

TED2020

UNCHARTED

How to lead through

**uncharted
times**

Insights from:



+



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Change. It isn't easy.

Whether you are in business or government, at a university or nonprofit, leading through a time of transformation is always a challenge — one where old metrics for decision-making no longer work, where building employee trust and motivation get tricky, and where there's increased risk at each turn. That puts today's leaders in a difficult position. Because for the past few months, our world has witnessed several overlapping crises unlike anything we've seen before. It's a humanitarian emergency on a global scale, and there's no way yet of knowing the timeline or full impact. We are truly in uncharted waters. And it will be on leaders to find the way forward for their organization — to reassess current movement, point to shore, and get everyone rowing in the same direction toward it.

The theme for TED2020 — a first-of-its kind virtual conference — was, fittingly, "Uncharted." And speakers throughout the eight-week program offered big ideas for leading effectively through this moment and any period of change to come. Brightline® Initiative, a long-time TED partner, was on-hand, taking notes. Read on for our insights, plus a hefty dose of inspiration.



Key Insight #1

Adaptability is more important than ever

It's a time of great upheaval, with change happening rapidly for every organization in every part of the world. And according to the speakers of TED2020, it's the leaders who embrace this that will set their organizations up for success. Here, leadership lessons you can apply tomorrow to get comfortable with — and even excited about — change.

Look for smart ways to pivot

Eric Yuan, the CEO of Zoom, had a clear vision for his company.

Their goal: to build the best platform for virtual meetings. They were doing pretty well, adding features and growing steadily. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit. "Overnight, there were so many consumers using the Zoom platform for all different use cases," said Yuan. Zoom classes. Zoom cocktails. Zoom yoga. Zoom weddings. Yuan had to lead his team to improve functionality and security for new users, to support all of the above. The experience will transform Zoom permanently. While Yuan is still driving toward the perfect online meeting — one with remote-handshaking, even real-time language translation — the mission will be broader too: to rival face-to-face gatherings of all kinds.

TED2020 was packed with leaders making quick turns in response to the pandemic. For some, especially those in healthcare, the change was initiated

because they saw a way to contribute. [Radiation scientist David Brenner](#) realized his work on far-UVC light — deadly to the flu virus, safe for humans — could be a game-changing tool. [Bioengineer Jim Collins](#) had just launched an ambitious project — [supported by The Audacious Project at TED](#) — to use machine learning to identify new antibiotics to treat seven of the world's deadliest bacterial pathogens. That work is vital to stave off antibiotic resistance, but Collins opted to dedicate half of his lab's time and resources toward work on COVID innovation. And [Karen DeSalvo, Chief Health Officer at Google](#), shared how they spun up an API to help contact tracers fill gaps in exposure logs, without violating user's privacy. "This is just a wonderful opportunity for Big Tech to come together with public health," she said. "Public health is an unsung hero. It saves your life every day, but you didn't know it."

Bill Gates had more time to prepare

— he sounded the alarm on a global pandemic [back at TED2015](#). Since then, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation helped fund the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), working with European countries — but it wasn't enough. The foundation has now earmarked more than \$300 million for the development of COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments and vaccines and is working to make sure [they're rolled out equitably](#), with access for middle and low income countries. "Some very complex negotiations are taking place right now," said Gates.

But perhaps most interesting were the speakers who created new models for their company or institution to get through this time. Live music has been especially hard hit by the pandemic, so [producer Swizz Beatz](#) and his friend Timbaland launched Verzuz TV. They invited musicians to stand back-to-back, each playing top songs from their



catalogue — Jill Scott versus Erykah Badu, Nelly versus Ludacris. There's been an outright "Verzuz effect," with these artists re-entering the charts and gaining new fans, even while stuck at home.

At the Ford Foundation, [president Darren Walker](#) pressed to launch a new offering. He saw the opportunity to take advantage of historic lows in loan rates, and at the same time invest in institutions struggling at this moment. They had 'social bonds' to market in June, offering double payout over the next two years for investments in institutions working on racial justice, human rights and the arts. They offered \$1 billion worth of bonds — and got \$5 billion in orders. "It shows the hunger on the part of investors," said Walker.

[Honor Harger of Singapore's ArtScience Museum](#) saw similar enthusiasm from the moves her team made. When it became clear that the museum — which curates exhibits at the nexus of art, science, technology and culture — would need to close, the staff shifted to creating online exhibits for home viewers. The pivot allowed them to make good on the original meaning of "curator" — from the Latin curare, "to care" — and hone in on exhibits not typically considered, like on migrant workers or people with disabilities. They've found engagement on another level, from people near and far.

Surely, the pandemic has closed some doors for your organization. But ask yourself: what opportunities might have opened? What do people need, and what do they simply want? How can this be a moment to experiment?

from top to bottom:
Eric Yuan, CEO of Zoom; Karen DeSalvo, Chief Health Officer at Google; Honor Harger of Singapore's ArtScience Museum; David Brenner, Radiation Scientist; Darren Walker, Ford Foundation President

Buckle in for digital acceleration

Since the start of the pandemic, [Rich Lesser of Boston Consulting Group](#) has talked to a lot of CEOs who want to know how they should be planning for the next one to two years. His assurance: the biggest challenges will be uncertainty and the rate of change. Consumers are accelerating their online activity in a matter of weeks at a pace that has been taking years; all timelines have been compressed. So leaders need to be prioritizing digital transformation and building agile inroads to offering more goods, services and employee support online.

[Dan Schulman of PayPal](#) estimated that digital capabilities have sped up by three to five years, from telemedicine to retail, with digital payment ascending faster than anyone expected because it means less contact. And [Will Cathcart of WhatsApp](#) pointed to the sharp rise in digital communication, noting that in April the app had two billion users around the world sending 100 billion messages every day. This meant quick, strategic improvements — like expanding the limit on video calls to include eight people, and making it easier for government and health organizations to set up helplines. All things they wanted to do over time, rolled out, stat.

So what plans had you been making for your organization's digital future?
And how could you get there sooner?

“Companies need to understand that the world will be changing rapidly, so they need to learn more quickly and to be able to act more quickly and be able to learn from those actions. Companies always talk about being adaptive and resilient. This is taking it to another level.”

Rich Lesser, CEO of Boston Consulting Group



Adopt a mission-oriented mindset...



Rethink your formula

[Jad Abumrad](#) built his career at Radiolab by following a specific formula — one that worked for hundreds of stories. But eventually, he got bored. His next attempt at a formula never quite gelled. Until he began reporting Dolly Parton's America in 2019. It was then that he had an epiphany — a new formula for stories he wants to tell. One that may help you as you work with others and chart new ways forward too.

2002–2011

Science + beautiful music = a feeling of wonder that localizes in your head and chest

2012–2019

One truth + another truth colliding = a story with no satisfying ending

2020–on

My version of truth + deep interrogation of someone else's = a mutual act of recognition that ends in a third truth

“The best free throw shooters, they don't worry about the shot they just missed. They worry about this shot, this putt, this throw, this first down.”

[Athlete Russell Wilson](#) on how a 'neutral mindset' helped him excel in baseball and as quarterback for the Seattle Seahawks

How do you inspire everyone in your organization — from managers to those on the frontlines — to move in unison and do their best work?

[Economist Mariana Mazzucato](#) has a simple answer: give them a mission. Mazzucato has been studying what happens when governments adopt this mindset — for example, in the United States, with NASA framing out the mission to make it to the moon and DARPA articulating its vision for a connected Internet. Missions like these catalyze investment across sectors and lead to innovations of all kinds. A mission, as Mazzucato puts it, isn't just a challenge — it's an ambitious, streamlined vision that can serve as a North Star. “The more interesting, inspirational, new,” says Mazzucato, the more likely it is to get people thinking bigger and embracing trial and error over what's easy and safe. So as you think about the transformation your organization needs to make, ask yourself how to articulate it as a mission everyone will want to rise to.

...then practice 'stubborn optimism'

Once you have a mission, [political strategist Tom Rivett-Carnac](#) has another shift for you. He recalls his country, the UK, before entering World War II, in denial about Nazi aggression because it was just too much to face. Winston Churchill changed that. “A deep, determined, stubborn form of optimism emerged,” says Rivett-Carnac, “not avoiding or denying the darkness that was pressing in but refusing to be cowed by it.” Stubborn optimism isn't wishful thinking. It isn't being naive or overly rosy — it's acknowledging the risks, and staying focused on why taking them is so important. It's what Rosa Parks practiced, and Mahatma Gandhi too — in fact, so many of the leaders we think of as having had the biggest impact. So where are the areas where your organization refuses to be defeated, despite overwhelming challenges? Pointing to them can help employees move past feeling powerless, and toward a sense of purpose and meaning.

Let the everyday inspire you



“My vision for the future is that when things come to life, they do so with joy. You know, less like the movie *The Terminator* and more like *Toy Story*.”

Ali Kashani, AI specialist at Postmates

TED Fellow Andrew Pelling, a proud biohacker, got the inspiration for a new method of healing spinal cord injuries while he was ... grilling asparagus. Chemist Mandë Holford is working on a treatment for liver cancer based on the venom of sea snails. [Biological designer Christina Agapakis](#), meanwhile, says that a briefcase full of multi-colored poop changed her life, showing her how something as unthinkable as excrement could be a way to monitor a person's health.

The point is that inspiration can come from anywhere — and this isn't only true for scientists. [Ali Kashani's team at Postmates](#) is developing delivery robots to bring food to the 20 million Americans who order from restaurants within walking distance every day — they're taking their design cues from WALL-E and Minions. [Philosopher Alain de Botton](#) recommends looking at the children's drawings tacked up on your walls as a guide for what might be missing in your life. And [Malala Yousafzai](#), a Nobel Peace Prize winner at age 17, said that in the past few years, she's been most inspired by ... giving herself room to have fun as a normal college student.

So how are you giving yourself the space to be inspired? And what ordinary things will spark the next big idea for you?

Look at the whole puzzle

Harlem Children's Zone is a nonprofit that's shaken up generational poverty in a 97-block neighborhood of New York City. It has eliminated the Black-white achievement gap in schools and sent 1,000 students to college. “Most interventions focus on one piece of a giant, complicated puzzle,” said [CEO Kwame Owusu-Kesse](#). “But that's not enough to solve the puzzle.” Instead, Harlem Children's Zone tracks 600 goals across areas that sound disparate, but that are interconnected. Let their model encourage you to zoom out and take an integrated approach too.

“Leadership ultimately speaks to two things. One, you have to be trusted for people to follow your advice. And two, you can't just claim it, you have to earn it.”

[Achim Steiner, head of the UN Development Programme](#), on two easily forgotten leadership lessons

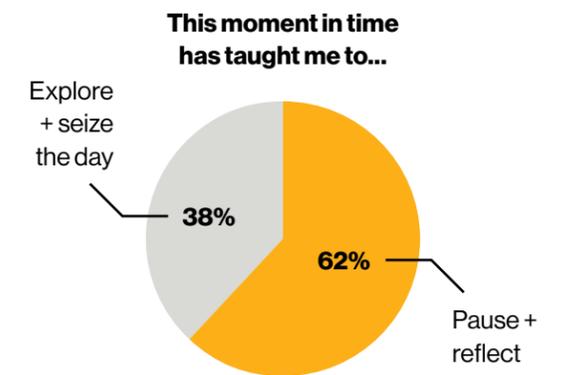
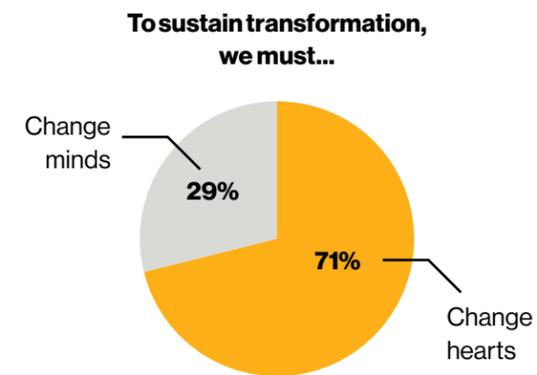
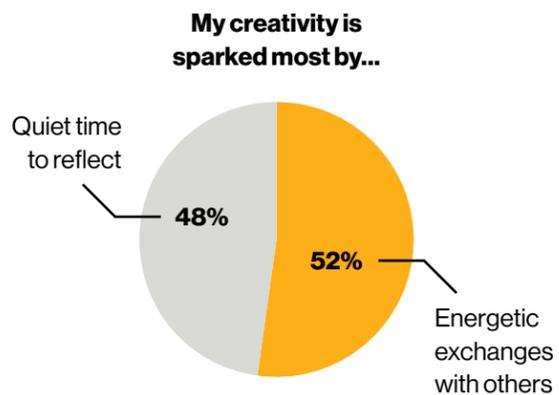
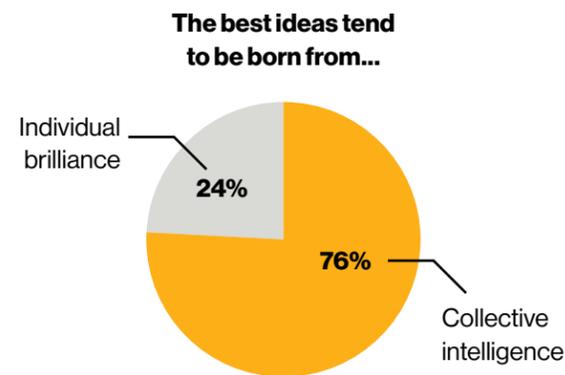
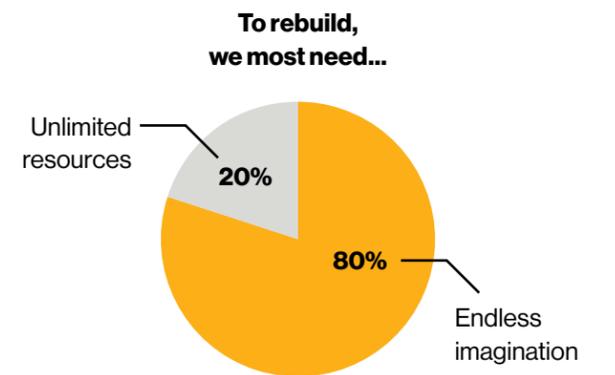
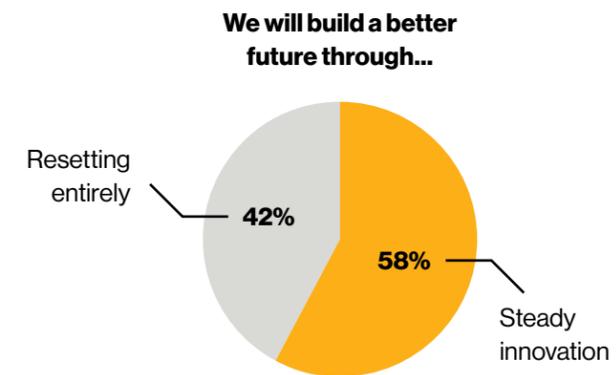
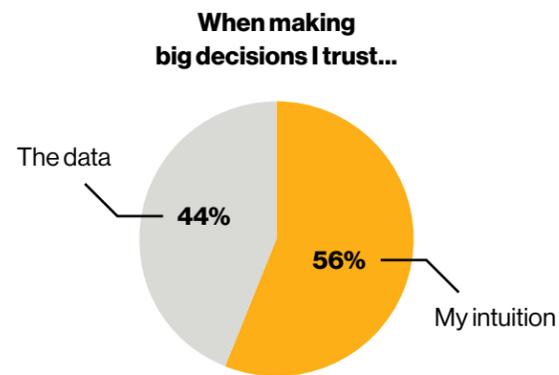
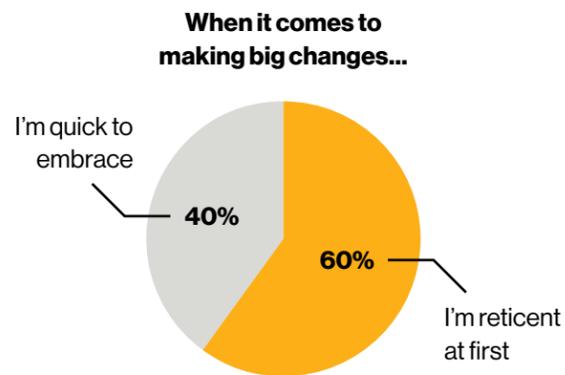
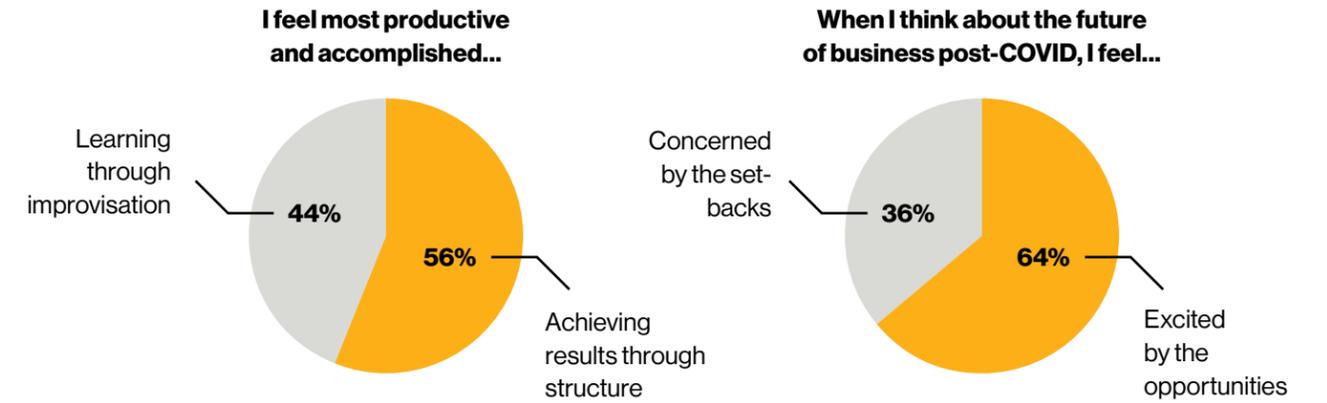


“Most interventions focus on one piece of a giant, complicated puzzle, but that's not enough to solve the puzzle.”

CEO Kwame Owusu-Kesse

Thinking deeply about change

Each day of TED2020, we at Brightline® Initiative posed an inspiring, thought-provoking question to online attendees to gauge their thoughts on transformation, creativity and the opportunity to build a brighter future. If your answers are anything similar, you view change more as an opportunity than a threat, and tackle big challenges by learning from your mistakes, adapting to new situations and harnessing the power of community. But we also know that isn't easy. If there's transformation on your horizon, you'll need a compass. [Download yours here.](#)



Key Insight #2

This is a chance to build back better

Right now, the world is — and will continue to — experience real suffering. Every leader has a role to play in easing it. If there was one resounding message from the speakers of TED2020, it was that this is a chance to change things for the better — one we need to take. Here, ideas on how you can contribute to larger sweeping change.

Think of the pandemic as “The Great Transformation”

Kristalina Georgieva is the managing director of the International Monetary Fund. So as other leaders think about how to shepherd their countries, cities, companies or communities, she’s thinking about stimulus efforts on a global scale, with financial injections of \$9 trillion.

The recovery is not going to be easy, Georgieva stresses, but there is the opportunity for lessons to be learned — among them, the need for resilient banking systems and the financial value of crisis prevention. “I very much hope that when we go on the other side in the recovery, we can use a new term and call this ‘The Great Transformation,’” she said.

[Economist Mariana Mazzucato](#) shares this sense, seeing a chance to transform capitalism itself. Right now, in most capitalist countries, governments invest large amounts in research and also step in to bail out industries when things go wrong. But when things go right, the profits stay privatized. Mazzucato sees this as the moment for a shift. As governments are asked to support companies, they should put in place conditions — whether that’s public profit-sharing, or a promise to eliminate tax havens, or a commitment to reduce carbon emissions. Governments can use this time to “shape” capitalism and make sure the public benefits from the value it helps create.

For Abigail Disney, business leaders could stand to listen to Jiminy Cricket: “Always let your conscience be your guide.” The iconic character was created by her grandfather, Roy Disney, and his brother Walt — but his words no longer guide The Walt Disney Company. Instead, shareholder supremacy rules the day. “Shareholder supremacy is a reasonable idea. Shareholders own the company, shareholders want profit and growth, so you prioritize profit and growth,” says Disney. “But the idea became a mindset, and it came to alter everything about business.” She ushered a bold call for companies to put core values, like care for employees and the environment, back at the center of their vision.

In Japan, Hiro Mizuno guided more than \$1.5 trillion as the Chief Investment Officer of Japan’s Government Pension Investment Fund. He also noticed the market not factoring in social impact — especially around the environment. The traditional take would be to divest



Kristalina Georgieva

in companies doing damage, but Mizuno tried a tactic he calls ‘tilting.’ He invested more in companies transitioning to climate-friendly practices and less to those that weren’t, maintaining the latter relationships to encourage better behavior.

“Leadership matters. The winners will be those who think of this crisis as an opportunity.”

Kristalina Georgieva of the International Monetary Fund

Working to encourage a change in values is also the goal for Jacqueline Novogratz, who just published the book [Manifesto for a Moral Revolution](#). At its heart is a question: “What if each of us gave more to the world than we took from it?” This

wouldn’t mean the end of prosperity, Novogratz assures. She points to chocolate — a \$100 billion industry fueled by 5 million shareholder farmers, most of whom make less than \$2 a day. A new generation of chocolatiers is setting prices higher to make sure these farmers can earn a real living, often with revenue share and ownership models. These companies may not be as profitable as the behemoths. But they’re doing very well and growing. And they’ve included the vulnerable in their definition of success.

So what would a moral revolution look like for your organization? In what areas have you let the status quo lead to shareholder-focused decisions? And how can this be the time to crack that open?

Seize the green opportunities all around



When she was 15, [Kristine Tompkins](#) got a summer job helping a rock climber make equipment in a tin shed. His company became Patagonia, and Tompkins its CEO — she married Doug Tompkins, a fellow climber who co-founded The North Face and Esprit. All three companies were founded on respect for nature, and all three have flourished. But in the late 1980s, the Tompkins left their roles for a new adventure, buying large tracts of land in Patagonia, the place, with an eye toward rewilding it. Through their foundation's efforts, they've protected 15 million acres and worked with the governments of Chile and Argentina to create 13 new national parks. "You might describe this as a kind of capitalist jujitsu move," says Tompkins. "We deployed private wealth from our business lives to protect nature from being devoured by the global economy."

But this was exactly the point that came up throughout TED2020: thinking about the environment and economy as two distinct

entities just doesn't work. Because greening our world brings with it huge opportunities. [Marcelo Mena, the former Minister of Environment in Chile](#) — who worked with Tompkins to protect an area of land bigger than Switzerland — made this point sharply. He gave the example of Chilean sea bass, which had been overfished to the point of collapse. By increasing marine protected areas from 4% of coastal areas to 43%, sea bass were not just able to make a comeback — there was a six-fold increase in biomass. Environmental protection led to economic boom. And Mena expects the same to happen as Chile moves toward its goal of zero emissions by 2050 — the economic impact will have a 4.4% increase in growth.

In the UK, [High Level Climate Action Champion Nigel Topping](#) encourages countries to invest in green efforts in the rebuilding process. "There is only one direction of travel," he said. "Countries that invest in the past will end up wasting their money and will lose jobs in the future." There's a tendency to think that adoption of clean technology will continue linearly, but

what that leaves out are the inflection points — for example, the moment when the cost of electric vehicles drops below those with combustion engines. "We're starting to see exponential change," said Topping.

“The rising generation is demanding a brighter future. When CEOs interview potential new hires, they find that the new hires are interviewing them. They want to make a nice income, but they want to be able to tell their family and friends and peers that they're doing something more.”

[Al Gore](#) on why business as usual won't work indefinitely

[Achim Steiner of the United Nations Development Programme](#) didn't mince words: "Accelerating toward a greener economy is the way out of this crisis." And [Al Gore](#), former vice president of the US, stressed a vision for a green, jobs-rich recovery, pointing out that 'solar installer' and 'wind turbine technician' are two of the fastest growing jobs. Finally, [Eric Garcetti, mayor of Los Angeles](#) and chair of the C40 Cities coalition, echoed this sentiment. "The big mega-industries of tomorrow are green industries," he said. "Either you're a city that's planning for that and will reap the benefits, or you'll be left behind." Economy and environment are deeply intertwined. "You have to solve one with the other," said Garcetti, "and in fact you can't solve one without the other."



from top to bottom: Kristine Tompkins; Marcelo Mena; Nigel Topping; Eric Garcetti

List on the Long-Term Stock Exchange



The world is truly ready for Capitalism 2.0. Just another indicator: the Long-Term Stock Exchange is launching soon. [President Michelle Greene](#) explains that it was created to reward companies for focusing on long-term impact. “Right now the narrative is too focused on quarterly earnings per share — and that’s not the right way to judge where a company’s going,” she says. “What we’re trying to do is rewrite the narrative for success.” Interested in listing? Here are the five core principles you’ll need policies around:

“The question for the wealthy the privileged philanthropist is not, ‘What am I willing to give away?’ but ‘What am I willing to give up?’”

[Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation](#), on how old modes of giving are no longer enough

- ➔ **Stakeholders over shareholders.**
A plan to serve all who are critical to long-term success. Includes impact on the environment and community, as well as an approach to diversity and inclusion and investment in employees.
- ➔ **Strategy over years and decades.**
A plan around the time horizon for success, with specific metrics aligned to it.
- ➔ **Results-based compensation.**
A plan that ties executive and board compensation with long-term success metrics.
- ➔ **A long-term board.**
A plan for how the board will be engaged in the company’s years and decades strategy.
- ➔ **Investor accountability.**
A plan for how long-term investors will be kept informed on metrics and progress.

Consider models that benefit all

In the US, prescription medicines aren’t cheap. Especially for the 10 million low-income adults with a chronic illness who are un- or under-insured, a choice comes every day about whether to buy their prescriptions or put food on the table. “Ten million is a big number,” said [health technologist Kiah Williams](#). “But it’s also a solvable number. Because we also have \$10 billion of perfectly good unused medication that goes to waste.”

This is the core idea of SIRUM, the nonprofit Williams co-founded. They put recycling bins in facilities like hospitals, nursing homes and pharmacies that incinerate unused medication. Couriers pick up the recycled medicines and the facility gets a tax receipt; meanwhile SIRUM’s platform matches the medications with patients who need them and delivers them for an average price of \$2 a month. SIRUM users have access to more than 500 medications, about 75% of all prescriptions.

SIRUM solves a waste issue and an access issue at the same time. It’s a fascinating model that’s earned the [support of The Audacious Project at TED](#). How could it inspire you to get creative to serve people traditionally left behind?

“Africa as a continent is a giant. We’ve got skills, intellectuals, natural resources more than any other continent. But without good leaders, Africa is like an eagle that has no idea it could fly, let alone soar.”

[satirist Adeola Faye](#) on why she holds African leaders to task

Look to the past for sustainable solutions

Imagine a bridge braided out of tree roots extending out over rushing water. This isn’t an image from The Lord of the Rings — it’s real. The Khasi people in Bangladesh receive more rainfall each summer than anywhere else on earth, and their landscape goes from connected to a series of islands. Over the past 1500 years, they’ve developed a method for training rubber trees to grow into ‘living’ bridges — not just to look beautiful, but to help them navigate.



[Designer Julia Watson](#) studies indigenous technology like these bridges. Not only have methods like this been refined for hundreds of years, she says, but they also tend to work symbiotically with nature. Our instinct when looking to solve problems is to reach for the newest technology — and in some cases, that might be right. “But in the push toward the future, we sometimes forget about the past,” said Watson. There might be a tried-and-true method that’s safe and reliable. And deeply inspiring too.

Key Insight #3

People must come first

The final theme that wove its way through the TED2020 conference: that successful leaders focus on the people of their organization, be they employees or suppliers, customers or clients. Read on for ideas on keeping that human element alive.

Commit your organization to antiracism

It isn't enough to be 'not racist,' says [writer Ibram X. Kendi](#). In fact, that label might be doing a disservice, as it's what people generally point to after having just committed a racist act. A much better goal is to be actively 'antiracist.' This means starting with the assumption that every group of people is equal, and questioning any thoughts, behaviors or ideas that diverge to see where they came from. "The heartbeat of racism itself has always been denial," said Kendi. "The heartbeat of antiracism is confession."

Speakers at TED2020 had many powerful things to say about the reckoning on racial justice, taking place in the United States and beyond. [Bernice King — CEO of The King Center](#) and daughter of Martin Luther King Jr. — pointed to the lack of moral leadership across government and business. "I believe there's a lot of heart-work to do amid all the hard work," she said. [Rashad Robinson of Color Of Change](#) spoke of the need to flip language to put the onus on systems in need to change rather than the people hurt by them. "We need to go from saying, 'Black people are less likely to get loans from banks' to 'Banks are less likely to give loans to Black people,'" he explained. [Police reform advocate Phillip Atiba Goff](#) did just that. "What we're seeing is the bill come due for unpaid debts that this country owes to its Black residents," he said. And laying out the case for reparations, [economist William "Sandy" Darity](#) made his words literal. "It's always an urgent time to adopt reparations. It has been an urgent time for the 155 years since the end of American slavery," he said. "A national act of procrastination is not a reason to avoid paying."

[Artist Titus Kaphar](#) reflected on the role art has to play. "The aesthetic beauty of the work in some cases functions as a Trojan horse," he said. "It allows one to open their hearts to difficult conversations." Kaphar pointed to some of his works: "The Jerome Project," which gilded mugshots of the 97 Black men who shared a name with his father; "Behind the Myth of Benevolence," which pulls back the curtain on Thomas Jefferson to reveal a Black woman on his plantation; "From a Tropical Space," a brightly-colored series of Black mothers and their disappeared children. All beautiful and challenging, and opening up dialogues. But it was [social scientist Jennifer L. Eberhardt](#) who returned to the question of examining thoughts and behaviors. Racial bias against Black people is deeply internalized, she says, but when you encourage people to slow down and look at their assumptions, it leads to measurable change. Eberhardt recalled being contacted by the cofounder of Nextdoor, an app designed to be a hub for neighbors to share information. They had a problem: a slew of posts about "suspicious Black men" walking in white neighborhoods. Eberhardt encouraged Nextdoor to add friction and they did

two things. First, they asked for more information: What was the person doing that made them suspicious? And could they give a physical description beyond race and gender? Second, they gave a definition of racial profiling, and asked users to be sure it wasn't at the base of their report. This lowered racial profiling on the app by 75%.

Friction won't solve the entire problem of racism, says Eberhardt, but it's a principle that can have an impact in other circumstances too. She and her colleagues worked with the Oakland Police Department in California, adding a single question to the form officers complete during traffic stops: "Is this stop intelligence-led?" With just this change, the number of traffic stops dropped from 32,000 to 19,000 in a year — stops of African-American citizens falling 43 percent, as crime rates went down overall.

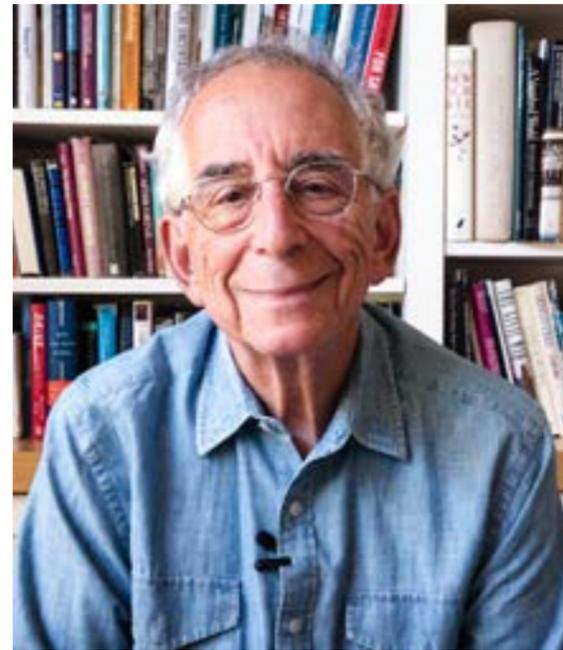
So what are ways your organization can slow down, examine its biases, and add friction to change things? How can you be invigorated by the pulse of antiracism?



Left: Artist Titus Kaphar; Right: social scientist Jennifer L. Eberhardt

Be aware of employees' financial health

As [president and CEO of PayPal, Dan Schulman](#) thinks a lot about financial inclusion, positioning the company as “a bank branch in the palm of your hands” for the 70 million adults in the US outside the banking system. He prided himself on the company paying above market value, so didn't think his employees would be among the financially vulnerable themselves. But when he surveyed PayPal employees, he found that 60% were struggling to make ends meet. After taxes and bills, most had only 4 to 6% of their income left for discretionary expenses or savings. So he decided to rip up the entire pay structure. He started a financial education program, made every employee a shareholder and created a system to raise payment so employees could retain 20% for savings. “Nothing could be more important to a company than to have financially secure, passionate employees,” he stressed. “Nobody is going to serve customers better than employees who feel a part of something and financially secure.” He challenges all CEOs to look at how their employees are doing. Because you might be surprised.



Rethink your hiring fundamentals

[Psychologist Barry Schwartz](#) opened our eyes to the paradox of choice. So when he reminds us that there aren't nearly enough spots at Harvard, Yale or Stanford, Google, Amazon or Apple for all the people talented enough to excel, it's worth remembering. For years, these institutions have ratcheted up standards to incredible heights, giving an illusion of fairness but also crushing a generation with anxiety. Schwartz has another idea. His hiring plan:

- 1 Set criteria of what's needed to be successful at your organization.
- 2 Gather all the applicants who meet that criteria and would likely do well.
- 3 Pick the ones who'll become your students or employees out of a hat.

Okay, so this is extreme. But it's posed to prove a point. “We hate the idea that really important things in life might happen by luck or chance. But that simply is the way things are.” With that in mind, what can you do to acknowledge the fact that many applicants could do a fantastic job, and make more varied hires?

Pay attention to your 'invisible workers'

A key digital trend accelerated in the pandemic: the large number of people who, instead of full-time work, are taking on task-based projects online. [Anthropologist Mary L. Gray](#) studies the people who do this “invisible” or “ghost work” and has found that they add incredible value to companies and organizations, doing tasks like content moderation, telemedicine, customer support, data analytics and more. And yet, these workers are at high risk for exploitation. Below, stats to get you thinking: how can you honor and reward this vital work too?

“What I hear from all walks of life — men and women, girls and boys — is a quest for normalcy. This quest for normalcy is what I'm determined to put into practice.”

[Ashraf Ghani, President of Afghanistan](#), on his goal in the leadership of his country



100,000 people created accounts on Amazon's Mechanical Turk in 2005 and 2006, the first major site of the “ghost” economy



20 million adults in the US alone said they'd earned money through online, task-based gigs in 2016



149 million new task-based jobs are expected to come online in the next five years



They're projected to add \$2.7 trillion in value to the US economy



People doing this work range in age from 18 through their late 70s



They're available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in countries all around the world



They learn task-to-task, often bringing their expertise to more than one company at a time



They're unlikely to have an official job title they can put on a resumé



Their hourly pay is typically low and they almost never get benefits



Community Leader
Shari Davis

Focus on building trust

Trust in institutions is at an all-time low. So it's never been more crucial for leaders to work on building it. There are no shortcuts — just openness, accountability, inclusion and authenticity. Here are four speakers' takes.

Contact tracing is a fundamental tool in the fight against COVID-19. So when [Joia Mukherjee, Chief Medical Officer of Partners in Health](#), was asked by the governor of Massachusetts to help build their program, she knew building trust would be key. To that end, their contact tracers are taught to lead with care. When they call a person to say they've been exposed, they don't jump to how long they need to quarantine or to a list of who they've seen. They simply ask, "How are you?" and connect the contact with a resource care coordinator who can give information, schedule food deliveries, help with filing for unemployment — whatever's needed. It's a method that inspires trust rather than fear, and Partners in Health has the support of [The Audacious Project at TED](#) to roll it out across the US.

In Taiwan, government mistrust

skyrocketed after the SARS epidemic. So officials framed a different response this time. [Digital minister for social innovation Audrey Tang](#) recalled how they established a Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) and focused on innovation at the border, creating "quarantine hotels" for people entering the country and "digital fences" to ping authorities if they tried to leave before 14 days of isolation. But Tang realized technology could do even more. In addition to livestreaming the CECC's daily press conference, Tang's team built digital tools to let people see the stock of masks at pharmacies in real-time and set up a hotline where anyone could share an idea directly with the CECC — like one boy who called to say he was embarrassed to wear a pink mask to school. These tactics brought citizens into the response, and kept the country of 23 million from having to issue a lockdown. "This is not about people trusting the government more," said Tang. "This is about the government trusting its citizens."

[Community leader Shari Davis](#) is thinking along the same lines. Her idea is 'participatory budgeting' or 'PB' — a process that brings community and

government together to allocate funds to projects that will solve problems. It started in Brazil and has grown; the mayor of Paris earmarks 5% of the city's budget for PB. Davis saw it in action in Boston and was blown away, watching young people allocate \$1 million in city funds to ideas like bringing tech to high schools and renovating parks to make them accessible. "We're on the brink of an apathetic apocalypse," she said. "We've got to open the doors to city halls so wide that people can't help but walk in."

For [Will Cathcart of WhatsApp](#), trust is really the secret sauce. It's based on the company using end-to-end encryption — there's no central repository of messages to be cracked by hackers or listened to by governments. Some have pushed back on this, saying WhatsApp enables nefarious activity, but Cathcart stresses that not having a recording of a conversation is nothing new — it's been the case for face-to-face dialogue for thousands of years. All-in-all, said Cathcart, "People trust that they can have a deeply sensitive, private conversation." And that's WhatsApp's power.

How to win an argument

Neal Katyal is the former Solicitor General of the US. And he says the way we build arguments is all wrong. "The conventional wisdom is that you speak with confidence," he says. "But persuasion is about empathy." Below, some counterintuitive pointers to help next time you have a case to present.

1

Remember to connect.

When Katyal trained to argue his first case before the Supreme Court, his coach had him deliver his opening statement — while holding his hand.

2

Make it personal.

Wear that pin from your parents or kids, or jot the names of key people on your legal pad, as reminders of why your position matters.

3

Avoid overt shows of emotion.

It makes it more about you than the listener. Instead, provoke that emotion in your audience.

4

Don't give up.

It's the only way to truly lose. Instead, let losses motivate you to present a better case upon appeal.

“Whenever you talk about creativity, it can have the feel that it's just nice, or warm, or something pleasant. It's not. It's vital. It's the way we heal each other.”

actor [Ethan Hawke](#) on the need to create

We hope these ideas from TED2020 have inspired you to lead with fearlessness, accountability and an eye toward the future. Want more resources on leading through times of change? [Head to Brightline.org](https://www.brightline.org).

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