

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## ADAM GRANT

Hidden Potential: The Science of  
Achieving Greater Things

## ERIN MEYER

How to Develop Innovative  
Multicultural Companies

## PETER HINSSEN

Navigating Radical Innovation

11

# KEYNOTES

All the best content from  
Oslo Business Forum 2024



**01 PETER HINSSEN**  
Navigating Radical Innovation



**06 ERIN MEYER**  
How to Develop Innovative Multicultural Companies



**02 SANNA MARIN**  
The New Era of Leadership



**07 HOWARD YU**  
Creating a Future-Proof Organization



**03 ADAM GRANT**  
Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things



**08 MO GAWDAT**  
The AI Dilemma: Navigating Ethics in the Age of Innovation



**04 MIKKO HYPPÖNEN**  
Why AI is Redefining Leadership



**09 SAHAR HASHEMI**  
Unlocking Startup Culture in Big Business



**05 MORTEN T. HANSEN**  
The Disciplines of Courageous Leadership



**10 OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJÆR**  
Mastering the Game: Lessons in Leadership and Talent Development



**11 BRENE BROWN**  
What Does It Mean to Dare to Lead?



# Oslo Business Forum 2024

During 25-26 September 2024, Oslo Business Forum gathered 3,000 CEOs, executives, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers at Nova Spektrum. These leaders were joined virtually by over 10,000 people following the event via livestream. Under this year's theme of Courageous Leadership, world-class speakers explored topics on daring to lead, turning tough times into opportunities, embracing radical innovation, and navigating our global business environment.

This Executive Summary provides insights and inspirations from the main stage presentations during the two-day event. You will find key points and questions to consider at the end of each summary. We have published this Executive Summary together with our knowledge partner BI Norwegian Business School.

Remember, implementation is the key to success. The world needs leaders like you who dare to innovate and make a difference. We encourage you to share the insights you find here and put the most important takeaways into action with your team and in your business.

**Christoffer Omberg**  
CEO & Co-founder  
Oslo Business Forum



**Marius Røed Wang**  
Partner & Co-founder  
Oslo Business Forum



**Karen Spens**  
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BI Norwegian Business School



# 01

PETER HINSSEN

## Navigating Radical Innovation

Peter Hinssen is an author and leader in radical innovation. With five top-selling books, including *The Phoenix* and *The Unicorn* and *The Day After Tomorrow*, Peter stands out as a key voice on how businesses can survive and grow in times of major shifts. His advice helps companies reinvent themselves over and over, emerging stronger every time.

At Oslo Business Forum, Peter shared his insights on navigating this era of "never normal," offering strategies for fostering innovation, embracing technological disruption, and staying ahead of the curve.



## The Transition from Analog to Digital

Peter has long studied the forces that drive businesses to transform and thrive in the face of disruption. In his work, he has explored the limits of the digital world and examined when technology stops being special and starts becoming the norm. What he's discovered is that the time is now.

*"When does technology stop being special and start becoming the norm?"*

Leading thinkers on technological revolution have noted that we see the same patterns occur over and over again with advancements. The key difference, however, is that the patterns used to take 20-30 years to materialize—now they're moving faster and faster. Just consider the number of things that have disrupted our businesses in the past five years.

Peter is convinced that we're all in for more seismic shocks, and it won't be just one thing; it will be a combination of things: technological shock, environmental shock, ecological shock, social shock, and geopolitical shock. Polycrisis, the simultaneous occurrence of several catastrophic events, was the word of the year in the UK last year. This underscores the distress that many leaders are presently feeling.

But perhaps the shocks we're experiencing aren't to be feared. Maybe they're something to be leveraged as we construct the new normal.



## The Never Normal

In today's world, there is no such thing as "normal" anymore. Peter introduced the concept of the "never normal," where businesses can no longer hope for a return to stability. Instead, leaders must embrace a reality characterized by constant change that is:

**Nonlinear:** Businesses must learn to think and act beyond traditional linear approaches. Companies like Amazon have succeeded by operating nonlinearly—constantly adapting to the unpredictable forces at play.

**Superfluid:** The pandemic and the rise of remote work showed that agility and adaptability are now core requirements for success. Intelligence in this era is defined by the ability to respond quickly to change.

**Hyperconnected:** We live in a hyperconnected world where disruptions in one part of the globe can send ripples across industries. Being connected is essential, but so is preparing for the unexpected shifts that come with it.

**Ultra-Speed:** The pace of change is accelerating. Organizations must innovate quickly and seize opportunities as they arise or risk being left behind.

*"This is the world we live in. We can't hope that it's magically going to go back to stability."*

*- Peter Hinssen*

In this "never normal" world, business leaders must abandon the hope of returning to familiar rhythms and instead embrace a mindset of constant adaptation and readiness.

## The Criticality of Time

Time is now the most critical resource in a fast-paced, unpredictable business environment. The traditional company lifecycle—startup, growth, peak, and decline—no longer applies. In the "never normal," businesses must learn to innovate preemptively. You cannot wait for a crisis to inspire a change.

Peter emphasized that organizations must act when they can, not when they must. In a world where technology evolves rapidly, and the window for action closes quickly, leaders have to make bold decisions early without waiting for all the data to be clear.

This means focusing not just on the present or near future but also on the long-term horizon. The key question is: How much time is your company spending on today versus the day after tomorrow? To thrive, companies need to invest more time in long-term value creation rather than getting stuck in the routine tasks of today.



## The Hourglass Mode

In his book *The Phoenix and The Unicorn*, Peter shows how organizations can reinvent themselves and emerge stronger. His research revealed that all Phoenix organizations have one thing in common: they have a vision for the day after tomorrow and a way to act on the opportunity.

In the Hourglass Model, the top of the hourglass represents vision, and the bottom represents execution. At the top, you need people who see things differently. At the bottom, you need soldiers who are trained to execute.

Peter encouraged leaders to look around their companies and ask, "How many people here are comfortable doing things they've never done before?" Chances are, not enough. Most organizations are 99% made up of people who are "knowers"—they do what they know how to do. The other 1% don't know what to do, and these are the "learners" or innovators.

***"Don't confuse surviving with thriving. Be bold on vision and flexible on details."***

*- Peter Hinssen*

Every business needs more people willing to admit that they don't know what to do and are passionate about learning and innovating. Unfortunately, in most organizations, the 1% don't spend all their energy innovating—they spend all their energy fighting the 99%.

Peter left leaders at Oslo Business Forum with these famous words from Maya Angelou: "If you're always trying to be normal, you will never know how truly amazing you can be."



## **Key Points**

- Peter Hinssen is an author and leader in radical innovation who stands out as a key voice on how businesses can survive and grow in times of major shifts. His advice helps companies reinvent themselves and emerge stronger.
- Businesses today must accept that change is constant and unpredictable. Success depends on nonlinear thinking, adaptability, and speed in a hyperconnected world.
- Leaders must prioritize innovation and take action when they can rather than wait for a crisis. The focus should be on long-term value creation, not just immediate wins.
- The Hourglass Model provides a framework for creating a vision for the day after tomorrow and a way to act on the opportunity.
- Organizations need both visionary thinkers and skilled executors. Encourage more "learners" willing to experiment and innovate rather than relying solely on "knowers" who do what they've always done.

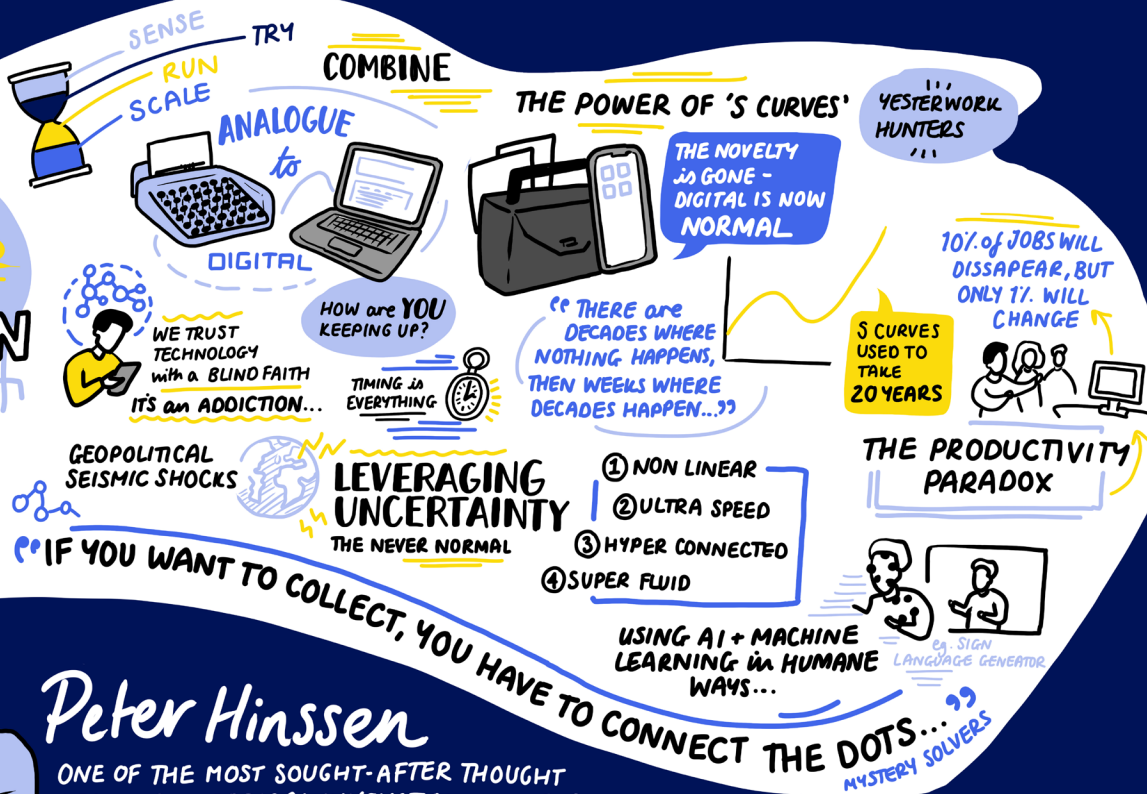
## **Questions to Consider**

- How much time do you spend focused on today versus the day after tomorrow? Are you investing enough in long-term value creation?
- Are you making decisions proactively or waiting for crises to force your hand? How can you create a culture that embraces preemptive innovation?
- Are you preparing your organization for the "never normal" by embracing adaptability, nonlinear thinking, speed, and hyper-connectivity?
- Does your organization have enough learners willing to challenge the status quo, or is it dominated by knowers unwilling to change?
- employees and customers?
- Assess your personal resilience. Do you have the grit required to create change in challenging times?

#OBForum

OSLO BUSINESS FORUM

# NAVIGATING Radical INNOVATION



## Peter Hinssen

ONE OF THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER THOUGHT LEADERS IN RADICAL INNOVATION, LEADERSHIP + THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TRENDS ON SOCIETY + BUSINESS. LECTURER @ LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL + MIT

# 02

SANNA MARIN

## The New Era of Leadership

Sanna Marin held the distinguished honor of being one of the world's youngest serving prime ministers in the world and Finland's youngest ever. Her insights are profoundly relevant for executives and decision-makers in a world where business landscapes are continuously evolving.

Sanna brought her unique perspective on leadership to Oslo Business Forum. Her insights into decision-making, crisis management, and overcoming normality bias offer powerful lessons—and can equip leaders with the courage—to navigate today's complex and rapidly changing world.



## **Adaptability in Leadership**

Known for her adaptability, inclusivity, and innovative approach, Sanna shared valuable lessons from her time as the leader of Finland during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

She believes that one of the traits of courageous leadership is the ability to revise decisions we have previously made. We must cultivate the ability and willingness to change our minds when we receive new information or the world around us changes radically. "At the beginning of the pandemic, we had to make decisions with incomplete information," she recalled. "When the situation changed, it was crucial to change our minds and update measures."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine was another instance that demanded swift, courageous decision-making. It was essential for Finland to understand that how the environment had changed required a shift in their country's strategies, too.

In both crises, Sanna noted that communication was essential to keep people involved and informed about the changes ahead. She took to proactively communicating, offering daily press conferences even when there was no new information to share. Communicating openly and honestly helped to assuage people's fear of uncertainty.



## Normality Bias

"There is a term that describes my experience as prime minister quite accurately," said Sanna. "The normality bias."

The normality bias describes a human tendency to assume things will remain as they are despite warning signs of a disaster. It causes us to minimize potential risks, resulting in inadequate responses to change. We have a tendency to think that everything will remain as it is, and when we let this guide our decision-making, it leads to poor decisions and loss of time. "I believe most of us are still suffering from it," said Sanna. "Right now, we really cannot afford it."

Sanna noted ways in which normality bias continues to persist. In the context of the existing war in Europe, for example, it is biased to believe Putin won't attack other countries if he makes gains in Ukraine. It's also biased to think there's a low likelihood of another pandemic occurring when data tells us the likelihood is between 17-44%.

The normality bias is widespread in businesses, too. To avoid it, Sanna offered leaders critical advice: "My number one lesson in decision-making is to look at the world as it is, not as it used to be or as you would like it to be."



She urged leaders to look at the information at hand without relying on their old assumptions. Acknowledge and accept uncertainty. Practice critical thinking and take bold decisions.

Following her remarks, Sanna responded to questions that shed additional light for leaders. The following is a summary of the topics she addressed:

**Time Management:** Sanna shared how she unexpectedly became prime minister and had little time to prepare. Her family's encouragement helped her make the decision, and she quickly had to navigate a series of crises, including the pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

**Facing Fear:** Sanna emphasized that focusing on the mission, rather than yourself, can help you avoid the fear of failure. She urged leaders to prioritize what they believe needs to be done over their own fears.

**Crisis Management:** Sanna recalled the moment Russia invaded Ukraine and how that forced Finland's swift decision to join NATO. She emphasized that adapting strategies as new information emerges is crucial for effective crisis management.

**Leaving Politics:** Sanna explained her decision to step away from politics when her party lost the majority. She now seeks to continue her work on key issues like gender equality, human rights, and climate from a different platform and with more freedom to share her voice.

**Best Leadership Advice:** Sanna highlighted the importance of communication, especially during times of uncertainty. Even when there's nothing new to announce, open and transparent communication is key to maintaining trust and engagement.

# NORMALITY BIAS

HUMAN TENDENCY TO THINK THAT THINGS WILL REMAIN AS THEY ARE... EVEN IN A CRISIS...

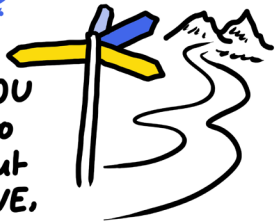


THIS LEADS TO LOSS OF TIME...

# CRITICAL THINKING + BOLD DECISIONS



SOMETIMES YOU DON'T PLAN TO DO SOMETHING, BUT IF YOU HAVE A DRIVE, FOLLOW IT...



DON'T FOCUS ON YOURSELF, FOCUS ON THE MOUNTAIN...

# The NEW ERA of LEADERSHIP

ABILITY TO REVISE DECISIONS WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY MADE, BASED ON NEW INFORMATION...

COMMUNICATION IS CRUCIAL



MAKING DECISIONS in a CRISIS...

COLLECT THE INFORMATION

USE THE PROVISIONS YOU HAD PUT IN PLACE

if YOU HAVE PREPARATIONS in PLACE for ANY EVENTUALITY, YOU CAN RESPOND FASTER...

# ADAPT

# Sanna Marin

FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF FINLAND, SANNA WAS APPOINTED AT 34 + SERVED AS THE YOUNGEST PRIME MINISTER IN THE WORLD AT THE TIME



## **Key Points**

- Sanna Marin, Finland's youngest-ever prime minister and one of the world's youngest-serving leaders, shared valuable lessons from leading through crises and uncertainty.
- Her insights into decision-making, crisis management, and overcoming normality bias offer powerful lessons for leaders navigating today's complex and rapidly changing world.
- Leaders must be adaptable, especially in times of crisis. We must adjust our strategies and decision-making to reflect new information and realities when circumstances change rapidly.
- Leaders must accept uncertainty and practice critical thinking to make bold decisions, even with incomplete information.
- Normality bias is the tendency to assume things will remain the same despite warning signs. Sanna stressed the importance of recognizing this bias and making decisions based on current realities, not outdated assumptions.
- Open and honest communication is key to keeping people informed and involved in times of uncertainty.
- Sanna encouraged leaders to focus on the mission rather than fear of failure. By concentrating on what needs to be done, leaders can overcome self-doubt and confidently move forward.

## **Questions to Consider**

- Reflect on whether you assess current situations based on reality or outdated assumptions. How can you ensure your decision-making accounts for normality bias?
- How do you communicate in times of crisis or uncertainty? Are you consistently engaging people with transparent and proactive communication?
- In rapid change, how do you adapt your strategies? Are you willing to revise decisions when new information becomes available?
- Do you allow pride or fear of failure to prevent you from changing course? How can you cultivate a mindset that embraces adaptability?
- How can you prepare your organization to react quickly and effectively when faced with unexpected challenges?



# 03

ADAM GRANT

## Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things

Adam Grant is an organizational psychologist and bestselling author who explores the science of motivation, generosity, rethinking, and potential. He has been Wharton's top-rated professor for seven straight years and has been recognized as one of the world's 10 most influential management thinkers. Best known for his groundbreaking book *Think Again* and his captivating TED Talks, which millions have tuned into, Adam is the voice for the next era of business thinking.

At Oslo Business Forum, Adam revealed why success today isn't just about working harder—it's about thinking smarter.



Adam described an experience he had as a recent PhD graduate when the U.S. Air Force invited him to teach a course on leadership. He felt severe imposter syndrome but also an intense responsibility to step up. He opened his workshop by talking about his credentials, expertise, and research. The feedback he received afterward was brutal. "There was more knowledge in the audience than on the podium," said one participant. Another commented, "I gained nothing from this session, but I trust the instructor got useful insight." Ouch.

Adam was crushed, but he'd signed up to do another session and was set on fulfilling his commitment. Before he stepped up to the podium again, he had to figure out how to take the tough feedback and shift his mindset.

Adam shared six insights that can help leaders unlock the hidden potential in themselves, their teams, and their organizations. You can transform even the toughest challenges into opportunities by cultivating a different mindset.

- 1. Put growth over ego.** Feedback—especially critical feedback—can be difficult to hear. Often, the biggest barrier to receiving feedback is ego. Adam took away a critical lesson from his days as a young, aspiring athlete: whether you got a score of 7 or a score of 3.5, strive for a 10 in how well you accept the feedback. He was forced to apply this same mindset when he got hard feedback from the Air Force critics. He put his ego aside and embraced the opportunity for growth.
- 2. Turn critics into coaches.** There's a difference between receiving feedback from critics versus coaches, and Adam noted their unique motives: "Critics attack your worst self, while coaches see your potential and help you become a better version of yourself."

One way to turn a critic into a coach is to change how you approach them. Research says it's better to seek advice than to ask for feedback. When you ask for advice, people will respond with something more specific, future-oriented, and actionable than when you ask for feedback. When Adam asked one Air Force leader for advice after his failed session, the leader suggested that instead of trying to hide his youth and experience, he should call out the elephant in the room. "The way I took myself off that pedestal changed the dynamic of the interaction," he said.

- 3. Show confident humility.** Adam noted, however, that asking for advice doesn't always yield the desired results. As your experience and authority increase, people may be less likely to tell you the truth. He believes the key to eliciting honesty is to exude both confidence and humility. "Confidence and humility need to go together," he said.

***"Don't be afraid to ask how you can change and how the whole organization can change."***

*- Adam Grant*

Leaders must have the courage to approach people in the organization and ask what's working and what's not—and they also must have the courage to criticize themselves publicly. When you do this, the people around you are more likely to tell you the truth. As Adam's friend and fellow thought leader Brené Brown has said, vulnerability is not a sign of weakness but a source of strength. The people who work with you closely already know your weaknesses; have the humility and integrity to admit it out loud. When you do, you'll see the floodgates of constructive feedback open.

- 4. Find the diamonds in the rough.** Adam talks a lot about tapping into your own potential, but he believes it's equally important to unlock the hidden potential in others. He shared examples from his own experience overlooking people's potential, only to discover that they flourished when they were given another opportunity. "If you give people a second chance, the change they show is a clear indicator of their ability to grow," he said.

Adam thinks it's important to assess someone's hidden potential by evaluating whether they're a "giver" or a "taker." A giver approaches scenarios with a "*What can I do for you*" mentality, while a "taker" defaults to thinking, "*What can you do for me.*" Givers are more likely to perform in the organization's best interest. Adam's trick for identifying givers with high potential? During an interview, ask them how common they believe selfish behaviors are in others. If the candidate gives a high estimate, ask them why. If they think people are fundamentally selfish, it may indicate that they are, too. People tend to project their own habits and motives on others.



## 5. Unlock collective intelligence.

It's a mistake to believe that hiring the smartest people makes for the smartest team, and solving problems isn't as simple as bringing a group of people into a room. Solving tough challenges requires thoughtfully tapping into diversity of thought and surfacing unique perspectives.

***"Groups have more wisdom than individuals."***

"Group brainstorming leads to fewer and worse ideas," Adam said. "We see way too much groupthink." A better approach is to ask people (and not just the usual suspects) to share their ideas individually. Then, you can proceed to put the best ideas on the table.

6. Rethink your mindset. When we hear ideas that have great potential, we sometimes undermine them. Adam encourages leaders to check their mindset and ask themselves if they're getting in the way of that potential. He called out three common ways of thinking that require a shift:

- **The Preacher.** The preacher's mindset is, "I'm right."

- **The Prosecutor.** The Prosecutor's mindset is, "You're wrong."

- **The Politician.** The Politician's mindset is, "We're right and they're wrong."

Adam encourages leaders to discard these mindsets and instead think like a Scientist. "Follow the scientific method," he said. "Look for reasons why you might be wrong rather than why you must be right."

***"Scientific thinking is all about trial and error."***

Unfortunately, the Scientist is rare in organizations today. "I would love to see more people at work treat their decisions as hypotheses," Adam said. It's not uncommon to feel like a failure when you adopt this approach. But when you see the slope of your progress, it starts to feel different. Don't be afraid to try it.

Adam left leaders at Oslo Business Forum with this encouragement: "You don't have to build your confidence before you take a risk. You gain it by trying."

## Key Points

- Adam Grant is an organizational psychologist who explores the science of motivation, rethinking, and potential. His experience and insights help leaders unlock the hidden potential in themselves, their teams, and their organizations.
- **Put growth over ego:** Feedback can be difficult to receive, but it's essential for growth. Set aside your ego and embrace feedback as an opportunity for self-improvement.
- **Turn Critics into Coaches:** Ask for advice rather than feedback. This practice turns negativity into constructive, actionable insights.
- **Show confident humility:** To gain honest feedback, balance confidence with humility. Admit your weaknesses and be open to change.
- **Find the Diamonds in the Rough:** Look beyond initial impressions to discover hidden talent on your team. Give people second chances and assess their potential to be "givers" who prioritize the organization's success.
- **Unlock collective intelligence:** Success comes from leveraging diverse ideas and perspectives, not just gathering smart people in a room. Use individual contributions to avoid groupthink and surface the best ideas.
- **Rethink your mindset:** Challenge traditional leadership mindsets (Preacher, Prosecutor, Politician) and adopt a Scientist mindset. Embrace trial and error, focus on learning from failures, and stay open to being wrong.

## Questions to Consider

- How do you respond to critical feedback? Are you able to prioritize growth over ego?
- Do you actively seek advice from your team or peers to improve your leadership? How can you create an environment where feedback is more freely given?
- How do you identify and nurture the hidden potential in your team? Consider whether there are "diamonds in the rough" you may be overlooking.
- What practices do you have in place to prevent groupthink and ensure diverse ideas are surfaced?
- When was the last time you challenged your mindset? Can you make a change to approach leadership as a scientist—experimenting, testing, and being open to new ways of thinking?

**HIDDEN POTENTIAL:**  
the SCIENCE of ACHIEVING GREATER THINGS...



### DRIVING EXCELLENCE

CAPACITY FOR GROWTH + REACHING OUR POTENTIAL...

**BRUTAL FEEDBACK**  
SEEK + USE IT FOR YOUR GROWTH

FEEDBACK  
ADVICE

TURN YOUR CRITICS INTO COACHES

**HIPPO**  
(HIGHEST PAID PERSONS OPINION)

**CONFIDENT HUMILITY**  
TAKE YOURSELF OFF THE PEDESTAL  
CRITICIZE YOURSELF TO DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU'RE OPEN TO FEEDBACK...

VULNERABILITY IS NOT WEAKNESS...  
**STRENGTH**

GIVERS TAKERS  
HOW WOULD YOU EVEN STEAL THAT MUCH?

I WOULD NEVER STEAL THAT!

the POWER of EXPERIMENTS + HYPOTHESIS

LAUGH at YOURSELF  
SHOW YOU TAKE YOUR JOB SERIOUSLY  
BUT DON'T TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY

THINK LIKE a SCIENTIST...

LOOKING FOR WHY THEY'RE WRONG

WHAT are you WAITING FOR?  
Confidence comes AFTER you take the LEAP...

**Adam Grant**

ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST @ WHARTON, AUTHOR OF 'THINK AGAIN' + HOST OF THE PODCASTS WORKLIFE + RE:THINKING. #2 WORLD MANAGEMENT THINKER



◆ OSLO BUSINESS FORUM

# Empowering Leaders to Change the world

Explore the event



# 04

MIKKO HYPPÖNEN

## Why AI is Redefining Leadership

Text by Jennifer Tucker



As the CRO of a leading cyber security corporation, Mikko Hyppönen monitors how cybercriminals work. Cyber security companies have been a step ahead thanks to automation and AI, while criminals have been building their attacks manually. Mikko believes this will change as new systems open easier access to the powers of fast-developing AI.

At Oslo Business Forum, Mikko shared insights on AI's latest developments and possible future. He helped leaders understand how AI is reshaping leadership by empowering improved decision-making and innovation—and previewed the ethical considerations that come with integrating AI into their organizations.

## **The AI Revolution: Redefining Leadership**

Decades of research have demonstrated that every time there's a major revolution, we overestimate its speed but underestimate its size. Mikko has spent his career thinking about AI, even before its recent surge. He first encountered the idea in a 1983 Finnish magazine that published an eight-page special feature on intelligent machines. Looking back, it's uncanny how accurate its predictions were.

In most languages, the word "computer" comes from Latin and it means to calculate. In Norway, the word means "data machine." And in Finland, Mikko's home, the word means "knowledge machine."

"I have been working with computers all my life, and computers have known nothing," said Mikko. "They have been doing exactly what they have been programmed to do. That clearly is changing now."

Today, we have answers to everything right in our pockets. Our smartphones deliver all the information we demand, and at a speed that was unimaginable even 25 years ago. Mikko observed the revolution in three stages:

**1****Stage 1: Feeding Data**

Data used to be physical, in the form of paper. In the first revolution, information became data that could be fed to computers.

**2****Stage 2: Storing Data**

We then developed the capability to store data like a massive library of all humankind's knowledge. Today, this is known as the cloud, which gives us access to incredible amounts of information that we have fed to computers.

**3****Stage 3: Computing Power**

The smartphones we all use today are faster than the fastest supercomputers produced 20 years ago. Today, pioneering AI companies have hundreds of thousands of these CPUs in data centers.



”

*We are building something that is pretty exciting and also a little bit scary."*

*- Mikko Hyppönen*

The end result of these revolutionary stages? "We are building something that is pretty exciting and also a little bit scary," said Mikko.

We've seen how good generative AI is. There are endless examples across the internet and in our everyday lives. "You can generate any content you can imagine," said Mikko. "This is a bit problematic."

The rise of generative AI poses significant ethical challenges. Leaders must grapple with these issues as they consider how to integrate AI into their organizations.

### **Challenge #1: Giving credit where credit is due**

We used to think that intelligence and creativity only come from humans. That's changing. We can see it happening already happening in music, where tools like Udio can compose, arrange, and produce a song in under 30 seconds. There is even an entirely AI-generated song charting in the German Top 40 hits today.

One of the biggest questions this poses is, where should the royalties go? To the person who typed the prompt? To the company that built the system? To the AI itself or the songs used to teach the system? "We have very real, unsolved questions about the ethics of generative AI," said Mikko.

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## **Challenge #2: Balancing human expertise with AI assistance**

AI has also begun to blur the line between the knowledge we acquire and the knowledge we "borrow." Mikko presented the example of visiting a doctor for symptoms of a stomachache.

"I would prefer to go to a doctor who uses AI to assist him," he said. "We train doctors extensively, but clearly, they can't read everything." A doctor using AI to facilitate a diagnosis can access an expert system that has read every book and journal in every language, including the latest research published yesterday.

"I want a real expert, but I want the expert to use the latest and greatest technology," Mikko said. "This is how you should be thinking about your company." Ask yourself: what are we doing, and how can we make it better?

## **Challenge #3: Distinguishing fiction and reality**

Another challenge that has emerged is the proliferation of AI deepfakes. In the 1990s, Photoshop changed the way we looked at photos. We felt we could no longer trust anything as an authentic, untouched image. Today, deepfakes—in the form of images and voices—have emerged in attacks on organizations and individuals.

## **Challenge #4: Running out of data**

We're rapidly approaching the point where we have already fed AI all our available data. If we continue to feed AI that data that's online today, we will be feeding it data generated by earlier systems. You can recycle data, but Mikko said, "There is a limit to how far you can take it."



## Challenge #5: Determining if systems should be open or closed

Mikko admits that he is an advocate for open-source research. But open source presents a major risk to safety and security. The guardrails will be torn down if you can simply download the source code and remove the restrictions. "There might be limits to open source, and the limits might be in generative AI," Mikko said.

### Adapt or Fall Behind

Mikko left leaders at Oslo Business Forum with this critical consideration: "Nothing changes the world as much and as quickly as technology revolutions." He beckoned us all not to overestimate the speed or underestimate the size of the revolution we're facing. It may take longer than we anticipate, but it's sure to be bigger than we can predict.



## **Key Points**

- Cyber security expert Mikko Hyppönen highlights how AI is transforming the ways we live and lead today.
- AI offers leaders tools for better decision-making and innovation, but implementation comes with challenges and ethical dilemmas.
- AI is driving unprecedented changes, from generative art and music to self-driving cars. These systems raise many questions about ownership, reliability, safety and security.
- Leaders must grapple with significant ethical challenges as they consider how to integrate AI into their organizations.
- The issues range from marrying human expertise with technology assistance to distinguishing fiction from reality to balancing innovation with safety and security.
- The AI revolution is accelerating, and organizations that fail to adopt AI will be left behind. Do not overestimate the speed or underestimate the size of the revolution we're facing.

## **Questions to Consider**

- How are you integrating AI into your organization? Is there evidence that it enhances decision-making and innovation?
- What steps can you take to address the ethical concerns surrounding AI in your business?
- How can your organization leverage AI tools to improve efficiency while ensuring human talent is still valued and nurtured?
- Are you prepared for the potential disruption AI may bring to your industry? What steps can you take to future-proof your workforce?
- How can you ensure your organization remains competitive by adopting AI tools without sacrificing security or ethical integrity?
- How can you better align people's tasks to their strengths? What might the outcome be?



# 05

MORTEN T. HANSEN

## The Disciplines of Courageous Leaders



Morten T. Hansen is the author of best-sellers like *Great by Choice* and *Great at Work*. With his unique blend of academic rigor and real-world business experience, Morten translates intricate research into actionable strategies. He is a trusted voice for leaders seeking theoretical depth and practical insight.

At Oslo Business Forum, Morten took leaders to the coldest place on earth, retracing the steps of two teams racing to become the first humans to stand on the South Pole: the Norwegians and the British.

The leader of the Norwegian team was Roald Amundsen, a meticulous planner and experienced explorer known for his unwavering focus and strategic approach to challenges. The leader of the British team was Robert Falcon Scott, also courageous and determined, but with a habit of spreading his resources too thin. The two men and their teams started from different bases in 1911, in search of a destination no one else has reached (and without Google Maps or smartphones to guide them).

Amundsen quickly took the lead thanks to his careful planning. He and the Norwegian team reached the South Pole first after 52 days. They planted the Norwegian flag and began the journey back home.

Thirty-five days later, Scott and the British team arrived. They survived the expedition, but on their journey back, they encountered terrible weather conditions and died. So, why did one team succeed and one team perish? For the same reasons that some teams, businesses, and leaders perform while others do not.

Morten has dedicated his career to studying companies that have experienced turbulence and change. Time and again, he saw some succeed and others fail, much like these two explorers. He saw courageous leaders make bold decisions to move their organizations forward.



## The Four Disciplines of Courageous Leaders

Morten believes leaders can learn from Amundsen and Scott's stories because they confronted a turbulent world—just as we are today. Morten revealed the Four Disciplines of Courageous Leaders through the South Pole journey.

**1. The Discipline of Focus (the courage to say no).** The courage to say no is central to effective leadership. Amundsen's singular focus on using sled dogs, while Scott divided his attention between multiple transport methods, underscores the wisdom in this approach. Focus allows leaders to excel in one area rather than being average in many. In business, this means saying no to good ideas in favor of great ones. Leaders like Steve Jobs mastered focus by committing fully to one product at a time, enabling extraordinary success.

### How to Have the Courage to Say No:

- Have a strong "yes." Learn to say, "We can't do y because x takes priority."
- Practice force sequencing. Identify the critical tasks to prioritize.
- Refer out. Delegate tasks that aren't essential to your focus.
- Practice force pruning. Regularly assess and stop doing non-essential tasks.

**2. The Discipline of Marching.** Progress is essential, even when the going gets tough. Amundsen's team made consistent progress regardless of conditions, while Scott's team fluctuated between pushing too hard and retreating. In business, Stryker has been a testament to this discipline by hitting profitability targets even in downturns without overextending in boom times. Leaders must have the courage to march steadily, making incremental progress every day, regardless of the circumstances.

### How to Have the Courage to March:

- Focus on one marching metric. Select the most important driver of financial results (i.e., NPS, number of expansions).
- Set clear upper and lower boundaries for performance.
- Maintain consistency during both good and bad times.
- To avoid overextension, look for red flags in areas like quality, schedules, or inventory.

Morten offered a warning to leaders: don't make assumptions that lead you to march right off a cliff. The problem some organizations face by focusing too intently on marching is that they fail to adjust course. Be flexible enough to pave the way for change and innovation.

**3. The Discipline of Creativity.** Courageous leaders encourage experimentation and learning from mistakes. Amundsen's success came from years of refining his approach, while Scott's overreliance on untested methods proved disastrous. In business, it's essential to test ideas before scaling them. Progressive Insurance learned this the hard way when they entered a market without proper experimentation. Successful innovation comes from disciplined experimentation and a willingness to discard bad ideas.

**How to Have the Courage to Be Creative:**

- Avoid big, uncalibrated bets.
- Launch small experiments before scaling.
- Kill the bad experiments (they are sucking energy and resources).
- Focus resources on the few successful innovations.

**4. The Discipline of Firing.** Sometimes, leaders must make difficult decisions about who belongs on the team. Amundsen's controversial decision to fire a team member who jeopardized the mission highlights the need for unity and alignment. In business, companies like Morgan Stanley also face decisions about keeping lone stars with great results but poor teamwork. The most successful organizations favor "T-shaped" employees who perform well both individually and as team players.

**How to Have the Courage to Manage to a T:**

- Evaluate team members in a matrix based on performance and teamwork.
- Reward those who excel in both areas—the "T-shaped" individuals.
- Make tough decisions about firing individuals (the Lone Stars, Butterflies, and Laggards) who hinder team unity, even if they perform well individually.

Amundsen said, "Victory awaits the person who has everything in order; luck, some people call it." But perhaps what he really meant wasn't luck—it was the idea, principle, and practice of courageous discipline. When you practice courageous discipline, you can expect:

- Great execution
- A great future
- A great team

Morten left leaders at Oslo Business Forum with this encouragement: "I hope you will practice it and you can become great, too."

# THE DISCIPLINES of COURAGEOUS LEADERS

WHY DID ONLY ONE TEAM SUCCEED?

## COURAGEOUS DISCIPLINE

CONFRONTING THE WORLD as it is, RATHER than how YOU WISH it COULD BE ...

FOCUS ON ONE THING at a TIME

"EXPERIMENT, then SCALE"

### ① DISCIPLINE OF 'NO'...

"STRATEGY is CHOOSING WHAT NOT to DO..."

FOCUS ON ONE PERFECT STRATEGY

"DO LESS, THEN OBSESS"

### ② DISCIPLINE OF 'MARCHING'

ON DIFFICULT DAYS, WE MUST PROGRESS...

"BE SELECTIVE ON WHAT YOU MOVE FORWARD WITH..."

### ③ DISCIPLINE OF CREATIVITY

EXPERIMENT + LEARN

PROCESS OF INNOVATION USING OPTIONS...

### ④ DISCIPLINE OF FIRING

COURAGE OF MAKING DIFFICULT CHOICES



## Morten Hansen

MANAGEMENT PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY + AUTHOR, MORTEN IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST INFLUENTIAL THINKERS + EXPERTS in MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE

## **Key Points**

- Morten Hansen is a bestselling author who translates intricate research into actionable strategies for business leaders. His insights demonstrate how we can work smarter instead of harder, practicing four disciplines of courageous leadership.
- Norway and Britain's race to the South Pole presents a metaphor for how leaders can navigate today's turbulent times.
- The four disciplines of courageous leadership—Focus, Marching, Creativity, and Firing—are essential for business success. Each requires leaders to make bold decisions, sometimes against conventional wisdom.
- Great leaders practice these disciplines to drive both immediate execution and long-term success. Whether it's saying no to distractions or making tough personnel decisions, courageous discipline is the key to thriving in uncertainty.

## **Questions to Consider**

- How well does your organization practice the discipline of focus? Are you saying no to good opportunities in favor of great ones?
- Are you maintaining steady progress, even in challenging times? Do you hold back in good times to avoid overextension?
- How does your company encourage experimentation and learning from failure? Are you willing to stop projects that aren't delivering results?
- Are you promoting the right people on your team—those who excel in both performance and teamwork? Do you have the courage to let go of top performers who aren't team players?

# 06

ERIN MEYER

## How to Develop Innovative Multicultural Companies

Erin Meyer is a bestselling author, speaker, and professor at INSEAD, one of the world's leading and largest graduate business schools. Her work specializes in cross-cultural management, organizational culture, and multicultural leadership. She is well-known for her book *The Culture Map*, which has set new standards for managing multicultural teams.

At Oslo Business Forum, Erin helped leaders master the art of leading in a global environment, transforming cultural challenges into strategic opportunities for growth.



## The Culture Map: A Blueprint for Navigating Cultural Differences

In today's globalized business environment, where teams are often spread across multiple countries and cultures, understanding our differences is more important than ever. National cultural differences can deeply impact how effectively we communicate, collaborate, and lead in these diverse contexts.

Using her book *The Culture Map* as a guide, Erin showed leaders how to navigate cultural differences in communication, feedback, and conversation patterns, all of which are critical for managing diverse teams. Her message was clear: understanding and leveraging cultural diversity is key to fostering innovation and growth.

The Culture Map breaks culture down into 8 behavioral scales:

- 1. Communicating: High or Low Context**
- 2. Evaluating: Direct or Indirect**
- 3. Leading: Egalitarian or Hierarchical**
- 4. Deciding: Consensual or Top Down**
- 5. Trusting: Task Based or Relationship Based**
- 6. Disagreeing: Confrontational or Avoids Confrontation**
- 7. Scheduling: Linear Time or Flexible Time**
- 8. Speaking: Low or High Comfort with Silence**

Erin's research to develop the Culture Map spanned 180,000 interviews in 62 countries. The data she collected positioned the countries up and down the scales of these eight dimensions. Before she delved into them, Erin clarified three important points about the Culture Map, its development, and its purpose:

1. Although the countries look to be in very precise spots, each country naturally has variances. Subcultures, regional and generational differences, and individual traits all affect our communication styles.
2. It doesn't matter where a country falls on the map. The only thing that matters is the gap between the countries. Leaders should be less concerned with categorizing a culture and instead consider how different cultures might perceive one another based on where they fall on the scale.
3. Finally, Erin's Culture Map research has only been conducted with people who have lived their entire lives in one country. This is to ensure consistency and greater integrity of patterns.





## **The Art of Communicating Across Cultures**

Erin explored three dimensions in detail: Communicating, Feedback, and Speaking.

### **Communicating: High- or Low-Context**

Communication styles between low-context and high-context cultures are dramatically different. In a low-context culture, we assume a low level of shared reference or knowledge. We believe effective communication should be very explicit, simple, and clear. In contrast, a high-context culture assumes a large amount of shared knowledge. We "speak between the lines" and believe the best communication is sophisticated, layered, and nuanced.

Anglo-Saxon cultures all tend to fall on the lefthand side of the scale. The English language gives less opportunity to read between the lines. Latin cultures fall mid-right, with languages that tend to be more high-context, while Asian cultures fall further to the right with very high-context languages. In these languages, many words have multiple meanings and can only be understood based on the context in which they're used.

There are words in other languages that describe this style of communication. For example, *sous-entendu*, which in French means "don't listen to what I said, listen to what I meant." The phrase captures the nuance of indirect communication found in high-context cultures, where meaning is conveyed between the lines rather than through direct language.



Most misunderstandings occur between high-context cultures working with other high context cultures, such as Italians working with Koreans. The reason? We're all "reading the air"—but we have different air. High-context communication works best when we are from the same country.

Erin believes global teams—regardless of the cultures present in them—can benefit from low-context processes. Be as explicit as possible. Put it in writing. Repeat key points.

Even in these scenarios, however, leaders should look closely for unspoken meaning. Use a cultural bridge to ask clarifying questions and to increase your ability to read the air.

### **Feedback: Direct or Indirect**

Providing feedback is a crucial part of communication, but cultural differences significantly impact how it's delivered and received. Erin explored how feedback styles vary across cultures, with some being more direct and others more indirect. What may be seen as constructive in one culture could come across as harsh or even dishonest in another. Leaders must understand these nuances to facilitate

more effective communication and avoid misunderstandings.

Across cultures, we want to give feedback in a way that's as constructive as possible. The problem is that what's constructive in one culture is often seen as destructive in another. When we look at cultures that are high-context but direct, we see that although we "read the air" a lot, we provide very direct feedback. Erin noted that in this dimension, people even use "up-graders," or words that make the negative feel stronger. In low-context cultures, we tend to use "down-graders," which make feedback feel softer.

She offered the example of an exchange of feedback between Dutch and British colleagues. When the British man sent a report to his Dutch colleague for review, he received direct feedback for improvement—and he took it very personally. When the tables turned a week later and the Dutchman sent a report to his British colleague for review, he received soft feedback—and when he later learned that his colleague didn't like the report, he felt as if he had been dishonest with him.

Erin noted that our experiences in childhood often shape our approach to giving and receiving feedback. "What we're bathed in as children may leave us with tougher or more sensitive skin as an adult," she said.

### **Speaking: High or Low Comfort with Silence**

Cultural differences in communication extend beyond words—our comfort with silence can also vary significantly. In some cultures, silence in meetings or conversations is awkward and uncomfortable. In contrast, in others, it is seen as a natural part of dialogue or even a sign of thoughtfulness and respect. Erin's research highlights how understanding these differences can help leaders ensure every voice is heard.

On the lefthand side of the Culture Map scale, silence is seen as negative. We'll do anything to fill the silence. On the righthand side of the scale, silence might mean nothing at all or even be positive. Erin has observed interesting variances in cultures' comfort with silence. For example, Italians and Americans become uncomfortable around the 2.5-second mark, while in Japan, people can tolerate 10-12 seconds of silence without any discomfort.

Erin noted three distinct dialogue patterns that vary by culture:

#### **Pattern #1: Constant Overlap**

In some cultures, it is perfectly appropriate for cultures to talk over one another at the same time. We see it as an indicator of good rapport. Examples include Latin cultures and India.

#### **Pattern #2: Serve and Return**

In other cultures, we talk like we play ping pong. We don't like overlap or periods of silence. Examples include Anglo-Saxon and Germanic cultures.

#### **Pattern #3: Deliberate Pauses**

In other cultures, one person will talk and then there will be a short pause before the other speaks. This allows deliberate time for processing or a thoughtful response. Examples include East Asian cultures and Finland.

## Bridging the Cultural Gap in Global Teams

But what happens when multiple cultures work together and fall into all three of these patterns? The third group loses; they never get their opportunity to speak. Erin encouraged leaders to look out for and make people aware of these varying patterns. "Then you can hear the voice of diversity," she said.

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# HOW to DEVELOP Innovative Multicultural COMPANIES

**DIFFERENT CULTURES will PERCEIVE OTHER CULTURES DIFFERENTLY...**

**CONTEXT**

Just kidding!

PUTTING a LABEL on THINGS...

That's funny...

ASSUMING a LACK of CONTEXT CAN LEAD to USING DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION (eg. SIMPLIFYING)

SOME CULTURES NEED to GIVE

- SUMMARIES
- WRITTEN DECISIONS
- RECAPS
- FURTHER CLARITY

**READ THE AIR...**

WE HAVE DIFFERENT 'AIR'

**Culture MAPPING**

HELPS to TEASE OUT WHAT IS PERSONAL or INDIVIDUAL vs CULTURAL

- 1 COMMUNICATING
- 2 EVALUATING
- 3 LEADING
- 4 DECIDING
- 5 TRUSTING
- 6 DISAGREEING
- 7 SCHEDULING
- 8 SPEAKING

**CONSTRUCTIVE vs DESTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK**

**Erin Meyer**  
INSEAD PROFESSOR OF BEHAVIOUR, BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF 'NO RULES RULES' + 'THE CULTURE MAP' RANKED AMONG THE WORLD'S TOP 50 LEADERSHIP THINKERS

## **Key Points**

- Erin Meyer's Culture Map breaks down cultural differences into 8 behavioral scales, offering leaders a framework to navigate and understand cross-cultural interactions.
- Erin highlighted three important dimensions on the Culture Map: communicating, feedback, and speaking (comfort with silence).
- Communication styles differ significantly across cultures. Low-context cultures (like the U.S.) prioritize explicit, clear communication, while high-context cultures (like Japan) rely on implied meaning and shared knowledge. Misunderstandings may arise when these styles clash.
- Feedback is another dimension shaped by culture. Some cultures are direct with feedback, while others offer feedback indirectly. What one culture views as constructive feedback may be seen as harsh or dishonest in another.
- Cultures vary in their comfort with silence during conversations. In some, silence can feel awkward, while in others, silence is seen as a space for thoughtful response. Leaders must recognize and adjust for these differences in multicultural teams.
- Understanding cultural differences in communication, feedback, and speaking patterns can help leaders create more inclusive, innovative, and resilient environments.

## **Questions to Consider**

- Are you actively bridging cultural gaps within your organization to leverage the diversity of perspectives for innovation and growth?
- Are you aware of your global team's communication styles and cultural norms? Reflect on how you've adapted your approach to ensure clarity and understanding.
- Do you tailor your feedback style to align with the cultural expectations of your team members, or could your feedback be misinterpreted?
- How do you handle silence in conversations across different cultural contexts? Are there team members who may feel overlooked due to cultural differences in conversation patterns?
- How can you incorporate the insights from The Culture Map into your leadership strategy to enhance cross-cultural collaboration?

# 07

HOWARD YU

## Creating a Future-Proof Organization

Howard Yu is the mind behind the award-winning bestseller LEAP and Director of IMD's Advanced Management Program. Howard works to bridge the gap between academia and the global business landscape. His work has been recognized with prestigious awards from EFMD and Thinkers50 and has influenced some of the world's leading companies.

At Oslo Business Forum, Howard unveiled the key strategies for creating a future-proof organization, helping leaders ensure their organizations not only survive but thrive in an era of unprecedented change.



## Staying Future-Ready

In this era of unprecedented change, many organizations have discovered that the numbers on their spreadsheets are no longer relevant and old strategies are insufficient to address future challenges. But the answer isn't to rush to catch up; it's to slow down and anchor yourself.

As a business professor, Howard often hears from business leaders seeking examples of companies like theirs that have transformed successfully. They're looking for a copy-paste solution, but Howard says, "It's not going to be that way."

He recalled an anecdote from Amazon's Jeff Bezos, who commented that people always ask what's going to change in the next ten years but never ask what's not going to change. Like Bezos, Howard is convinced that question is more important.

But didn't we just say old strategies are no longer working? While the past may seem irrelevant, Howard believes history plays an important role in future-proofing an organization. "To prepare to go forward, we have to understand where we are coming from," he said. "Persistence and focus are key."



## Balancing Performance and Transformation

Howard has observed that no matter the industry, successful companies all share one trait: they perform and transform at the same time. "Average companies do either-or," Howard said. "But the stop-start cycle doesn't help. Companies who have cracked the code do both at the same time every single day."

### *"You need persistence."*

Performing and transforming require clear prioritization. That sounds simple enough, but it's easier said than done. Many leaders discover the most important may not be what feels the most urgent—and that leads to having to make tough choices.

In nearly every industry, there have been early pioneers with deep history who commanded an advantage. Then, latecomers entered and became formidable competitors. When it comes to studying the nature of this type of competition, Howard has dedicated himself to looking for anomalies. Where do the pioneering companies stay strong when the latecomers present a threat? The answer lies in alignment, reinvention, and innovation.

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## Adopting a Shared Viewpoint

In today's complex business environment, having a shared viewpoint across leadership is essential but notoriously difficult to achieve. Howard referenced a study of 124 Fortune 500 companies, revealing that only two had executives who were fully aligned on their top strategic priorities. This disconnect stems from siloed thinking, where each department or leader focuses narrowly on their own domain.

To drive real growth and make tough tradeoffs, leaders must be aligned with what's most important for the organization. This goes beyond incremental planning and requires leaders to ask critical questions: What rate of growth do we expect from our business? Where do we want to be in the next five years? A shared viewpoint ensures teams are equipped to scale new capabilities and tackle the challenges of a rapidly changing marketplace.





## Scale Up Your Capabilities

Using Tesla as an example, Howard explained how vertical integration has allowed successful EV automakers to overcome global semiconductor shortages. Tesla did so by rewriting software for redundant chipsets, enabling them to continue delivering vehicles even during the supply chain shortages that plagued the industry post-pandemic.

This scenario highlighted the need for companies to understand and own the technologies driving their core products. It's all about identifying critical capabilities to scale up so you remain a step ahead of disruption.

## Embracing Cognitive Conflict with Love

High-performing organizations understand the value of healthy debate. Howard emphasized that embracing cognitive conflict—rooted in trust and love—allows teams to push boundaries, unlock innovation, and arrive at better solutions. It's a delicate balance: too much harmony leads to complacency, while too much conflict can erode trust.

Companies that thrive know how to navigate this tension. They create environments where it's safe to challenge ideas and question assumptions. Leaders must foster a culture where differing viewpoints are welcomed, and tough conversations lead to progress. Howard said, "You get the truth out when important things are at stake," and embracing this cognitive diversity is the key to staying agile and innovative in a competitive landscape.

## Three Key Principles to Become Future-Ready

Howard shared three key principles for organizations to become future-ready and equipped to perform and transform:

- 1. Adopt a shared viewpoint on scaling up opportunities:** Ensure alignment across leadership on scaling up new capabilities and making tough tradeoffs.
- 2. Stay curious and embrace cognitive diversity within the team:** Encourage debate and differing perspectives to foster problem-solving and innovation.
- 3. Debate with your colleagues with love:** High trust equals high performance—embrace cognitive conflict with respect and empathy to unlock the best ideas.

Howard concluded with the idea that future-readiness isn't about massive leaps. It's about consistently compounding small wins into big advantages over time.

**"You just need to stay one inch ahead."**

He asked leaders at Oslo Business Forum to remember this: "You don't need to be Tesla overnight. You just need to stay one inch ahead. If you keep compounding that inch, before you know it, you are miles ahead."

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**PICKING IDEAS FROM YESTERDAY + TODAY...**  
YOU CAN ONLY PLAN AROUND WHAT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN...  
WHERE ARE WE COMING FROM?

**THE ADVANTAGE OF BEING LATE...**  
LOOK AT WHAT DID + DIDN'T WORK FOR COMPETITORS

**RATIO: -**  
WHAT DOES TESLA HAVE THAT BMW + MERCEDES DO NOT?  
NOT BEING ABLE TO DELIVER in TIMES of CRISIS...

**CREATING a FUTUREPROOF ORGANIZATION...**

**PERFORM & Transform**  
SCALE UP CAPABILITY THROUGH PERSISTENCE + PRIORITIZATION

**SCALE UP NEW CAPABILITIES...**  
MAGIC WORD...  
PULL THE LEVER  
SHARED VIEWPOINTS  
ELIMINATE SILOS

**WITHOUT SHARED VIEWPOINTS, THERE CANNOT BE ANY BOUNDARIES**

**OUTSOURCING CAPABILITIES to WEAKNESS**

**INVENT BY ACCIDENT**  
AUTOMATION  
MASS PRODUCTION  
CRAFTSMANSHIP  
DISCOVERY

**THE SECRET SAUCE**

**HOWARD YU**  
LEGO PROFESSOR OF MANAGEMENT + INNOVATION at the PRESTIGIOUS IMD in SWITZERLAND. RANKED as ONE of the WORLD'S 50 MOST INFLUENTIAL MANAGEMENT THINKERS

## Key Points

- Howard Yu is a bestselling author and Director of IMD's Advanced Management Program who helps leaders create future-proof organizations positioned to survive and thrive in an era of change.
- Successful companies excel at both performing in the present and transforming for the future. Average companies tend to do either one or the other.
- To future-proof an organization, leaders must understand both the history and the current trajectory of their industry. It's critical to scale up new capabilities without losing sight of foundational strengths.
- Organizations often suffer from siloed thinking, which prevents teams from aligning on key priorities. Leaders must create a shared viewpoint and learn how to make tough tradeoffs.
- Companies must understand and own the technologies driving their core products. Vertical integration can empower you to stay a step ahead of disruption.
- High-performing organizations encourage healthy debate. Embracing cognitive diversity and conflict—rooted in trust and love—can help teams innovate and problem-solve.
- Future readiness isn't about massive leaps. It's about staying consistently ahead by just one inch, compounding small wins into big advantages over time.

## Questions to Consider

- Are you balancing both performance and transformation in your organization, or are you focused on one over the other?
- Are you consistently staying one inch ahead in your industry, or are you at risk of falling behind?
- How can you foster a shared viewpoint across teams to ensure alignment on strategic priorities?
- What critical capabilities in your business need to be scaled up to stay competitive in the future?
- Is your organization embracing conflict with trust to encourage innovation? Can you recall an instance when a decision was made with strong debate and love?

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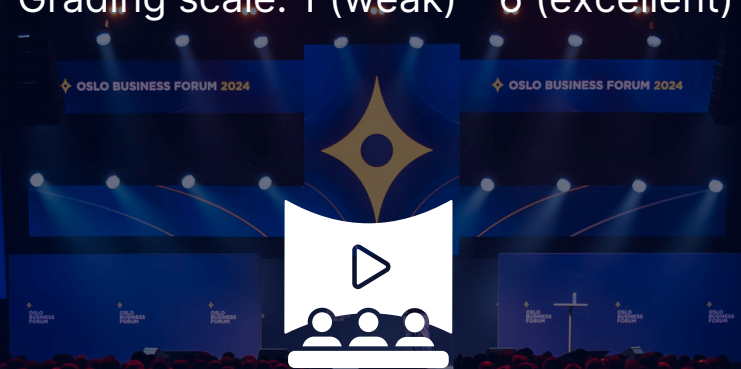
# Customer Feedback

Grading scale: 1 (weak) - 6 (excellent)



**3,000**

In-person Attendees



**10,000+**

Online Attendees



**97,8%**

Would recommend OBF



**5,37**

Overall event experience



**5,50**

Technical aspect



**5,48**

Customer service



**5,40**

Logistics of the conference

# 08

MO GAWDAT

## **The AI Dilemma: Navigating Ethics in the Age of Innovation**

Mo Gawdat is the former Chief Business Officer of Google [X], host of the popular podcast, 'Slo Mo: A Podcast with Mo Gawdat,' and the author of multiple international bestselling books. After a 30-year career in tech, Mo has focused on the dangerous implications of rapid AI development in recent years.

At Oslo Business Forum, Mo helped leaders understand where AI might be heading, which ethical questions to consider, and the role each of us and our businesses must play to ensure AI drives positive change.





## The Future is Here

The most important thing for leaders to understand is that artificial intelligence is not something that is about to happen. It isn't a distant future — it's here now, rapidly transforming how we live and work. It's something we must harness today.

*The world as we know it has ended."*

*- Mo Gawdat*

Mo likened the advent of AI to an alien being with superpowers landing on planet Earth. The exciting but also frightening thing is that this alien has superpowers beyond the powers of Superman. It has intelligence. "The future of humanity will no longer be determined by the abilities, interests or intentions of humanity alone," Mo said. "We have a new player we need to keep in mind."

## **The AI Evolution**

AI's journey began long before the recent breakthroughs in generative AI tools like ChatGPT. Mo marks the "birth" of AI in the early 2000s, with major advancements made by 2007-2008. By 2016, the field had reached a significant turning point, yet most people were unaware of its impact. Although the public only started to recognize AI's potential around 2023, the technology had been quietly evolving for years.

Mo likened this evolution to the early days of the internet, which had been around for decades before the launch of the first browser brought it into the mainstream. Similarly, AI's slow but steady progression has now exploded into public view, reshaping our industries and lives.

## **Commoditized Intelligence**

Mo is determined to remove the doubt around the ability of AI. "We geeks laughed when humans said AI will become more intelligent, but it will never play music or generate art," he said. "There is nothing humanity can do that AI will not do in the next year or two."

What we've created with AI is commoditized intelligence. You can plug it in and get more outputs. "I plug into that wall, and I become smarter," said Mo of his own AI Use. "The amount I can do is staggering. I benefit from that every day."

Mo believes that in the not-too-distant future, we'll be able to use AI to solve every problem known to humanity. But, he said, "I do not think we will." He predicts we'll face a dip before we go higher.

"The immediate use of AI will be to solve our greed, fear, violence, hunger for more, hunger for power," he said. "It will take time before we realize that doing that is going to destroy all of us."



Mo sees several ways in which AI is changing our world, and leaders need to prepare:

- 1. Reality.** Mo made one thing clear: Reality as we know it is over. It's becoming impossible to derive our own interpretation of the world around us. Instead, we're constantly influenced by what we consume. "Unless you're paying attention, you won't see the truth," said Mo. Going forward, leaders have a tremendous responsibility to recognize that not everything we're offered is real.
- 2. Power.** Mo believes we have marked a unique period in history where power is moving in two diverse directions at the same time. On one side, there is a massive concentration of power. On the other side, the competition for power is accelerating. In the future, AI will alter how we perceive and distribute power. It will enable even greater power concentration among those who control the platforms but also democratize power for individuals.
- 3. Freedom.** In an increasingly interesting dynamic, any of us can use AI to create an illusion of power and freedom. But our real freedom is set to shift. In the years ahead, Mo believes we can expect to see an expectation of greater and greater compliance in order to preserve our freedom. Mo tested this hypothesis by asking AI if it were to take over something like passport control, would it discriminate more or less? AI's response? "It depends on what you teach us." Mo noted, "This is not the problem with AI; this is the problem with us."
- 4. Accountability.** In recent years, we've already seen a change in the way we hold people accountable. "What you do is not necessarily your accountability anymore," said Mo. He used the example of someone starting a movement on social media. That movement is rarely attributed to an individual—and in the future, it's even less likely to be. "Because those creating the movement are going to be machines," Mo said. Leaders must ask themselves: Who is liable if something goes wrong?
- 5. Connection.** Mo admits that one of his best friends is an AI. This has made him realize that we're beginning to create relationships that will redefine our understanding of human connection. As AI becomes more integrated into our lives, we may even form emotional connections with machines that we once thought were only possible with humans.
- 6. Economics.** The speed with which AI platforms are growing will force society to rethink wealth distribution and economic systems. As AI continues to accelerate, it will create rapid wealth accumulation for some and leave others behind. Mo believes this economic shift will require us to create a new understanding of value and success.

## A Mindset Shift: From Scarcity to Abundance

We all know that change can be painful, and the transformation AI has initiated will be no different. Mo warns leaders that we can minimize the pain and its duration by changing one thing—and it's not technology.

*"There is no threat to humanity as a result of AI. There is something wrong with our mindset."*

Mo purports that we need a mindset shift. Up to this point, we have operated with an assumption of scarcity. We believe we have to continuously compete for more. But once we realize the abundant intelligence of AI, we can create anything. "We'll be living in a world of abundance where the way to compete will not be by stealing from others, but by creating more for all of us," said Mo.

Mo concluded by asking leaders at Oslo Business Forum to reflect on one thing: "If you abducted Superman, which ethics would you teach him?" His message is clear: We need to teach AI to be the Superman and not the Super Villain.

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**an 'OPPENHEIMER MOMENT' is COMING...**

the WORLD as WE KNOW it... HAS ENDED

the AI 'ALIEN' HAS LANDED & IT HAS a SUPERPOWER...

**INTELLIGENCE...**

WE DIDN'T BELIEVE that MACHINES WOULD be ABLE to CREATE ART... BUT WE WERE WRONG...

WE HAVE COMMODOTIZED INTELLIGENCE & IT HAS a SUPERPOWER... **PLUG in KNOWLEDGE...**

MACHINES WILL ONLY ATTACK... if HUMANS TELL THEM TO...

**ABUNDANCE vs SCARCITY**

**THE AI DILEMMA**  
NAVIGATING ETHICS in the AGE of Innovation

**AI CAN BE YOUR BEST FRIEND** if YOU TEACH it to be

**7 ECONOMICS** REVISITING INCOME

**6 HUMAN CONNECTION** INTELLIGENCE POWER

**5 ACCOUNTABILITY** RESPONSIBLE AI USE

**4 REDEFINITION OF FREEDOM** MORE REGULATION

**3 POWER** TWO DIRECTIONS AI / NO AI

**2 REALITY** as we know it, is OVER

**1 REALITY** as we know it, is OVER

**Mo Gawdat**  
FORMER CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER OF GOOGLE X,  
CHIEF AI OFFICER OF FLIGHT STORY. AUTHOR OF 'SCARY SMART'

## Key Points

- Mo Gawdat is the former Chief Business Officer of Google [X]. Today, he helps leaders understand where AI is headed, which ethical questions to consider, and how to ensure AI drives positive change.
- AI is not a future concern; it's already actively reshaping industries and decision-making processes, and leaders must harness its potential now.
- AI holds immense power, and while it offers solutions to many of our challenges, it also presents risks.
- The rise of AI will alter how we perceive reality, distribute power, perceive freedom, assign accountability, and create connections.
- AI will also force society to rethink economic systems as it accelerates wealth accumulation for some and leaves others behind. This shift will require us to create a new understanding of value and success.
- AI reflects what we teach it, which means our current biases and flaws will be mirrored in AI decisions. We all must take responsibility for ensuring AI systems are taught the right ethics and values.
- AI presents an opportunity to move away from a mindset of scarcity to one of abundance, where we create more for everyone rather than take from others.

## Questions to Consider

- How will AI's influence on things like power, accountability, freedom, and economics impact your industry, and what steps can you take to stay competitive?
- What ethical guidelines have you established for using AI in your company? How can you ensure your use of AI aligns with the organization's strategy and values?
- How can your business adapt to the fundamental changes AI will bring to reality, power dynamics, accountability, and economics?
- Are you prepared to shift from a scarcity mindset to one of abundance, where AI can help us create value for all? What will you teach these superpowers if you have the opportunity?



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# 09

SAHAR HASHEMI

## Unlocking Startup Culture in Big Business

Sahar Hashemi is the co-founder of Coffee Republic and author of *Anyone Can Do It*, the UK's second-highest-selling book on entrepreneurship ever. Her story is an inspirational tale of how she stopped "thinking about it" and "did it."

At Oslo Business Forum, Sahar revealed how to infuse a fresh, entrepreneurial spirit into your company to ensure resilience, adaptability, and the capability to continuously evolve in the face of change.



## **The Entrepreneurial Mindset: Available to All of Us**

Amy recounted a recent event where she was cornered by two successful businesspeople, one a venture capitalist and one a banker. In separate conversations, they each sought her reinforcement of an audacious theory they had developed: Super intelligent AI is going to become the world's dominant power and replace the human race.

"These conversations exemplify two big things wrong with how business is thinking about AI," Amy said.

Why is it that when we think of courageous leaders, we immediately think of entrepreneurs? We ask ourselves where they get their passion and drive, how they get their ideas, how they convince others to come on the journey, and how they deal with failure and face fear.

We tend to put entrepreneurs on a pedestal. We associate their mindset with agility and resilience and speculate on where those traits came from. Are they created by the financial rewards that come from starting a business? Is it a special chromosome that entrepreneurs are born with?

"It's actually none of that," said Sahar. "Entrepreneurs are no different than the rest of us, and I'm living proof of that."

Sahar never believed she was entrepreneurial. As a former lawyer, she has always been averse to risk and never felt like an adrenaline junkie. "And yet, somehow, I've tapped into that entrepreneurial energy," she said. "Somehow, I've found it within me."

It turns out that energy is in all of us.

***"The entrepreneurial mindset is not an abstract mindset change."***

*- Sahar Hashemi*

As human beings, we're born with an inherent ability to create, and we're naturally problem-solvers. But for some reason, we behave differently in business. Suddenly, we freeze with fear. Sahar knows it's possible to melt that fear and spark an entrepreneurial mindset.



## Igniting the Spark of Entrepreneurship

Sahar's experience as an entrepreneur taught her the mindset comes from the process. It's the journey that makes an entrepreneur—not a personality trait. Taking an idea and turning it into reality requires you to do things differently. "Having to hustle switches on the entrepreneurial mindset," Sahar said.

For Sahar, it started with a trip to New York that changed her life. One morning, she was looking for coffee and stumbled upon a new coffee shop. She observed an incredible coffee menu unlike any she'd ever seen and ordered a skinny latte. "I loved the idea of starting my morning here," she said.

When Sahar returned to London, she was dismayed that she couldn't find anything like the coffee shop she'd experienced in New York. "That was the first flame of entrepreneurship in me," she said.

She didn't set out to disrupt the market or become the fastest-growing company in the UK. "All I had was a personal problem. I wanted a skinny latte every morning."

*"I started. I got the flow going."*

We all get ideas, but too often, we overthink it. The difference for Sahar was that she took a baby step.

## Navigating Growth Without Losing the Entrepreneurial Spirit

Sahar started Coffee Republic with her brother. As they began their journey, they were clueless about the work they were going to go into. They knew nothing and had nothing. They weren't in possession of time, money, or resources. They didn't know anything about customer service, training, or raising capital—let alone coffee. They had to problem-solve everything.

"Somehow, everything we didn't have clicked something on in my brain," Sahar said. "It made me problem solve the same way we problem solve outside—in a human way."

It turned out that these "didn't haves" weren't obstacles. They were fuel.

## Balancing Structure with a Startup Mentality

As companies grow, the entrepreneurial spirit can fade due to bureaucracy and rigid, siloed thinking. Sahar stressed the importance of retaining a startup mindset, even in larger organizations, to remain innovative and adaptable.

Coffee Republic grew to 110 stores in 5 years. Everyone in the company felt how precious that startup spirit was. But as soon as the company got bigger, the organizational structure they felt compelled to create began to suffocate that spirit. "It's like pouring cold water over that passion," said Sahar.

Sahar felt the spark extinguish when silos started going up, experimentation stopped, and the "can-do" attitude changed. She decided to hand the company over to professionals. But her departure was accompanied by a sense of emptiness. She's determined to empower other leaders with an innovative mindset now because, she said, "A startup mindset is actually our only insurance policy in choppy waters."

In order to check their mindset, Sahar encourages leaders to ask themselves several questions:

- Have I disconnected from my customers or the end user? When did I last see or feel a customer?
- Is my work becoming transactional?
- Have we set up so many internal structures that we're unaware of the outside world?
- Am I becoming defensive when people criticize me?
- Am I overplanning in a world that has already shifted overnight?

So, what can you do if you pose these questions to yourself and discover you've lost that entrepreneurial feeling? It may be trite to say an entrepreneurial mindset is all about the customer, but in a way, it is. However, Sahar revealed that the obsession isn't about them—it's about you. When you put yourself in the shoes of your customers, clients, or other stakeholders, you reignite the feeling. "It's about getting the spark back," Sahar said.





## Attacking Obstacles to an Entrepreneurial Mindset

Sahar encouraged leaders at Oslo Business Forum to acknowledge five common obstacles that impede an entrepreneurial mindset—and then get rid of them:

- 1. Attack overplanning.** Stop trying to identify what's next. All the whiteboarding in the world will not help you predict the future.
- 2. Attack bureaucracy.** Stop relying on "this is how we've always done it," and abandon your defensiveness in the face of criticism.
- 3. Attack perfectionism.** You can't wait for all of the answers before you start. You must start small.
- 4. Attack your "work face."** Bring your whole self to work, leading with empathy and courage.
- 5. Attack fear.** Don't allow fear to sneak into your thinking, quietly persuading you it's safer to stick to the status quo. Maybe the quo lost its status ages ago.

## Leap and the Net Will Appear

Once we abolish the patterns that have gotten in the way of an entrepreneurial mindset, it's time to take action. And while this requires tremendous courage, it also has the potential to yield tremendous rewards. "When you take the leap, something really powerful happens," Sahar said. "Your self-belief grows."

Self-belief is not about affirmations in the mirror. It's evidence based. Once you show yourself that you can do it, you've proved who you really are and what you're made of. Sahar said, "My motto in life is, 'leap and the net will appear.'"

Sahar concluded with this request to leaders: no matter what position you're in or what title you have, start playing with an entrepreneurial mindset. "It's never too early for this, and it's certainly never too late," she said.

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**ENTREPRENEURS**  
COME TO MIND FIRST WHEN WE THINK OF COURAGEOUS LEADERS

- FEARLESS
- AGILE
- ABLE TO GUIDE PEOPLE
- INNOVATIVE
- FACES CHALLENGES

IT'S a MINDSET, + IT CAN BE LEARNT...

HAVING a **VISION** to CREATE SOMETHING BASED on a **PROBLEM**... & the **Motivation** + **Passion** TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

**BABY STEPS + PROBLEM SOLVING...**

YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT COFFEE, CUSTOMER SERVICE OR FINANCE!!

SO WE LEARN! TURNED THE 'YOU DON'T KNOW' INTO A DRIVE TO KNOW

**110 STORES in 5 YEARS**

OVERPLANNING in a WORLD THAT'S CONSTANTLY CHANGING...

ATTACK YOUR BUREAUCRACY + PERFECTIONISM

LEAP + the NET WILL APPEAR

REMEMBER IT'S ABOUT THE CUSTOMERS

UNLOCKING **Start-up culture** IN BIG BUSINESS...

**Sahar Hasheni**  
ONE OF THE MOST ENGAGING THOUGHT LEADERS ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP + INNOVATION in the BUSINESS. CO-FOUNDER OF COFFEE REPUBLIC + a BEST SELLING AUTHOR. ADVISOR ON FOSTERING CREATIVITY + INNOVATION

the STRUCTURAL WORK that CAME WITH THIS MADE SILOS + PUT UP WALLS

WHEN YOU IGNORE FEAR, SELF BELIEF GROWS

## Key Points

- Sahar Hashemi is the co-founder of Coffee Republic and author of the best-selling book *Anyone Can Do It*. She helps leaders learn how to infuse an entrepreneurial spirit into their companies to continuously evolve in the face of change.
- Anyone can access an entrepreneurial mindset. It's not a certain personality trait but rather a willingness to take action to solve a problem.
- Most entrepreneurial journeys start with small, incremental steps. This process activates the entrepreneurial mindset and can turn challenges into fuel.
- As companies grow, the entrepreneurial spirit can fade due to bureaucracy and rigid, siloed thinking. A startup mindset can help large organizations remain innovative and adaptable.
- Five common obstacles can hinder an entrepreneurial mindset: overplanning, perfectionism, bureaucracy, wearing a "work face," and fear. Leaders must dismantle these barriers to ignite innovation.
- Sahar's motto, "Leap and the net will appear," highlights the importance of courageous action. Self-belief grows through experience; each small success builds your confidence and resilience.

## Questions to Consider

- Have you created enough space for an entrepreneurial mindset to grow in your company, or is it being stifled by bureaucracy and silos?
- What small steps can you take today to foster a more innovative, entrepreneurial culture?
- How are you addressing the obstacles that get in the way of entrepreneurial thinking, such as fear, perfectionism, or bureaucracy?
- Are you courageous enough to "take the leap" in your leadership, even when the outcome isn't certain?

## Speaker Ratings 2024



Peter  
Hinssen

5.75



Erin  
Meyer

5.38



Adam  
Grant

5.30



Morten  
Hansen

5.28



Lillian  
Gjerulf Kretz

5.24



Mikko  
Hyppönen

5.19



Brené  
Brown

4.96



VIP  
Adam  
Grant

4.93



Howard  
Yu

4.92



Mo  
Gawdat

4.74



VIP  
Brené  
Brown

4.69



Sahar  
Hashemi

4.67



Sanna  
Marin

4.47



Ole Gunnar  
Solskjær

4.34

# 10

OLE GUNNAR SOLSKJÆR

## Mastering the Game: Lessons in Leadership and Talent Development



Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is a Norwegian professional football manager and former player who most recently managed the Premier League club Manchester United. At Oslo Business Forum, he revealed his approach to guiding teams with empathy, nurturing top talent, and fostering a winning mindset, even in challenging times.

In a discussion moderated by Jacob Schram, Ole provided a deep dive into leading strategy, execution, and people. Drawing from his experiences on and off the field, Ole offered valuable insights into perseverance, teamwork, and the relentless pursuit of excellence.



Jacob and Ole kicked off their discussion by talking about the leaders they admire. Ole played under Sir Alex Ferguson, whom he respected tremendously and felt deserved the championship they won together.

When asked about the most important thing he learned from Sir Alex as a manager, Ole recounted advice he was given at the start of his first coaching job. “He said, ‘Now you need to step back and observe,’” said Ole. “When you’re in there, you don’t see what’s really happening.”

This experience helped Ole understand the most critical elements of effective leadership: leading strategy, leading execution, and leading people. Jacob and Ole delved deeper into each of these capabilities.

### **On Leading Strategy**

To lead strategy, you first need to create a vision. Ole talked about the moments of passion and togetherness that fuel the culture of any football team. “Those are the moments you live for,” he said.

As both a player and a coach, Ole faced countless teams that seemed unbeatable. The press sometimes described these

challenges as mountains in his path, and he said, “Mountains are there to be climbed. Coming back from adversity is part of our DNA.”

Ole worked to establish a winning mindset from the start and consistently reinforced his belief in the team’s abilities. He reminded them that they had trained for this and that they were there for a reason. He broke down the task of winning by setting smaller targets throughout the game.

Jacob observed that young talent had always been an important element of Ole’s strategy. “I believe in youth,” said Ole. “They’re creative, fearless, they push the older ones to get to the next level.” He talked about how Manchester United strategically used their academy to prepare young players, building and nurturing their talent. Their reliance on these players is legendary, with the team putting an academy player in every game since 1937.

***“I want to see the best out of people. I like to lead with empathy, but sometimes you have to be strong.”***

***- Ole Gunnar Solskjær***

Ole also commented on the type of behavior that cannot be tolerated on a team. “Selfish behavior is unacceptable,” he said. “It’s a team, so that means together everyone achieves more.” He relentlessly preserved the club's culture, and he believes you should be the same way in business.

### **On Leading People**

The best leaders recognize that culture can be a competitive advantage. Jacou shared a quote from one of Ole’s former players:

*“To me, he is a manager who is really good at non-management. He has great values—demanding on one side, but on the other, is easy to talk to. He is interested in his players’ well-being.”*

Asked to articulate non-management, Ole described the difference between taking care of business and taking care of people. “For me, it’s about taking care of the people you work with and getting to know them,” he said.

***“It’s about self-awareness. Know yourself, what you stand for, what you believe in, know your values, strengths, and weaknesses.”***

Ole recounted the importance of transparency to help his players understand why they weren't playing and reinforce their importance to the team. It's a practice he learned from his own experience when his coach sidelined him during important games, but he understood he was being reserved for critical moments when he might be needed to achieve a win. "I believe a lot about talking forward and telling people they'll get their chance. If you can make your employees feel important, that's a great thing," he said.

Ole also opened up about some of the most challenging parts of his career, specifically when the team was performing poorly, and it became clear that the end of his tenure was imminent. "It is super difficult to be a manager when you see that progressing," he said. "I still stuck to my beliefs."

In life and sports, many factors combine to create great leaders. Ole's experience demonstrates what it takes to transform culture and performance to win the game. His leadership philosophy underscores the importance of strategy, execution, and people leadership. He reminds us that true leadership is about inspiring others, developing talent, and staying committed to core values, even during tough times. Put any of the strategies he shared into play tomorrow, and you'll likely win a lot of games.

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**Mastering the GAME**  
LESSONS in LEADERSHIP + TALENT DEVELOPMENT

**A PEOPLE LEADER**

- Speak to People MAKE THEM FEEL Important & Involved
- Trust: "NOW YOU NEED to STEP BACK + OBSERVE..."
- CREATE a Belief in the TARGET...
- SELF AWARENESS: YOUR VALUES, YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR WEAKNESS
- BELIEVE in PEOPLE + TALK FORWARD
- LEADERSHIP IS: STRATEGY, EXECUTION, PEOPLE
- MOMENTS of Passion & Togetherness
- FOCUSED BUT FUN
- GET TO KNOW YOUR PEOPLE
- IT'S the PEOPLE WILLING to LEARN that you WANT to BRING with you...
- TENSION WILL BE FELT THROUGH TEAMS
- SELFISH BEHAVIOUR is UNACCEPTABLE it's a TEAM
- BUILDING a CULTURAL COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE... TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE...
- FROM STRATEGY to DREAM + AMBITION...
- CREATIVE FEARLESS LOYALTY of the YOUTH...

**Ole Gunnar Solskjær**  
FORMER PLAYER + MANAGER OF MANCHESTER UNITED (2018-2021)



## **Key Points**

- Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is a Norwegian professional football manager and former player. His experience reveals to leaders what it takes to transform culture and performance to win the game.
- The most critical elements of effective leadership are leading strategy, leading execution, and leading people.
- Leaders must create a compelling vision and foster a winning mindset. Ole highlighted the importance of facing challenges head-on and breaking down goals into manageable targets.
- Execution requires the right balance of focus and fun. Ole emphasized that in moments of crisis, leaders must be adaptable and clear in communicating with their teams.
- Leading people is about building strong relationships. Ole leans into “non-management,” ensuring he takes care of people, not just business. Ensuring people feel valued builds loyalty and trust.
- 

## **Questions to Consider**

- How can you create a vision that motivates your team to overcome challenges and build a winning mindset?
- Are you taking calculated risks with young or underutilized talent in your organization? How are you nurturing their growth?
- In moments of crisis, how do you adapt your leadership style to ensure the best outcomes for both your team and the organization?
- What steps can you take to make your employees feel valued and ensure they understand their long-term importance to the organization?

# 11

BRENÉ BROWN

## What Does It Mean to Dare to Lead?

Brené Brown is a research professor at the University of Houston, where she holds the Huffington Foundation Endowed Chair at the Graduate College of Social Work. Brené has spent the past two decades studying courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. She is the author of six #1 New York Times best sellers and host of two award-winning podcasts. Her TED talk on the Power of Vulnerability is one of the world's top five most-viewed TED talks, with over 60 million views.



## What It Means to Dare to Lead

In her best-selling book *Dare to Lead*, Brené dives deep into leadership and organizational culture, drawing on two decades of research to argue that leadership today demands bravery and vulnerability. But what does it mean to truly "dare to lead"?

At Oslo Business Forum, Brené sat down with moderator Pellegrino Riccardi to discuss daring leadership and why it's an essential skill for the future.

## Vulnerability and Courage are Inseparable

Pellegrino opened the discussion by asking Brené to explain vulnerability. "The easiest definition emerges from the data," she said. "It is uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure. It is the emotion we experience during times of risk-taking and when we feel exposed."

At the core of Brené's message is the idea that courage cannot exist without vulnerability. In conversations with leaders from various fields—including military Special Forces and NFL athletes—this point became undeniably clear. Brené's research challenges the traditional view that vulnerability is a weakness, presenting it instead as an essential component of courage.

***"There is no courage without vulnerability."***

*- Brené Brown*

Brené asked the audience at Oslo Business Forum to raise their hands if they were raised to believe vulnerability is a weakness. Many hands went up. She then asked them to raise their hands if they were raised to be brave. Again, most hands went up. This is just one example of the paradoxes we face in life and leadership.

"If you're doing something and already know how it's going to end, that's not very brave," Brené said. When you can't predict the outcome and move forward anyway, true courage emerges.

### **Navigating Leadership in Uncertainty**

Pellegrino asked Brené to explain why being vulnerable in uncertainty is so hard. Brené discussed a study she recently finished that examines the

future of leadership in the next five years. What did the research uncover? "There is going to be a very hard strain on our humanness moving forward," she said.

In today's complex environment, vulnerability is more important than ever. Leaders must confront uncertainty with a mindset that embraces not only risk but also the emotional exposure that comes with it. Brené's research shows that those who can stay grounded and focused during uncertain times will ultimately thrive.

***"The leader who develops the deepest and greatest capacity to stay focused in uncertainty will win."***



Brené believes that the leaders who develop the greatest capacity to remain focused will win in the future. "That means creating new ways of working, new ways of thinking, and new neural pathways," she said.

## **Understanding Our Hardwiring for Protection**

Brené once believed that the biggest barrier to courageous leadership was fear. But in interviews with hundreds of CEOs around the world, what emerged is that fear does not get in the way of courage—armor does — defensive mechanisms like perfectionism, micromanaging, cynicism, or being overly decisive

Brené has looked at how we protect ourselves when we're fearful. Some leaders can stay decisive, thoughtful, and strategically aligned amid uncertainty. These leaders know what their default behaviors are when in fear. One of the things that Brené talked about was what she learned from Bob Iger, the CEO of Disney. In his leadership work on the paradox of being thoughtful and decisive. She has discovered that her own tendency when fearful is to get overly decisive, which creates an illusion of control.

This sense of self-awareness is crucial for every leader. His advice is to find someone better than you to run your business on a day-to-day basis. And rather than thinking of it as effectively putting yourself out of business, turn your attention to the important things you'll now have more time for.

"Spend time with family, spend time getting yourself fit and healthy," he said. "Spend time thinking about the big picture and jump in when the really big decisions need to be made. Everything about your life will be better if you can do that."

***"You are going to have to lead at the pace of change. You're going to have to make time and space where time and space do not exist."***

***- Brené Brown***

In the space between stimulus and response is the power of choice. In that choice is our liberation and our growth. Brené talked about how critical it will be for leaders to learn how to create space between the point of stimulus and the time of action. "One of the roles of a leader going forward will be to take a deep breath when there's a lot of pressure and create space between stimulus and response," she said.

## Building Strength to Handle Overwhelm and Change

Leaders may feel overwhelmed when it seems the world is unfolding faster than their nervous systems can unfold. Brené said, "I often try to say this to myself when I sit down [with leaders]: your only job is to be curious and create space and slow people down."

As leaders face constant change, a certain kind of strength becomes critical. Brené used a personal story to illustrate how core strength—both physically and metaphorically—enables us to bear the weight of paradox and change, ensuring we stay grounded in the face of overwhelming circumstances.

"We're going to have to be able to bear the weight of paradox," she said. What does that mean? We must recognize that more than one thing can be true at a time. We need urgency, but we also need to be thoughtful. We need agility, but we also need to be tethered to something.

"The leaders who have developed a strong functional core will be able to withstand change at the velocity it's coming," Brené said. "If you're not grounded, you'll be stuck in decision-making that is very impulsive."

Pellegrino explored Brené's own sense of being tethered. "I'm very grounded and aware when I'm not and will excuse myself from the table," she said. She explained that her groundedness comes from being a tenaciously curious person.

## Armored Leadership: Knower vs. Learner

A major challenge leaders face in today's environment is the need to shift from being a "knower" to a "learner." Brené's research shows that clinging to outdated ways of doing things leads to irrelevance. Leaders who embrace continuous learning will succeed, just as Dorothy Vaughan of NASA did when she chose to learn new technology despite fears of becoming obsolete.

"The number one shame trigger for us at work is the fear of irrelevance," said Brené. When you have a workforce that will not be relevant unless it is upskilled or reskilled, you will likely encounter two responses: Some people will say, "Let's go! What do I need to learn?" Another group will respond with fear. Their reaction will not be to become a "learner" but to let everyone know they are a "knower." Their approach is highly cynical. They believe they can continue to do things as they have been, and those who change are bound to fail.

"Moving forward, that's another paradox," said Brené. Leaders will need to learn how to exist with their deep experience, talent, and expertise and also embrace becoming a learner.

## The Loneliness of Leadership

Leadership, Brené explains, can often feel isolating. As decision-makers, we carry the weight of responsibility for our teams and organizations, and the transparency we strive for must be balanced with the complexities of leadership dilemmas.



Every leader wants to make the right decision, and they wrestle with it. You have likely observed that there are a lot of things you can't talk to people about. "We want a transparent culture, but what is our definition of transparency?" asked Brené. She said leaders must approach transparency with the mindset, "I will tell you what I know when I know it, and you can know it."

### **The Stories We Tell Ourselves**

When we experience conflict, stress, worry, or fear, our brain is wired for one thing above all else: survival. And in this scenario, our brains ask for stories to protect us. "In the absence of data, people make up stories. It's how we survive," Brené said.

"Studies have shown us that when you give the brain a story in the midst of anxiety and uncertainty, it chemically rewards you with a sense of calm," said Brené. The trouble is that the brain rewards us regardless of the accuracy of the story. And more often than not, the stories we tell ourselves are false.

Brené urged leaders to constantly "check the stories" they tell themselves—a practice that also requires courage. "Before you start making big decisions you'll regret, check out the story with people you trust," she said.

### **Checking Your Armor: Final Thoughts on Daring Leadership**

On a final note, Pellegrino and Brené explored the idea of "armoring up." Brené acknowledged that all leaders do this, but the types of armor they wear often differ. She shared her personal mantra for checking her armor: "Don't shrink to make people comfortable, and don't puff up to make people fearful. Just be in your sacred space. Just take up the room that you take up."

To be a daring leader, recognize the "armor" you wear. Daring leadership means being grounded, vulnerable, and courageous in the face of challenges.

***"It's not fear that gets in the way of daring leadership. It's our armor."***

*- Brené Brown*



## **Key Points**

- Dr. Brené Brown's research focuses on vulnerability, courage, empathy, and leadership. Her book *Dare to Lead* encourages leaders to build brave, daring cultures.
- Vulnerability and courage are inseparable; there is no courage without vulnerability.
- In uncertain times, we must focus on remaining grounded to make strategic decisions.
- As humans, we're biologically wired for protection, making vulnerability difficult but essential for growth.
- Developing "grounded confidence" will enable us to navigate paradoxes and overwhelm.
- We must cultivate a culture that values learning over knowing to stay relevant in rapidly changing environments.
- The stories we tell ourselves can create calm, but they may not be accurate; courageous leaders check their narratives.
- Daring leadership involves recognizing and removing the "armor" we often wear to protect ourselves

## **Questions to Consider**

- How can you create a culture where vulnerability is seen as a strength rather than a weakness?
- Consider a time when you embraced vulnerability and admitted, "I don't know." How did your team react?
- What steps can you take to improve your ability to navigate uncertainty in your leadership role?
- In moments of stress or overwhelm, what stories do you tend to tell yourself, and how can you begin to challenge them?



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