

DAMIAN VAUGHN, PHD

The work is not about managing complexity.

It is about converting it into momentum.



Damian Vaughn was the first Brazilian to play in the NFL, at tight end, and now works with the leaders of companies at their most consequential moments. He coaches CEOs, founders, and boards through scale, transformation, succession, and transaction. He still coaches professional athletes, which is where the work started.

He holds a doctorate in flow science from Claremont Graduate University, completed under Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, the psychologist who discovered flow. His research concerns autotelic development, the arc by which a person's motivation moves from what is demanded of them toward what actually draws them, and what that shift changes about the way they lead. His doctoral work studied one hundred eighteen NFL and NCAA athletes. Current studies, conducted with a research team at Columbia, examine how flow distributes across the roles of a person's life and how a leader's own flow shapes the flow of the team around them.

Underneath all of it sits attention. Flow is an attentional state before it is anything else, and attention is trainable. Thirty years of meditation practice, and twenty of teaching it, inform that claim as much as the literature does.

He is co-author of *A Culture of Flow*, forthcoming from Columbia Business School Publishing on January 5, 2027, and the author of two further books on individual and organizational performance. He has been an executive inside large multinationals, including senior roles at HBO and FOX, and he has founded three companies of his own. He has taught strategy and leadership at the University of Oregon and has spoken at the World Economic Forum. He was featured in the HBO film *State of Play: Happiness*, and he received the NFL's Crystal Award at the Super Bowl. Today he actively coaches NFL All-Pros, MLB All-Stars, CEOs and their teams, side by side. His clients have also included executives from Disney, Nike, FOX, Accenture, and Google, and Grammy-winning artists.

The work is direct. Most executives at this level have been coached before and found it comfortable. Damian is retained when the situation will not tolerate comfortable. When a leader's behavior has begun to cost the business real value. When a company is growing faster than its leadership team can hold. When someone has to be able to say the true thing in the room and be heard.

He lives in Scottsdale, composes music, and is a father of three.