24 IDEAS THAT ARE *TRANSFORMING* TALENT MANAGEMENT TODAY

COMPILED BY ANDREW DANIELS

WHAT DO A NEUROSURgeon, futurist, former Apple exec, and group of corporate rebels have in common?

For starters, they'd all be killer guests at a dinner party. But these inquisitive leaders—along with dozens of other innovators—have also made the shortlist for Thinkers50's 2017 Distinguished Achievement Awards,

the Oscars of management thinking.

Some of this year's esteemed batch of global thinkers have already changed the way we lead talent and conduct business, and for the rest, it's only a matter of time. Categories include achievements in innovation, digital thinking, strategy, and more.

To celebrate the finalists, we asked 29 participating Thinkers one unique

question about today's trends, controversies, opportunities, and challenges that face talent professionals. Every response was predictably insightful and stuffed with sage advice for how to be a better leader—and heck, human being—in a rapidly changing world. Would you expect anything less from some of the smartest business gurus on the planet?

When did disruption become such a dirty word?

Twenty years ago, a relatively unknown Harvard Business School professor named Clayton Christensen wrote a book that described a phenomenon he dubbed disruptive innovation. He titled the book *The Innovator's Dilemma*. Note the last word: dilemma. Christensen presented disruption as a conundrum. And the subtitle of the hardback version of the book was even more ominous: *When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*. Not poorly run firms. Not antiquated firms. But *great* firms. Thus began the connection of the word disruption with something bad. Today, we associate it with cautionary tales of opportunity lost, like Blockbuster, Blackberry, Kodak, and Toys "R" Us. Even saying the word makes your mouth contort, as if you want to spit the word out.

But here's the thing: disruption doesn't have to be a dirty word. In fact, our research shows that disruption always grows markets. Take photography: Kodak went bankrupt in 2012, but we as individuals take many more pictures than we ever did before, and we share them more widely than we ever could before because it's incredibly simple and easy. Of course, the way in which money is made has completely changed, but the photography market has grown, not shrunk.

Furthermore, far from being power-less, large incumbents have unique assets that can give them real advantages in seizing disruptive opportunities. Today, huge companies like GE (the industrial Internet), IBM (Watson), Monsanto (digital farming), and many other organizations are demonstrating how to turn disruption from a threat to an opportunity.

We need big companies to continue to up their game. For all the attention that gets showered on "unicorns"—privately held companies worth more than $1 billion—established incumbents are often better positioned to take on tough problems. After all, the ease of starting a business and the ample amount of venture capital means the second a startup gets a whiff of success, they have to fight fiercely against a horde of copycats. Large companies have already gone through that journey, building powerful assets along the way.

The biggest enemy to innovation at scale lies within. The greatest untapped source of energy in the world isn't in the wind, it isn't in the water, and it isn't in the sun. It's inside our large companies that are capable of doing so much more. It starts by recognizing the word disruption itself isn't evil—that, in fact, making the complex simple or the expensive affordable can bring significant benefits. Maybe try smiling while you say it. It can't hurt!

THE THINKER: SCOTT ANTHONY is a managing partner of Innosight, an innovation and growth consulting firm. He is also the author and coauthor of several books, including *Dual Transformation: How to Reposition Today's Business While Creating the Future* (with Clark Gilbert and Mark W. Johnson).

Q: You're all about preaching the "4 A's" of leadership. Is there a fifth 'A' that you left on the cutting room floor?

IF YOU OPERATE your life with altruism (being courteous, compassionate, and selflessness); affiliation (committing to building stronger relationships and bonds in your life); achievement (that you wake up every day committed to moving and impacting the world in a positive way); and abundance (that you're on the earth only to serve others through authentic "touching" of their hearts, minds, and souls, and that your sole purpose is to create centeredness and happiness in others), these are the predictive elements that will determine how your life as a person and leader will be remembered.

Notice I just used another 'A': authentic. I would say that authenticity actually didn't miss the cut as much as it's clearly a strong foundation element of a bigger construct (character) that can give the 4 A's strength and vibrancy. If you have bad character, you have no chance of embracing, living, and executing the 4 A's. But if you have strong character, these are the deep inner-core igniters that will drive the 4 A's.

THE THINKER: JOHN MATTONE is one of America's leading executive coaches, with over 30 years' experience in the fields of intelligence leadership and human capital management.

Breakthrough Idea //// **Susan David**

Q: What's the first step to becoming emotionally agile?

Every single day we have thousands of inner experiences, many of them unpleasant. We have thoughts like "I'm not good enough." We feel sad and angry. To deal, we construct stories about ourselves, like "I'm not cut out for this career." These emotions, thoughts, and stories are the "hooks"—our default method for responding to tough times.

Emotional agility, meanwhile, understands that it's not the fact of these inner experiences (we all have them), but how we deal with them that's the biggest predictor of our success and our effectiveness in every aspect of our lives.

Humans are evolutionarily predisposed to jump to very quick, intuitive decision-making. Sometimes that decision-making doesn't serve us. For instance, I might be sitting in a meeting, and I might know in my mind

that I need to be an inclusive leader, but I might feel undermined by the person I'm speaking with. The reactive part of who we are as humans might hook me into a reactive response that is to shut down, or to stop contributing. Emotional agility is the process of navigating this inner experience effectively, so that instead I can bring more intentional, values-aligned responses forward—responses that serve the person and leader I most want to be. It enables me to close the gap between my intentions and my behavior.

The first step to becoming more emotionally agile is to face every thought, emotion, and behavior willingly, with curiosity and kindness. Some are appropriate to the moment, but others are old bits stuck in your psyche. "My father used to talk to me like that. I'm not letting my client do the same!" is an in-agile response that demands a new childhood or new client, neither of which is likely, and in which your reaction is likely to be emotions-driven rather than values driven. Our emotions do not need to call the shots.

The next element, to step out, is being able to detach from and observe your emotions and thoughts for what they are: just emotions, just thoughts. There are simple strategies for this, like moving from "I'm so angry!" to "I'm noticing that I'm feeling anger." When we step out

from our emotions and thoughts we can create a non-judgmental space between our feelings and hew we respond to them.

The third step is to "walk your why." This is the practice of choosing actions that are aligned with your values. Who do you want to be in this situation?

Last, you must move on and take actions that are values-concordant. They may be uncomfortable, like having a tough conversation. But when that dialogue is informed by the clarity of your values—not a quick emotional response—it's likely to be more effective.

Agility is a critical need in organizations today. However, there's no real agility without emotional agility. For instance, innovation in organizations only becomes truly possible when the organization and its people are able to open themselves to the discomfort and disappointment that comes with failure. Emotional agility is a critical skill set that enables organizations and its people to develop greater psychological capability to close the gap between intentions and on-the-ground behaviors.

THE THINKER: SUSAN DAVID is an award-winning Harvard Medical School psychologist. Her bestselling book, *Emotional Agility,* is based on the concept that *Harvard Business Review* heralded as a Management Idea of the Year.

Innovation ////**Tendayi Viki**

Q: You help companies develop their internal ecosystems to innovate like startups, but what's one secret that every startup should steal from long-established companies?

THE CREATIVE CHAOS of a startup team can be good in the early years, but will become detrimental when it becomes a scaleup. This is the reason why most startup founders end up getting fired from their successful companies.

What startups can learn from large companies is how to manage execution once you've found a business model that works. If you keep exclusively using entrepreneurial behaviors at this stage, you could be inadvertently destroying value. This isn't to say that startups should

adopt everything large companies do, including the stifling bureaucracy that these organizations can become. However, there are certainly elements of good governance and management that startups can and should learn from veteran companies.

THE THINKER: TENDAYI VIKI is founder of Benneli Jacobs, an innovation consultancy firm. He codesigned Pearson's Product Lifecycle, which won Best Innovation Program 2015 at the Corporate Entrepreneur Awards.

Q: **Neurosurgeons are some of the smartest people on the planet, but what's the one management tactic that it can take them a while to grasp?**

Humility.

THE THINKER: PETER LEES is the CEO and medical director of the U.K.'s Facility of Medical Leadership and Management, which promotes excellence in leadership on behalf of all doctors in the National Health Service. Lees, a former neurosurgeon, is a longtime champion of leadership in the medical community.

Innovation //// **Howard Yu**

Q: What should established companies do when nimbler startups encroach?

Experiment. If they don't, sooner or later they will run into a crisis. They'll end up having to bet the house money on a single initiative. Some people would call that a burning platform, and sometimes it works out. But often it doesn't.

Instead, companies should focus on experimentation, and then see which idea ultimately generates a big win. This demands that the organization has the ability to form new business units along the way, because when we're talking about commercializing disruption, the last thing you want to do is ask your mainstream business to try a radical idea.

At the same time, you need to have the discipline to prune. When you experiment, there will be failures along the way, and large, complex organizations often find it difficult to let go of projects. Politically, it's very hard for executives to declare failure and walk away. Projects drag on, consuming resources. But if an organization truly embraces the spirit of experimentation, the implication is that executives have to call a failure early enough to cut their losses. And that requires a cultural shift.

THE THINKER: HOWARD YU is professor of strategic management and innovation at IMD Business School in Switzerland. He specializes in technological innovation, with a focus on why and how some firms can sustain new growth while others cannot.

Q: You led the largest takeover in financial services history. How'd you come up with the playbook, and can we steal a page?

THE LARGEST TAKEOVER in financial services has become a golden book for any leader interested in growth, transformation, and instant failure. It demonstrated that a brilliant strategy, idea, and business case (and billions of euros invested) can fail during the implementation. If you don't dedicate time (up to 2 days a week) and take accountability of leading the successful execution of the project, failure is around the corner.

Great leaders have a unique ability to make the tough choices, stay focused, and inspire the entire organization until the project is completed. They make ideas a reality.

THE THINKER: ANTONIO NIETO RODRIGUEZ is director of the Program Management Office at Glaxo-SmithKline Vaccines and former chair of the Project Management Institute.
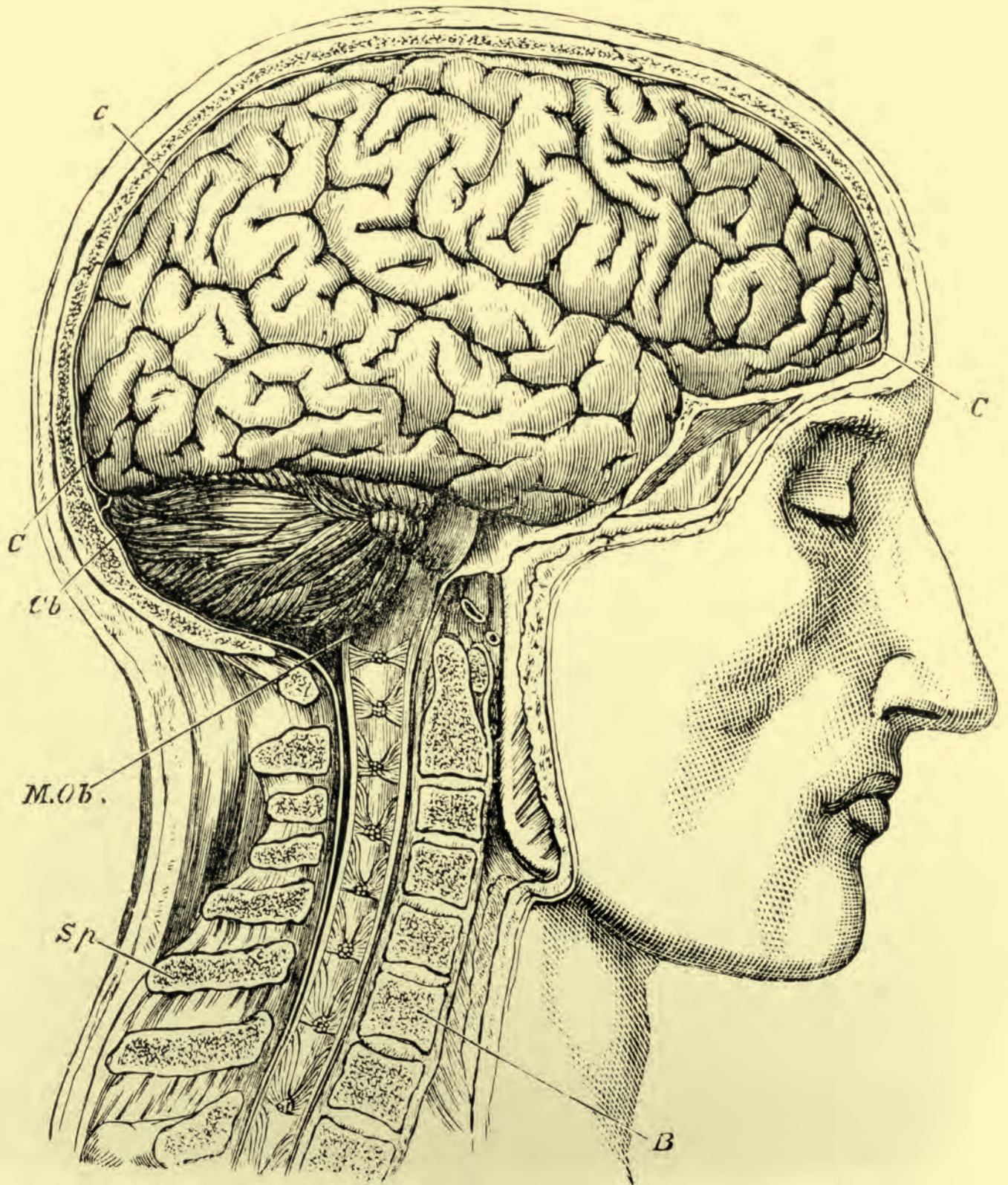
Q: Should we all recruit and manage talent like superbosses do?

I think it's true that talent development has become very conventional, and superbosses certainly do things differently. If you're hiring 1,000 people for a company, it would be too chaotic if you adopted superboss practices for all 1,000. But there should be room for freelancing. For example, some people could get pushed two to three levels up. This would be unheard of in a conventional career ladder.

Look at enterprise and organizational life around the world. The amount of innovation in areas like supply chain management and marketing has been stunning, and driven by digital revolutions. What's the part of the organization with the least innovation? HR. And what's the single most important aspect of the organization? People!

There has been little or no change in HR practices. When you talk to a CEO today and you ask, "What are your pain points?" it's still about finding and developing great people. HR practices haven't helped. Maybe it's about time to try something a little bit different.

THE THINKER: SYDNEY FINKELSTEIN is the Steven Roth professor of management and faculty director at the Tuck Center for Leadership. He is the author of several books, including *Superbosses: How Exceptional Leaders Master the Flow of Talent*, the result of a 10-year research project.

Talent //// **Lauren Noël**

Q: What's the biggest misconception today's old-guard leaders have about millennial women?

WHEN WE SURVEYED talent management leaders about why they think women around age 30 might leave companies, the top two reasons were: "My work and personal life are out of balance. I would like a role with more flexibility" and "We are starting a family. I would like to spend more time with them." But when we asked millennial women, they identified finding a higher paying job, a lack of learning and development, and a shortage of interesting and meaningful work as the primary reasons.

The point here is not to downplay the importance of work-life balance to millennial women. As a millennial mom myself, I know that this challenge is extremely real. Rather, our hope is to elevate the importance of other factors that also entice early-mid career women to flee: pay, development opportunities, and meaningful work.

THE THINKER: LAUREN NOËL is managing director of QUEST, a global leadership institute for early career women. She is the author, with fellow nominee Christie Hunter Arscott, of *What Executives Need to Know About Millennial Women*.

Q: In your TEDx Talk, you revealed your pedometer addiction. What else are we secretly addicted to?

MANY OF US grapple with us an addiction to being informed—a compulsion to try to stay on top of current events and happenings in the world, our industry, and our social circles. We can't help watching the news, logging onto Twitter and Facebook, and surfing special interest sites.

Some of the costs are obvious: negative emotions, distractions, attention to fake news, and wasted time. The non-obvious costs may be even more pernicious. The idea that we're supposed to know what's going on, everywhere and with everyone, creates an impossible task—so it comes with failure and stress. And all the time and energy and brain space we dedicate to input ultimately gets taken away from output.

The terms "thought leaders" and even "Thinkers50" are a bit misleading, since what thought leaders and thinkers are *really* doing is writing and speaking. Of course we need some input to have interesting thoughts, but if all we were doing was thinking them, well, there's no value to the world in that at all.

THE THINKER: ZOË CHANCE, a former marketing manager at Mattel and current professor at the Yale School of Management, examines persuasion and decision-making through the lens of behavioral economics. In 2013, she delivered a popular TEDx Talk about how to make a behavior addictive.

Talent //// **Carol Fishman Cohen**

Q: What's the biggest change to hit the career reentry world over the past decade?

The fundamental challenges of relaunching a career remain the same as when I reentered the working world after an 11-year break back in 2001. You need to figure out exactly what you want to do—a step I skipped when returning to Bain Capital. I later realized I did not want to pursue a financial analysis career at age 42 when I had loved and excelled at it at 30.

I tell "relaunchers" of today to learn from my mistake. You need to do a career assessment all over again, to figure out if your interests and skills have changed while you've been away. Maybe you fell into a career without a lot of strategizing. Maybe you were fulfilling someone else's expectations. A career break can be a gift in that it may be the first time you let yourself step back and reflect on whether you were on the right path to begin with.

However, the employer view toward relaunching careers could not be more different in 2017 than it was in 2001, when it wasn't even a concept. There wasn't media attention, there weren't any return-to-work programs, and I didn't know anyone who had stepped away and then returned. I was isolated and without a game plan. That's the main reason fellow relauncher Vivian Rabin and I wrote *Back on the Career Track*—to provide the playbook we didn't have.

But most important is the recognition among employers that the return-to-work talent pool is a gold mine. It used to be that if you had a career break on your resume, it was automatically tossed out. Now, leading global companies from IBM to GM have career reentry programs for which you *must* have a career break in order to be eligible to apply. That's why I've never been more optimistic about the prospects for relaunching professionals than I am today.

THE THINKER: CAROL FISHMAN COHEN is the CEO of iRelaunch. Her return to full-time work at Bain Capital after 11 years was documented in both a Harvard Business School case study and a 2015 TED Talk.

Digital Thinking ////**Anindya Ghose**

Q: Conventional wisdom says smartphones are evil, but you argue the opposite. What's the healthy way to be dependent on our smartphones without going totally nuts?

THE FORMER CEO OF EBAY, John Donahue, referred to mobile devices as the "central control system of consumers' lives." The always-on lifestyle has become so pervasive that we now take it for granted. But many will tell you that being emotionally and spiritually attached to our phones is a choice we all make.

The past 15 years have seen rapid evolution in mobile phones and related technologies. Consumers around the world encounter modern mobile technologies so often that they take them for granted. We overlook the collective impact of these technologies, how pervasive they are, and how they shape even the most mundane of our daily activities.

When we wake up in the morning, we check our email and any instant messages. We check our favorite social network sites for updates from friends and family. We check for breaking news from the usual websites or apps. We check our calendar to remind ourselves what the day looks like. Then we check the weather to see how we should dress for the day. We open up maps to check commute times and the fastest route to work. Our morning routines have been forever changed or enhanced as a result of smartphones. Whether we use this new technology to make or break us is therefore entirely up to us.

THE THINKER: ANINDYA GHOSE is a professor at New York University's Stern School of Business. His work focuses on economic issues and consumer behavior as it relates to the Internet, mobile, digital marketing, big data, and business analytics. His book *TAP: Unlocking the Economy* covers opportunities created by the global prevalence of (and dependence on) smartphones.

Q: When you're groomed as a future leader, could that be a death sentence?

That is too strong a statement, even as a metaphor. It's usually a privilege, or a marker of privilege, to be selected as a "future leader." However, since there is no such thing as "future leaders," other than in the imagination of those who pick them, being cast as one can be challenging.

Our research shows that being labeled "talented" or "future leader" can put ambitious and hard-working people in a holding pattern, full of vague promises and deep doubts. It can make them worry more about proving that they deserve the appellation than about leading where they are, right then. In that respect, the promise of leadership one day, in exchange for dedication today, can be stifling. It moves one's leadership in the future, threatening to "kill" one's spontaneity and ability to focus on the present—and on others. No wonder "future leaders" can come across as self-absorbed, while privately harboring a very real loneliness.

At the same time, being named a "future leader" is a challenge, and a veiled threat, from which one can learn much about the pressures of leading. At a minimum, about the dangers of yielding to the temptation of a Faustian bargain. At best, about the tension between being oneself and being who others need us to be, which is central to good leadership.

When you look at it that way, being groomed for leadership is more of a love sentence. That's an oxymoron, because you can't be sentenced to love. Like leadership, love is one of our most recalcitrant freedoms. Hence a love sentence presents a dilemma: Do you ignore the sentence, and take the risk to love? Or do you ignore the love, and take on the sentence? With presence, and some help, the luckiest among us find a way to mix the two into a cocktail of duty and desire, seduction and sacrifice, that only the best leaders have. And the greatest loves.

THE THINKERS: GIANPIERO PETRIGLIERI and **JENNIFER PETRIGLIERI** are professors at INSEAD and authors of the *HBR* article, "The Talent Curse: Why High Potentials Struggle—and How They Can Grow Through It."

Radar //// **Amy Webb**
Q: How can everyone start thinking like a futurist?

STRATEGIC FORESIGHT requires alternating between narrow and broad thinking. The following framework uses six distinct steps and relies on the duality of flared and focused analysis.

1. FLARE AT THE FRINGE Keep an open mind as you cast a wide-enough net and gather information without judgment. Create a map showing nodes—or key concepts, companies, places, and people—and the relationships between them, and round up what you will later refer to as "the unusual suspects."

2. FOCUS TO SPOT PATTERNS You must narrow your research from the fringe and uncover the patterns hidden in your sketch to spot possible trends. I developed a system called CIPHER. It's a framework that identifies contradictions, inflections, practices, hacks, extremes, and rarities.

3. FLARE TO ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS Determine whether a pattern really is a trend, or whether it's merely a trendy flash in the pan. Poke holes into every assumption you've made. Creating counterarguments is an essential part of the forecasting process.

4. FOCUS TO CALCULATE TIMING Interpret the trend and ensure the timing is right. This isn't just about finding the typical S-curve that managers rely on—it shows a trend's adoption, but it does not offer a full picture of how external effects could affect its development. As technology trends move along their trajectory, there are two forces in play—internal developments within tech companies, and external de-

Breakthrough Idea //// Joost Minnaar, Freek Jan Ronner, and Pim de Morree

Q: During your travels, who gave you the best piece of advice? Why has it stuck with you?

WE'VE TRAVELED THE GLOBE for 18 months learning from the most progressive organizations we could find. The result? We've ticked off more than 65 items from our bucket list. These include entrepreneurs, academics, organizations, and business leaders—all of whom have realized success by working in radically different ways. Some have featured on the Thinkers50 list; many have not. On the one hand, we can't (and don't want to) point to a single individual who gave us the "best" advice. On the other, the most inspiring leaders frequently tell similar stories, and run their businesses with a similar mindset. It was the result of this mindset that struck us, and yielded the best advice we've received so far. We'd summarize it as follows:

1. LISTEN TO YOUR EMPLOYEES
The most progressive companies have leaders who truly listen. They constantly ask employees: "What do you want? What support do you need to be able to perform better?" They ensure all are heard, and then act. The key is then doing everything they can to implement the suggestions—thereby giving respect to their employees.

2. SEARCH FOR INSPIRATION The most progressive organizations understand they rarely need to invent the wheel. They know it's probably been done before. So when they encounter an opportunity, a challenge, or a problem, they search for solutions both inside and outside their own organization. They know others have probably faced a similar issue, and found a good solution.

3. CONDUCT EXPERIMENTS
Arguably the most important thing about progressive organizations is that they just do it. They know it's better to experiment and fail than to never make any mistakes at all. When this is done well, we see new approaches in the workplace are rarely more than a combination of outside inspiration, gut feeling, and common sense—all acted on.

THE THINKERS: JOOST MINNAAR, FREEK JAN RONNER, and **PIM DE MORREE**—a.k.a. the Corporate Rebels—are on a mission to make work more fun. They quit their frustrating corporate jobs and set out to travel the globe and visit the world's most inspiring organizations, sharing their insights as they go.

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velopments within the government, adjacent businesses, and the like. Both must be calculated.

5. FLARE TO CREATE SCENARIOS AND STRATEGIES Build scenarios to create probable, plausible, and possible futures and accompanying strategies. "Probable" scenarios assume that there will be no meaningful changes in laws of nature or business as the trend evolves. "Plausible" scenarios, meanwhile, rely on the laws of nature, but allow for many other facets of daily life—some which we might not be able to imagine now—to change dramatically.

"Possible" scenarios assume that nothing is set in stone—not even the laws of nature—and that life as we know it could look radically different than it does today. This step requires thinking about both the timeline of a technology's development and your emotional reactions to all of the outcomes. What necessary strategies and ways of thinking will govern how your organization will respond? You'll give each scenario a score, and based on your analysis, create a corresponding strategy for action.

6. FOCUS TO PRESSURE-TEST YOUR ACTION We must acknowledge that the future is in constant flux, which means that trends and scenarios are ever-evolving. For that reason, the final step is to create a strategy or incremental action. The worst thing any organization can do is to recognize an emerging trend early but then take a "wait and see" approach.

THE THINKER: AMY WEBB is a professor of strategic foresight at New York University's Stern School of Business and the author of *The Signals Are Talking: Why Today's Frange Is Tomorrow's Mainstream.* Webb is the founder of FutureToday Institute, a forecasting and strategy firm that researches technology.

Isn't "preparing for uncertainty" an oxymoron?

Esposito: As I've researched megatrends, I've discovered that the future can be predicted today by some of the large-scale events that are shaping our society daily. These include the population pyramid changing its shape and becoming more and more balanced among segments, to urbanization in cities, where we see an increasing concentration of where the population lives and works.

Equally, the rise of the converging technologies are defining future plots that will occur for sure. Changes in the concepts of work, production, relationship to life, relationship to labor, and relationship to our planet will equally undergo deep transformations.

We can't forecast the future in the ways psychics falsely claim, but we can study the safe trajectories of large-scale events, like demographics, resources, or technologies, to determine that new landscapes are being shaped. This is a revelation as it both allows us to connect dots that we didn't notice before, and provides us with the power to change our future, as we see it unfolding in front of us.

Tse: I really don't have the ability to know about the future that others don't, but it would be a very nice skill to have! What I do know is that by understanding the current trends, we're able to put ourselves in a much better position to figure what could be happening in the future.

Take, for example, the issue of inequality: Many current indicators point to the fact that the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" is widening. As a result of increasing inequality, we can expect that there will be more social problems associated, such as mental health, drug use, obesity and violence, to deal with.

In all likelihood, we're currently at the outset of a major technological revolution called the fourth industrial revolution. Every year the learning speed of A.I. increases 100 times. Yet, many of our schools and education systems are still based on the model established some 250 years ago. In the near future, we may see a good number of existing positions disappearing and a shortage of skills related to managing both machines and people. This is one good reason why we should do more of what we called "present-casting," or looking at what's around us. By understanding now, we will be much, much more capable to glean better and clearer insights on how the future could unfold.

THE THINKERS: MARK ESPOSITO is a senior professor at Grenoble Graduate School of Business in France. **TERENCE TSE** is an associate professor of finance at the London campus of ESCP Europe Business School and head of Competitive Studies at the i7 Institute for Innovation and Competitiveness. Together, they're the authors of *Understanding How the Future Unfolds: Using DRIVE to Harness the Power of Today's Megatrends.*

Q: What one trait separates an authentic leader from a bogus boss?

IN STUDYING authentic leaders, I've discovered three types of authenticity: affect, behavioral, and social.

Affect authenticity is based on the golden mean between the extremes of narcissism and shyness. An authentic leader is proud of his or her accomplishments, but is also aware of his or her limitations. Awareness of their shortcomings makes authentic leaders more likely to seek the help of others and show gratitude for their contributions. A bogus boss moves from the arrogance of turning a blind eye on his or her flaws, to shyness with a laissez-faire leadership style that leaves the group leaderless.

Behavioral authenticity is based on the golden mean between the extremes of a fixed mindset and a chaotic mentality. A bogus boss ranges from static positions to chaotic change. In contrast, authentic leaders are always evolving, growing, and developing.

Social authenticity is based on the golden mean between the extremes of self-interest and other-interest orientation. A bogus boss travels from being only interested in his or her career to pleasing everyone, without backbone or internal compass. The key to social authenticity is a harmonious unity between oneself and others. Assertive, authentic leaders create a sense of community so that others can shine and develop.

THE THINKER: MARGARITA MAYO is a professor of organizational behavior at IE Business School and the author of *Yours Truly: How to Stay True to Your Authentic Self.*

Ideas Into Practice //// **Deborah Rowland**

Q: Why do many companies fail to make responsible societal impacts?

The clue is in the question and its three key words: responsible, societal, and impact. Let's start with the responsible: What does it mean? Organizations that take their responsibility to society seriously think of three things:

1. They make sure there's a fair balance of exchange between their organization and the customers and communities they serve. Is it fair to make a ton of money in one country and not pay back a fair share to that country in corporate taxes? I don't think so.

2. They own and fess up to their mistakes. Did Ryanair really do that when they canceled their flights and blamed the unavailability of pilots? The wiser move would've been telling their customers how they got their employee relations a bit wrong.

3. They realize their role as an organization is to steward the social and economic wellbeing of their enterprise through time. The heavy-handed takeover of the U.K. confectionery company Cadbury's, by U.S.-based Kraft Foods in 2010, was an exercise in how not to be responsible to the locality without which you would not be able to secure future economic growth. Perhaps the hauling over

of its company executives by members of parliament helped Kraft see the true meaning of responsibility. The new owner, now named Mondelez International, has recently invested in new plant lines and enhanced employee benefits.

Now comes societal: Organizations now operate in complex ecosystems of largely lateral networks and relationships. Gone are the days when separate institutions could hierarchically and unilaterally tell society what they were going to provide, at what price. New technology, social media, and globalization have put an end to all of that. Some might say it's for the worse, as centuries-old institutions are having their business models, and hence their role to secure local economic health, severely challenged.

Just take a look at the major German energy companies, whose lignite- and coal-fired power stations played a major role in reinstating Germany's economic health and wellbeing after the devastation of two world wars. Those very companies are now being spurned as the march toward renewable energy and consumer self-provided electricity continues at pace. In this example, the organizations concerned have to redefine "societal" away from just their municipal shareholders (who grew very wealthy off the back of their regional grid system), and appeal to a far wider group of stakeholders.

This is an exercise in humility. They must work alongside both retail and corporate customers to provide energy services that operate as just one player in an ecosystem of digital and renewable energy innovation. Just look at the rise of electric cars! How can traditional energy providers now work with local communities and other companies such as Tesla and battery providers to provide clean energy cities?

Finally, there's impact. Do the boardrooms of our major private companies seriously debate the positive

influence they wish to have beyond increasing shareholder wealth? Do our politicians ever consider setting up cross-party initiatives, with the expressed aim to build deeper trust in society toward our politicians and political institutions? To what extent do our religious institutions proactively join forces to steward moral welfare and good citizenry? What is the role of the media in not just uncovering the corrupt, arrogant, or irresponsible bad impact stories of our organizations, but also proselytizing the "good news" impact stories? This would certainly go a long way to fostering trust, pride, and goodwill in the organizations that leave large imprints on our society. It's very hard to have any positive impact in the world if the forces of public opinion are firmly set against you.

There is no quick fix to this complex situation. But the answer lies in leadership. I genuinely believe that the majority of our organizations are stewarded by wise, well-meaning individuals. But today's leaders are getting a bit of a wake-up call about the moral compass, intention, and style through which they run our institutions. I'd say a first step would be to have the aim of "responsible societal impact" embedded into an organization's purpose and leadership development curriculum. In today's world, it's no longer a nice slogan, but necessary for survival.

THE THINKER: DEBORAH ROWLAND is the coauthor of *Still Moving: How to Lead Mindful Change.* Fellow Thinkers50 nominee Peter Terium used Rowland's change model to transform a large, traditional energy company into a company fit for the new world of decentralized and decarbonized energy supply.

Q: Why are bureaucracies resistant to design thinking?

Bureaucracies—almost by definition—are about control and stability. They're designed to maintain not only the status quo, but also the bureaucracy itself, and to reduce variation and enforce standardization. They also believe that getting the answer right the first time is what good managers do.

Almost *everything* about design thinking bumps up against this. Design thinking is about consciously letting go of the way things work today; it requires the courage and commitment to pursue new ideas as though anything were possible. Sure, the constraints are real, but we need to hold them at bay during idea generation, otherwise tomorrow will never look much different than today.

Surprisingly, designing works especially well in inducing change in bureaucratic environments. It turns out that we are humans after all—and when you confront us, face to face, with real people with real problems, we want to help them. Sometimes even if it means the inconvenience of changing ourselves (and the bureaucracy around us) to accomplish that.

We think of design thinking like a Trojan horse: It looks harmless enough on the outside, but is actually capable of revolution, of democratizing innovation itself, even in bureaucratic environments.

THE THINKER: JEANNE LIEDTKA is a professor of business administration at the Darden School at the University of Virginia. She's the author of *Designing for Growth: A Design Toolkit for Managers* (with Tom Ogilvie) and the forthcoming *Designing for the Greater Good*.

Q: If we're all ambiverts now, how does that change the way we work?

AN AMBIVERT IS someone whose degree of extroversion is situated roughly midway on the continuum between those of introverts and extroverts. An introverted senior leader must step up at times and act like an extrovert in order to be a good leader, like when they're giving a talk to hundreds of their employees about the future vision of their organization, or when they're at a major corporate event where they must work the room and greet everyone so as not to have anyone feel left out. Extroverts, meanwhile, must learn to shut up, listen more, and put the spotlight on others, among other things, because this is what a great leader has to do in a world of emergent strategy.

THE THINKER: KARL MOORE, an expert in CEO and c-suite leadership and an associate professor at the Desautels Faculty of Management at McGill University.

Digital Thinking //// **Jose Esteves**

Q: Is there a secret sauce that one digital company uses to attract billions of users, while its less successful competitors can't replicate the recipe?

AMAZON CERTAINLY has a secret sauce. Jeff Bezos's strategy of continuous evolution has allowed the company to experiment in adjacent areas and disrupt one business sector after another. All this was possible because of a great digital leader. Bezos created a data-driven organization with a culture of analytics that pervades every aspect of the business.

Amazon is, at heart, an agile startup, one with a culture that embraces experimentation and the need to repeatedly remake itself. For example, the Amazon Go store concept now makes it possible for in-store shoppers to interact with the company's digital platforms in all-new ways.

This is a classic Amazon method to identify new opportunities, and they're putting all of their digital capabilities to use, such as cloud computing and machine learning. We're likely looking at the next big digital platform that will be sold to other businesses.

THE THINKER: JOSE ESTEVES is a professor of Information Systems at Spain's IE Business School. He studies how technology impacts lives.

Breakthrough Idea //// **Andrew Scott** and **Lynda Gratton**

Q: What do you tell a 30-year-old who has to work 40 more years?

You face the great prospect of a longer, healthier lifespan than any previous generation. That means you also face the prospect of a longer, more varied working career than any that came before you.

Look around and study what your own peers are doing differently. Realize that whatever you do next in your career is unlikely to be what you do last in your career. Think about the main goal of your current career path. Is it making money? Earning a reputation? Building skills? Whatever it is, focus on that goal and make sure you achieve it.

You must also think about how what you're currently doing will enable you to shift into what you'd like to do next. How and when should you upgrade your skills so that you can have a successful multi-stage career full of options? Just be careful to ensure that your networks and identity aren't too exclusively based around your current stage.

And think hard about your identity and your reputation. What is it that will make the various stages and shifts of your career "your career"? Recognize that some parts of your career will be about commitment, and others about experimentation and investing in options. A 50-year career will be neither successful nor enjoyable if it's stale and familiar.

THE THINKERS: ANDREW SCOTT and **LYNDA GRATTON** are authors of *The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity*, which heralds massive social upheaval and opportunity for social and commercial innovation.

Digital Thinking ////
Sherry Turkle

Q: Why is it so hard to have an actual face-to-face conversation in 2017?

PEOPLE KNOW HOW, but they also know they can easily avoid conversation. We turn to our phones. We say we do this when we're bored, but we're bored because we're used to a constant feed of connection, information, and entertainment.

Face-to-face conversation is the most human thing we do. When we're fully present to each other, we learn to listen. We develop the capacity for empathy. We experience the joy of being heard and understood. And when we talk with other people, we talk with ourselves—a cornerstone of early development that continues throughout life.

If we don't confront each other face to face, we can have the illusion of friendship without the demands of intimacy. The pace of human conversation, with its silences and awkward pauses, is difficult. One young woman I interviewed talked to me about the intolerability of the "boring bits" of conversation. She talked about a "7-minute rule" in any conversation: It takes 7 minutes to tell how a conversation is going to go, if it's going to be meaningful.

But then, she admitted that she rarely puts in those 7 minutes. When she hits a "boring bit," she goes to her phone. The truth? It's when we stumble or are silent or search for our words that we reveal most to each other.

THE THINKER: SHERRY TURKLE, professor of the social studies of science and technology at MIT, is the author of *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age.*

Breakthrough Idea //// **Nilofer Merchant**

Q: What's the weirdest idea you've ever had, and how did you unlock its potential?

I've been researching the topic of unlocking ideas for nearly 10 years. I could share with you the business context of how I came to it, but the personal story is far more revealing.

When I was 18, I came home from a day at the community college to a house full of aunties, making a biryani feast and celebrating that my arranged marriage had been … well, arranged. Despite growing up in America, I always knew that "my job" was to marry well. I had accepted it. But I also asked my uncle who was helping with these arrangements to ask the groom if I could get an education. Sadly, my own mother wouldn't allow him to. She was negotiating for a house so her future was provided for, and not for my interests. I knew that if no one asked early, it would cost me at least a year (if not a lifetime) to achieve that dream.

I waited until my extended family left before I made the case to my mother. Grabbing an old box left over from the groceries, I theatrically put in five books and one outfit (and no toothbrush!), turned to her, and said: "I am the product. You cannot do the deal without me and so please, just change your mind to ask the groom."

I then walked out the door not knowing where I was headed. I ended up at the local winchell's donut shop. One apple fritter and a donut hole later, I called home. But my mother didn't relent. I figured I'd be home by the following morning, or maybe the one after. But that day never came. I was kicked out of my family, homeless, penniless, disowned.

People often say that everyone has a chance to make a difference, but the truth is that your ability to direct your future is also deeply social. In the case of my family, that group didn't value me as "Nilofer" with my own unique history and experience, visions and hopes, but through the lens and framework of "Islamic, Indian, woman." The social norms of those categories defined my personal identity, power, and thus value to the world.

That's when I first noticed that being seen through the lens of a group that you belong to shapes what you can do, and what ideas make it through. I would notice this again in my first job, as an admin at Apple, when I got invited to a brainstorming meeting. I did research and showed up with ideas to contribute, but it only took a few short minutes to realize they didn't mean *all* ideas—just the MBA-type ideas.

This pattern is persistent. Ideas are expected to come from certain people, pedigrees, and experiences. In this way, existing power structures either limit or liberate ideas. Naturally, this changes whose ideas are heard, what ideas are generated, and ultimately the value created. It's estimated that just 30-some percent of all of ideas make it through now. If that staggering statistic is true, we're missing out on approximately 60-some percent of all other ideas. And so, we all miss out—on the creativity, solutions, and innovations that humanity most needs.

That's why I started to notice when new innovation models emerged, allowing value creation to be more widely dispersed. Platforms and crowdsourcing meant ideas could come from anyone, anywhere. I wondered: What if everyone became freed up to contribute that which only they can? And so I coined a word to describe that generative capacity: onlyness.

You stand in a spot *only* you stand in—a function of your distinct history and experiences, visions and hopes. Those ideas (now) scale in connectedness through distributed networks. Hence, onlyness: how new value is generated in an ideas economy.

Sometimes, this word conjures up the idea of a singular hero, suggesting that power is personal. But the underlying shape of it follows the duality inherent in the word individual, which is the smallest member of a group. An individual therefore is never isolated. She is always connected. Similarly, onlyness is that purpose born of you which unites you meaningfully with others; it is the connected you. And therein lies the social power.

It's a super weird idea to some, pointing to a larger frame than "talent" as it's often used, which is to say if someone has the right degree or right experience. We can now say that each of us has something to add to the world. It's up to businesses now to find ways to tap into this boundless capacity. The fact that we don't today is our biggest problem, but also our great opportunity. It points to the future of work and our economic prosperity.

THE THINKER: NILOFER MERCHANT is a Silicon Valley–based ex-Apple executive and the author of *11 Rules for Creating Value in the Social Era.* Her latest book is *The Power of Onlyness: Make Your Wild Ideas Mighty Enough to Dent the World.*