

Systems for the Strategic Self

Sustained pressure rarely announces the moment it begins to change a leader. The calendar tightens. Sleep becomes negotiable. Decisions take longer, ethical edges blur, and the team starts carrying the cost of a system built around one person's endurance.

Leadership Under Load treats prolonged pressure as a design condition, not a character test. The UNDERLOAD framework gives founders and operator-leaders an awareness-based practice for observing load, protecting decision quality, redistributing responsibility, and recognizing when the only responsible move is to reduce or leave the load.

You will learn to:

- Audit where sustained pressure is already altering attention, judgment, and behavior.
- Rebuild presence as a practiced operating condition rather than a performance.
- Navigate uncertainty without converting urgency into avoidable damage.
- Use decision records and evaluation loops when memory and confidence become unreliable.
- Treat the calendar, delegation, and team capacity as load architecture.
- Observe early signals in yourself and the organization without turning them into diagnoses.
- Adapt the protocol as the load changes instead of forcing one routine indefinitely.
- Assemble a personal UNDERLOAD protocol that includes limits, escalation points, and handoff.

The result is a practical set of artifacts: an erosion audit, a load map, a decision-under-load checklist, a signal observation system, a delegation protocol, and a long-game review cadence.

This book is educational. It does not provide medical, psychological, clinical, or therapeutic advice, and no framework can fully protect judgment or health under extreme or prolonged load. Significant distress, impaired judgment, burnout symptoms, or unsafe conditions call for qualified professional support and, where necessary, a reduction or removal of the load.

Len P. van der Hof, MSc

He builds operating systems for the strategic self. Treats entrepreneurship, AI and machine learning, marketing, philosophy, psychology, and health optimization as one engineering problem. MSc in Strategic Entrepreneurship, Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University.