

NEXT AGENDA™

What's new in executive education?

Fall 2021

Out of global crisis, a new world of opportunity is rapidly emerging. 10 years of digital, consumer behaviour change in 18 months, a radical shake up of every market, new disruptive start-ups and new business models, a rapid acceleration of scientific breakthroughs, the challenges of climate and inequality, and supply chains restructured. The future is not like it used to be.

Executive education has seen dramatic change too. The shift to remote learning formats is just part of the story. What matters more are the new learning pathways that have emerged. Learning for life, learning in bites. "Liquid learning" models, that fuse the best of physical and online experiences, offer a new foundation for learning experiences, business models, and new topical agendas.

NEXT AGENDA is a fast and inspiring overview of what's new, hot and next in the world of learning and development for business people. How can you meet changing business needs, enable the application of new practices, and stand out in an increasingly crowded market? We bring together the best ideas from thought leaders, books and reports, companies and individuals.

Here is an overview of the big topics that are driving the new business education agenda:

Sense Making Leading in complex and uncertain environments	Future Shaping Strategic, edge thinking, to seize the future	Having Courage Courage to step up, persistence and resilience	Next Markets Understanding the new consumers, young and old	Gamification How gamified interfaces are transforming CX	AI and Big Data Competing in intelligent and individual markets
Aligning Purpose Defining and aligning around a higher purpose	Conscious Design Smart to wise, more intuitive and holistic	Stakeholder Inc Reimagining capitalism, value and stakeholders	Social Brands Engaging consumers with influence and community	Liquid Business Rethinking physical and digital business models	Asian Superpower Inspired by Asia's next generation corporations
Adaptive Leaders Anticipatory, collaborative, and emotional agility	Leading In a world of relentless change		Competing with new digital technologies		Consumer Trust Building reputation and trust in a tech world
Re Thinking Open minded, curious, critical, resolving paradox	Innovating for sustainable impact		Working as smarter organizations		Super Speedy Supply chains, last mile, and super apps
Wicked Problems Complex, systems-based problem solving					Being Human Organisations as amazing as people inside them
Net Positive Reinventing business and solutions for good	Incubating Ideas New innovation models, entrepreneurs, ventures	Quantified Impact ESG investing and ideas, metrics and reporting	Activists Inside The growing role of ethics, politics and activism	Superfast Building fast and agile organisations for change	Extreme Teams Building teams that achieve more together
Doughnuts Developing strategies with social and enviro limits	Good Life Making the 17 SDGs more human and engaging	Business Design Sustainable production and consumption	Future Work Remote working, and hybrid ways of working	Inclusivity Diversity as advantage, bias and difference	Ecosystems Working as networks of added-value partners
Circularity Full-circle thinking to redefine business systems				Imaginarium Sparking extreme creativity in people	

NEXT AGENDA also takes a look at how education itself is changing. How have business schools responded to the pandemic, at a time when many said they were ripe for disruption? How are a new generation of digital platforms shaping the market? And what are businesses themselves doing to change the way they learn? We look at some of the award-winning programs of the last year.

Is this a time for optimism? Absolutely. Business leaders across the world have embraced change, accelerated by Covid-19, with boldness and imagination. While the market caps of companies from Amazon to BYD, Tesla and Zoom, have sky-rocketed, every organisation recognises that now is the time to reimagine the future. Smart thinking, future skilled people have never mattered more.

LEADING in a world of relentless change

Jane Fraser, the new CEO of **Citigroup**, stepped up to become first lady of Wall Street earlier this year, declaring that if banks as we know them are to survive, they need to embrace radical change. She called for her leadership teams to embrace 3Cs – context to make sense of a rapidly changing world, creativity to reinvent the banking business model, and courage to do it now.

Meanwhile, **Satya Nadella** has led **Microsoft** to become a \$2 trillion tech business, primarily using two tools – as inspiring purpose, to empower every customer to achieve what they previously could not, and a growth mindset – “from know-it-alls to learn-it-alls”. The result is a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship at scale, harnessing the power of AI to transform our futures.

NEW TOPICS

- **Sense Making** ... Most leaders struggle with ambiguity. They strive to simplify what is complex, and to hang onto what is certain. Leading with uncertainty requires stretch thinking, hypothesis and scenarios, intuitive and empowered decisions. Institute for the Future have some great projects to tap into, and CB Insights provide great analysis.
- **Future Shaping** ... Digital platforms enable the smallest companies to shape markets in profound ways. How can you anticipate, and actively shape your emerging future markets and industry models to your advantage? Siemens and Maersk chairman Jim Snabe offers a practical “Dreams and Details” framework for making this happen.
- **Aligning Purpose** ... Much discussed, poorly executed. Organisations with clear and meaningful purpose engage the best talent, more investment, and profitable consumers. Beyond strategy, define your brand, business and culture with your “why”. Former Best Buy CEO Hubert Joly provides an excellent case study in his book “The Heart of Business”.
- **Stakeholder Inc** ... Finding a new balance between investors, employees, customers and society – or better a new dynamic model for increasing value to all stakeholders – thinking longer-term, transforming purpose and value definitions, metrics and rewards. “Reimagining Capitalism” by HBS’s Rebecca Henderson sets out the challenge and opportunity.
- **Re Thinking** ... Conventions and habits, unconscious bias and limited worldviews, shape leader’s thinking. The old models of success increasingly don’t work, as new ethical and commercial dilemmas challenge our accepted approaches. Adam Grant’s new book “Think Again” is a crusade to unlearn and relearn, to see today’s business with fresh eyes.
- **Conscious Design** ... Indian-born, French-educated Navi Radjou describes this as “the ability to integrate our thinking, feeling, intuiting, doing”. He brings together diverse approaches to solve problems in the broadest sense - to consider the whole person, to align business and individual purpose, to achieve both business success and self-fulfilment.
- **Inclusive Leaders** ... Authentic, collaborative, adaptive leadership models are much in vogue. Andres Tapia’s new book “Inclusive Leadership” builds on 3 million Korn Ferry leadership assessments to identify the 5 disciplines of effective leaders in today’s markets. They define them as flexible, self-assured, inquisitive, authentic and emotionally resilient.
- **Having Courage** ... Brene Brown’s brilliant book “Dare to Lead” explores the interplay between vulnerability and courage. It is about overcoming fear, to ask the difficult questions, to say what hasn’t been said before, and to start something new. Leaders need the courage to jump in, to accept you don’t know everything, to make the best choices you can.

EXAMPLE PROGRAMS

- **Business Recoded** ... The old codes of business don’t work. Tech has disrupted, power has shifted, and new possibilities emerge. Do you have the courage to create a better world?

The 5 day leadership program explores the future of business, and how leaders can “recode” their future strategies, markets and organisations, for enlightened progress.

- **Adaptive Leadership** ... How to lead in a dynamic, complex and uncertain world – from experts to problems solvers, knowing to discovering, stability to agility. The 4 module program uses a mix of seminars, projects and coaching to focus on four attributes – being authentic, being open, being curious, and being collaborative.
- **Purpose Profit Progress** ... Developing an inspiring purpose is just the start. How does it fit with vision and strategy, culture and performance? How does the purpose live in everyday promises and actions, creating positive impact? With deep dives into companies like Schneider and Patagonia, the 3 day intensive program turns idealism into impact.

COMPETING with new digital technologies

Mukesh Ambani is the billionaire leader of India’s Reliance Industries, focused on oil and chemicals. 5 years ago he launched the Jio phone, with an almost-free business model, and became the overnight market leader. It has now evolved into **Jio Platforms**, a digital app-based platform at the heart of Indian life – groceries to healthcare, mobility and finance. A great example of a super-app.

In China, the world’s largest home appliances company, **Haier**, is planning to give away all of its products free. **Zhang Ruimin**, the CEO who is famed for eliminating layers of middle management and introducing his rendanheyi organisation model that is built on thousands of self-managed micro-businesses, imagines a connected future, with subscription services for every aspect of home living.

NEW TOPICS

- **Next Markets** ... How well do you understand the new consumer agendas? From Gen Z (now a \$1.4 trillion consumer group) to Gen Alpha (born in last 10 years), ageing audiences and new Asian middle class, markets are evolving rapidly. While it is easy to stereotype markets, they are diverse in needs and access, niches and individuals.
- **Social Brands** ... Social media and social influencers, curation and co-creation, the way consumers behave, and brands engage, has been transformed by digital technologies. Kai Wright’s new book “Follow the Feeling” focuses on the role of community and culture, language and visual media, in building new brands like Deliveroo and Peloton.
- **Consumer Trust** ... Trust in business and brands, and any type of institution, is at an all-time low. People trust each other, friends and role models, more than organisations and formal media. “Who can you trust?” asks Rachel Botsman, particularly in a tech world. Edelman’s Sandra Sucher offers the TrustIQ as a useful model, developed with Deloitte.
- **Asian Superpowers** ... We now live in “the Asian Century” claims Parag Khanna, home to the world’s most rapidly growing markets – both in population and economic performance. Companies like Alibaba and Baidu, Coupang and Dalian, increasingly dominate markets, and offer the best insights for new business practices, and application of technologies.
- **Gamification** ... eSports is the world’s most popular sport, Fortnite the most popular game (more people participate than watch soccer). Banking, education, fashion, retail, have all become “gamified” in different ways, intuitive and engaging. Game platforms are the new social spaces for online rock concerts, online retailers offer discounts as rewards in games.
- **AI and Big Data** ... AI is now a \$16 trillion business, the amount of data doubles every year, and AI has immersed itself in our lives – from Google’s journey navigation to Lemonade’s insurance quotes, Amex’s fraud security to AliveCor’s remote heart monitoring. How can big data and AI transform your business through anticipation, efficiency, and personalisation?

- **Liquid Business** ... As the world locked down from pandemic, education and work, health and entertainment shifted rapidly online. It's easy to think of binary worlds – physical and digital – but in reality, the future will be much more fluid – combining the best of human interaction and tech capabilities to achieve more – faster, simpler, human, better.
- **Super Speedy** ... Uber emerged from the last global crisis to challenge our old models of transportation, now a second generation of data-driven, socially-shared, on demand logistics companies are transforming supply and distribution. Super-apps like Grab, Jio and Rappi will deliver anything to your door, the next challenge is to do so in 10 minutes.

EXAMPLE PROGRAMS

- **Leading for Exponential Growth** ... Harnessing the potential of digital networks and technologies to drive new business models that multiply customer value and business impact. This intensive 5 day program explores how tech is transforming markets and organisations, to change the way we work, and win.
- **Unlocking the Power of AI** ... Exploring the potential of AI - from speech recognition to computer vision, financial models and customer behaviour – to transform every business. At the same time, this drives new ethical and legal issues for business, and requires new strategies and skills. Over 3 days online, we prepare you for a more intelligent future.
- **Building Brands in a Digital World** ... Almost every transaction starts with a mobile Google search. Every influence starts with an Instagram post, or a reality TV show. Branding in today's world is not like before. DTC and C2C, companies like Nike and Glossier have shown how brand building can be direct and collaborative. 3 days to reinvent marketing.

INNOVATING for sustainable impact

Pat Brown was a 56 year-old Stanford biochemistry professor who wanted to change the world – to eliminate animals from the human food chain. Lectures didn't do it, so he set up **Impossible Foods**. 10 years later the plant-based Impossible Burger is loved across the world, for its looks and taste. Impossible is also in many other categories beyond meat, disrupting the future of food.

10 years ago, **Ørsted** - the Danish energy company – was known as DONG, a traditional carbon-intensive utility. Under the leadership of **Henrik Paulsen**, it transformed itself into a global leader in clean energy, and the World's Most Sustainable Company in 2020. It is an inspiring story of bold vision and radical transformation, investment and partnering, sustainability and innovation.

NEW TOPICS

- **Wicked Problems** ... Big problems that are difficult to solve, usually requiring systems thinking to explore causes and effects, and identify root causes. "Wicked 7" is a huge project led by Christian Sarkar, seeking to address the world's biggest challenges – from social inequality to climate change – and how businesses can positively contribute.
- **Doughnut Economics** ... We are familiar with the UN's 17 SDG's, but Kate Raworth's economic model takes this further to develop organisations within the limits of social and environmental constraints. It is currently being applied to urban development, including Amsterdam's City Plan 2025, and Berlin's Donut Strategy.
- **Business Design** ... New business models are an excellent tool to apply innovation across the whole business. Sustainable business models explore how to this in a way that addresses sustainability within the organisation, and also enabling more sustainable consumption. Building on Strategyzer's latest work, and the Board of Innovation.

- **Net Positive** ... Most sustainability approaches seek to reduce negative impact, but perhaps miss the opportunities to create more positive impacts. Andrew Winston’s new book is about how courageous companies thrive by giving more than they take. Former Unilever CEO Paul Poleman takes a leadership perspective in how to make this transition.
- **Circular Innovation** ... Circular models, as championed by The Ellen MacArthur Foundation take an ecosystem approach to understanding how every part of the value chain can be innovated towards this net zero, or net positive, goal. While this has tended to focus on environmental impact, many organisations now find that social impacts are even greater.
- **Incubating Ideas** ... Traditional product-centric approaches to innovation have increasingly given way to more entrepreneurial approaches – from human-centred Design Thinking, to “Lean Start-Up” and rapid “Blitzscaling” scale up. Venturing in its different forms, either inhouse or with partners, is increasingly the norm, with dedicated facilities and support.
- **Quantified Impact** ... Conventional business performance metrics do not embrace the broader goals of stakeholders, and impacts beyond financials. Our World In Data tracks global performance towards the 17 SDGs, while new combined metrics are being championed by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.
- **Good Life** ... Understanding that sustainability is ultimately about human behaviour change, the UN recently worked with Futerra to develop a more personal and positive way of describing the challenges, creating the “Good Life Goals”. These work for individuals, but also for how brands can be a force for good, enabling consumers to live a better life.

EXAMPLE PROGRAMS

- **Sustainability for Competitive Advantage** ... How can you embrace sustainability in your business not just for compliance and efficiency, but to differentiate yourself from others? Building business as a platform for change, and for good, is the challenge. We explore it over 3 days of exploration, cases, debate and project work, ready to implement.
- **Designing New Business Models** ... Innovating your business model is a fundamental challenge for every business leader, exploring how to reinvent every aspect of business. We build on Alex Osterwalder’s canvas to explore new templates, and new blueprints. This is a 3 module hybrid program, which can take a specific sustainability focus or not.
- **Sustainable Innovation Accelerator** ... This is a 12 week intensive program for start-up entrepreneurs and corporate venturers, combining practical support and coaching, with broader education and insight from leading companies. The outcome can be incentivised by a prize or broader acceptance to the next stage of funding and development.

WORKING as smarter organizations

In Singapore, **Piyush Gupta** is the Indian-born CEO of **DBS Bank**, frequently called “the world’s most innovative bank”. His transformational journey is one of engagement – starting with a organisation-wide customer listening initiative, to innovation hackathons in every office, and digital transformation that has reinvented the way the organisation works internally, and in the market.

Ilkka Paananen, founder of **Supercell**, the Finnish gaming company, describes himself as “the world’s least powerful CEO”. His organisation is designed with customers – meaning game players at the top, and then small independent teams who work on each game, and share in its successful. Paananen, and the rest of the head office, is there to support the teams do what they do best.

NEW TOPICS

- **Being Human** ... Most organizations are overburdened by beauracracy, says Gary Hamel in “Humanocracy”, learning from companies like Handelsbanken, Gore and Zappos, to “create organizations as amazing as the people inside them”. He uses 5Ms – motivation, models, mindsets, mobilization, and migration – to unlock the humanity of business.
- **Inclusivity** ... Gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexuality, experience, are all dimensions of diversity in organisations. Most business focus is on equality, but the real benefit of diversity – or, rather, inclusivity - is in seeing new perspectives, reaching new audiences, creating new innovations. McKinsey estimates that diverse organisations outperform others by 33-35%.
- **Extreme Teams** ... Google’s Aristotle Project sought to identify the perfect team. Perhaps it is from sports that we can find the best examples, and also in high-stress, high-trust situations like military or healthcare. Amy Edmundson focuses on psychological safety, with 3 critical factors – positive tension, complimentary styles, and collective attitude.
- **Imagination Sundial**... Organisations need creativity more than ever – to reimagine the future, enhance technology, solve the big problems. Rob Shorter created the “Imagination Sundial” as a way to structure and stimulate creativity. The tool focuses on spaces that open minds, places that people gather, practices that connect possibilities, and pacts for action.
- **Future Work** ... The most debated topic right now, with more reports and conferences than anything else. Will the shift to remote working continue beyond the pandemic? Microsoft’s “New Future of Work” report is one of the best. The real issue is not home or office, but how organisations will use the catalyst of Covid to work smarter, collaboratively and better.
- **Superfast** ... Speed and agility are hallmarks of today’s most effective organisations. Not just structural agility, to adapt projects and processes, but emotional agility, to cope with relentless change. This also demands fitness and resilience, particularly for business leaders. “The Chief Wellbeing Officer” by Steven MacGregor turns business leaders into Olympians.
- **Activists Inside** ... Starbuck’s Howard Shultz actively challenges his government on social issues, Patagonia takes direct action to protect the environment. Employee activism is here to stay, believes Megan Reitz in “Speak Up”, saying a positive debate, and consideration of perspectives and policies can enrich organisations, and build trust with all stakeholders.
- **Ecosystems** ... The convergence of industries, organisations and geographies have built new tech-enabled ecosystems that transform possibilities. Like Tobi Lutke, founder of Shopify, says “the smallest business can now have huge global impact” depending on its ecosystem design. It also has huge implications for brands, taxation, employment and more.

EXAMPLE PROGRAMS

- **Transform!** ... a fantastic business transformation simulation game that can be played online over 5 days, or physically in a shorter time, between internal teams, or with a relevant case study. The game simulates the full journey of business transformation, from strategy and investment, to people and process, customers and brands, implementation and impact.
- **The Imaginarium** ... bringing to life the Imagination Sundial as a practical creativity accelerator for business teams, creating the environment and mindset for radical creativity. It includes QuestionBurst thinking, to define the problem, and then IdeaCatalyst techniques to spark faster, smarter thinking – shaped into practical concepts, all in 3 high energy days.
- **Building Extreme Teams** ... inspired by the world of sport, we explore what it means to create a great team, and why it matters in driving innovation, agility and performance. Learning from sports coaches and psychologists, in 3 days, we explore how to form, storm and norm better teams, which become self-managed, constant learning, high impact units.

LEARNING for more business impact

Executive education is evolving rapidly. Not only because of its huge acceleration into online formats, but because of the rapidly changing needs and nature of business people, and their organisations. At a senior level, participants want to transform their business in more imaginative ways, but they also want to supercharge their own career pathways beyond the corporation. In a world of where most theory is easily accessible, it is the mindset and inspiration that matters more.

NEW APPROACHES

There is a wealth of new approaches to business learning, a lot of disruptive noise, alongside useful innovation. While some platforms, like 2U's GetSmarter and EdX and The Economist's Navigator, are essentially distributing conventional business school programs, others are driving real innovation in why, when and how business people learn. LinkedIn Learning has become the dominant volume education platform, alongside the likes of Coursera and Udemy.

Here are some of the more interesting approaches to executive education design and delivery:

- **Learning Jams** ... Investing more time upfront, before programs begin, understanding what individuals or organisations seek from programs – and then actively shaping the content and formats to these needs. Specific content can be prioritised, case studies selected appropriately, and learning outcomes more definitive and driven.
- **Personal Pathfinders** ... Front-end modules that enable participants to explore their specific needs or interests, after which they can build more personal learning journeys from a portfolio of options. This requires flexibility by educators, but also enables a fuller portfolio to be showcased, and longer (more profitable) learning journeys to be delivered.
- **Liquid Programs** ... Creating more fluidity between physical and online formats, choosing how to use the different media effectively – more time reading, watching and exploring, online – more time debating, collaborating and making, physically. This enables learning to fit around busy schedules, but also to be more experiential, applied to real issues and projects.
- **Business Safaris** ... Case studies are increasingly outdated. Participants prefer to deep dive into what the most interesting companies are doing right now, through guided realtime learning experiences with open companies. Silicon Valley Safaris are still popular, but so are specific deep dives into disruptive innovators by sector. Tesla is, of course, the favourite!
- **Micro Learning** ... Online platforms have driven the rise of short burst, highly specific courses – Udacity's nanodegrees and Google's learning pods. These generally appeal to functional learners with specific goals or browsing for interest, but are less effective in driving new mindsets and transformational impact. But that could change!
- **Subscription Learning** ... Encouraging the “lifelong” engagement of executives in learning, and leveraging a largely untapped alumni base, new business models such as annual subscriptions redefine value and relationship. For a set annual fee, participants can attend a specific number of program days, plus get access to special content and events.
- **Education Incubators** ... Most leading programs now include one-to-one coaching and project work, incubators take this further. More in the style of a start-up incubator, or venture accelerator, they combine the latest executive education with real business development. This sparks smarter projects, but also educated entrepreneurs, who can go further.

Other examples of recent innovations include Space Simulators, exploring how leaders respond to extreme environments, University Ventures, where the business school takes a stake in the future business project work that participants develop during programs for future implementation, and Leading Minds, which brings together the best of the best from across business schools by topic.

EXAMPLE PROGRAMS

Here are some of the award-winning corporate executive development programs of the last 12 months, responding to the challenges of a changing world:

- **Adidas** ... seeking a more consistent global approach to leadership development, the sports business engaged Artgym to design and deliver its new Manager Development Experience (MDE). Artgym, as the name suggests, starts from a more creative perspective and then adds business theory, creating a more intuitive, collaborative, experiential program.
- **Asia Development Bank** ... in 2018 ADB decided to invest in building a cadre of leaders across the organisation to develop its Strategy 2030, and lead it through the full decade. The program, developed with Impact, focused on phases of Thrive, Engage and Transform – transforming leadership and innovation, with a close-knit group working over many years.
- **AT&T** ... seeking a more human and energising program for its Corporate Finance community, created AT&T Rockstars Live! for mid to senior levels. Like art, the medium of music is democratising and fun, but with fundamental lessons in teamwork, organisation and leadership. The Business School of Rock runs a similar format.
- **Julius Bar** ... an adaptive leadership program, co-created with IMD for team leaders (where the design experience is a key part of the organisation development). The program links to the new strategy, building responsiveness to a changing world, common language across the organisation, new collaborative behaviours, and coaching the next level system.
- **KPMG** ... a 5 month journey for senior leaders, initially in India. Combining faculty from Harvard and the local IIM Ahmedabad business schools, the program uses a SCRIPT approach – S for self-learning, C for classroom content, R for reflection, I for internalisation, P for peer learning, and T for teachable (leaders coaching next generation of leaders).
- **Verizon** ... VLeads is an immersive leadership development for Verizon’s top director-level executives, and built on a new set behavioural principles that aligns with the “Verizon 2.0” business transformation. The principles are clustered by business leadership, people leadership, and self-leadership ... in that order, which is often not the case!
- **World Economic Forum** ... the Responsible Leadership Challenge, a 5 week immersive leadership program designed by Accenture. It focuses on the WEF Foundation’s communities, a global network of 10000 under 40 next generation leaders participating in a series of online challenges, to contribute to WEF agendas, and build new behaviours.

That’s all for this edition of **NEXT AGENDA**. Thanks to all who have contributed – books, reports, programs and rankings. If you’d like to know more, just let me know. It’s all free! If you have insights and ideas which you’d like to contribute, do not hesitate to reach out to us!

All the best,

Peter

Professor Peter Fisk
Co-founder and Academic Leader
Global Executive Education and Development Network