Abbott is fascinated by AI, but not naive about it. His response is practical: control the controllables. “We cannot fully control AI,” he says. “But we can build better systems, make clearer decisions, develop better leaders, and stay ready to adapt.” It is the same thinking behind one of his central philosophies, Humanize + Systemize + Optimize. Use systems and intelligent technology where they create leverage. Use the capacity they create for judgment, relationships, accountability, and leadership. To Abbott, progress has always been a both/and equation: purpose and profit, head and heart, people and systems, vision and execution.

Why This Work, Why Now

Abbott’s urgency comes from what he sees in today’s world. Organizations are navigating AI, volatility, generational change, talent pressure, shifting expectations, and constant demands. A workforce can span people in their twenties through their seventies, each carrying different experiences and assumptions about work. Abbott is less interested in making everyone think alike than in helping them find enough common ground to work well together: shared purpose, sound structure, clear standards, strong values, and language people can actually use. Whether the room belongs to a startup, a founder-led business, a Fortune 1000 company, a university, or association, his preference is the same: keep it real, keep it useful, keep it simple.

Abbott also believes that leadership development has been too easy to treat as an event or a perk. His view is more practical and more demanding because leadership shows up in how people think, communicate, plan, execute, and care for what’s entrusted to them. That is why the Leadership Development Experience is designed to move beyond motivation and inspiration. The ambition is staying power, ideas and practices that matter after the applause is over and the difficult conversation, decision, or Monday morning arrives.

The Flowers, the Scars, and the Arena

The deeper source of the Leadership Development Experience is Abbott’s life in business. He has been an entrepreneur, founder, CEO, investor, coach, buyer, seller, advisor, partner, and employee. He has worked across startups, midsize businesses, and large enterprises. He has watched capital create opportunity, accelerate growth, and magnify mistakes. He has seen good people struggle inside weak systems and strong systems fail when people stop communicating, deciding, or holding one another accountable. To Abbott, experience is not a trophy. It is evidence, collected in the arena through the flowers, scars, and years.

That perspective is why grace and grit show up so often in his work. Good leadership requires both. So does faith, not only in a spiritual sense, but as the confidence and courage to keep moving when every answer is not readily available. Structure matters because people need something specific and dependable to help guide their work. Humanity matters because no system can substitute for judgment, trust, accountability, or care. Abbott likes to describe himself as an architect and builder of prosperous companies and a steward of leadership and growth, while quickly adding that he has made a truckload of mistakes along the way.

From Indiana to International

Abbott was born in Fort Wayne and now lives in Carmel, Indiana, where he jokes that he is “just a dumb farm boy who got lucky.” The line lands because the rest of the story travels so far. He spent more than a

decade living in London, Paris, and Madrid and has worked across Europe, Asia, India, South America, Canada, and the United States. Those years gave him an appreciation for how much context changes from one culture, company, or country to another, and how much does not. Clear expectations matter. Trust matters. Accountability matters. People want to know where they are going, what is expected of them, and whether the people around them will do what they said they would do. Alignment is a universal aspiration.

That range is one reason the Leadership Development Experience is going international from the outset, with a London-based booking agent and an eye toward global companies, conferences, and universities. Abbott can talk comfortably about enterprise systems, venture capital, AI, and global operations, then be equally energized by the owner running a company or the emerging leader trying to find a better way forward. His roots show up in less formal ways, too. He is an unabashed Indiana University football fan, and Coach Curt Cignetti's emphasis on standards, accountability, and "production over potential" sits squarely in Abbott's wheelhouse. Different arena, familiar principle: what matters is what gets practiced and produced.

Scratching a Never-Ending Itch

In some ways, Abbott has been circling this work for most of his career through four bestselling books. *Level-UP to Professional* focused on career-centric life skills. *The Co+Factor* explored the power of alignment. *BOS-UP* addressed the essential concepts, tools, and disciplines behind a tailored Business Operating System. Most recently came *BOS-UP Moments*, the human counterpart: 40 concise Moments built around the choices and behaviors that shape performance. Taken together, the books reveal a recurring preoccupation in Abbott's work. Companies need structure and spirit. Purpose and profit. Vision and production. They need an operating system that makes the work clearer and human beings capable of making those systems live.

How the Experience Comes Together

The Leadership Development Experience includes four keynote programs, each tied to one of Abbott's books. The cornerstone is Moments to Momentum, built around a simple idea: success and failure accumulate through the moments in between, the choices people make, standards they uphold, conversations they have, and commitments they honor. *BOS-UP Your Business* moves into the operating foundation of a company. *The Co+Factor* focuses on how people work with one another. *Level-UP to Professional* returns to the individual, the habits, choices, and standards that shape a career and a life. The subjects differ, but the thread is the same: help people become more productive in business, work, and life.

What happens around the keynote matters just as much. The Experience can move from a stage into a workshop, from a workshop into coaching, or from one event into continued development through BOS-UP Moments and related tools. Sometimes a keynote is enough. Sometimes it opens a longer conversation. Abbott is comfortable with either. "I don't want people to leave saying, 'That was a good speech,'" he says. "I want them to leave with something they can use." That distinction gets to the center of the Experience. He is not separating the speaker from the operator, author, coach, investor, founder, or person. The point is to bring the full range of that experience into the room, then make it useful to the people sitting there.

Where BOS-UP Fits

The Leadership Development Experience sits inside the BOS-UP Coaching Solution & Academy, the company Abbott founded in 2022. BOS-UP gives the work an operating home and connects two sides of Abbott's thinking. The "blue book," BOS-UP, deals with the framework, structure, engineering, mechanics, and disciplines of a tailored Business Operating System. *BOS-UP Moments* deals with the human and EQ side of

performance. The broader platform follows the same philosophy: human where people matter most, digital where intelligent technology creates leverage, and structured enough to create consistency without forcing every person or company into the same mold. For Abbott, the Experience is where those ideas become personal and reflect one of his favorite quotes: “Systemize the predictable and humanize the exceptional.”

Purpose, Cause, and Passion

Spend enough time with Abbott and three words keep resurfacing: purpose, cause, and passion.

The purpose is to share what 35+ years have taught him, including the lessons he earned the hard way. The cause is helping people and organizations prosper in business, work, and life. The passion is leadership as a daily practice, not a title, moving people and organizations forward with clarity, accountability, courage, and humanity. For Abbott, prosperity is broader than money. It includes healthy companies, strong families, trusted relationships, meaningful work, and the capacity to steward what other people are counting on. That view has been shaped as much by the difficult chapters as the successful ones, which may be why his work tends to land less as doctrine and more as a conversation with someone who has been there.

There is also something intentionally personal about this chapter. At an age and stage when he could reasonably slow down, Abbott is choosing the opposite. BOS-UP is established, the team and coaching community are growing, and the platform gives him room to take this work farther. He is hitting the road not because one keynote changes a company or because 35+ years have given him all the answers. He is doing it because a meaningful experience can change what somebody does next. A leader sees a problem differently. A team finally has the conversation it has avoided. An owner connects vision to execution. A student or emerging professional sees a wider possibility. Someone in the room decides to begin again.

There is a legacy element to the work, even if Abbott would resist the word. The point is not to leave behind a monument. It is to leave behind something useful, and perhaps to make people curious enough to keep the conversation going. That is also the spirit behind the “BOS-UP Generation,” a phrase Abbott uses less as an age group or campaign slogan than as a point of view: respect what experience has taught us, stay engaged in the realities of today, remain curious about what comes next, and keep the human being at the center of the work. “This next chapter gives me the chance to take everything I’ve learned, and put that passion to work helping people,” Abbott says. “That’s sincere. It’s personal. And I’m ready to make it useful.”

Learn more about Scott and the Leadership Development Experience at www.leadwithscott.com.

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