



Next Era Leadership: All Hands on Deck

Abstract and Key Questions

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What is *next-era leadership*? It's a fundamental rethink of what it means to lead in a world that has moved far, far beyond the conditions and institutions of the postwar era. Across two days of spirited interaction in Vienna, we'll confront the shortcomings of leadership today – as it is practiced, researched, and taught – and move together toward better ways of building the capacities needed for the future.

Our subtitle for the 2025 Forum – *All Hands on Deck* – betrays one belief we already hold on the subject. What has been seen as a powerful role for individuals, and rare ones at that, must be reframed as a creative energy distributed across many. We all know that to lead is a verb, not a noun, and what matters is the positive change that leaders bring about through others. (Drucker himself stressed decades ago that the mark of effective leadership is outcomes, not attributes.) We should also know that when leadership is making great things happen, it isn't because legions of followers have mindlessly shown up to take orders from some mogul, it's because people eager to make life better have been inspired by a vision and purpose, have ideas for how to make progress, and know their efforts must be aligned to accomplish anything big.

Notice that, while the Drucker Forum has always focused on the management of *organizations* and *workplaces*, none of the above is expressed in such terms. This year, we engage with a crisis



afflicting the world on every level. With Drucker, we see the health of whole societies in the strength of their pillar institutions – and understand that next-era leadership must be cultivated in every corner.

Join us **November 6 – 7** to share ideas and experience in the splendid setting of the Hofburg Palace. And be part of leadership's next-era vanguard.

Questions implicit in the above, to inspire deliberations about program sessions:

What does “next-era leadership” mean? In terms of *theory*, it's a shift away from (or at least a step beyond) today's prevailing model(s) of leadership.

- What is/are the prevailing model(s)? Why did they become so firmly established?
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- How is the existing understanding of leadership failing us? What is the evidence that a new model is needed?
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- How have the conditions in which leadership operates generally changed, disrupting the effectiveness of old ways of leading? (democratized access to information and ability to communicate to large audiences, for example, and much greater mobility of talent, and dis-integration of operations as transaction costs drop to zero)
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In terms of *practice*, it's a different set of people focusing on different activities

- Who are the exemplars in the vanguard of next-era leadership? Whose approaches deserve to be emulated by others?
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- What are they doing so differently?
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- Can leadership effectiveness be measured? If a next-era leadership emerged, how would we know it was an improvement? How would anyone on a journey toward it gauge their progress?
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- What are the levels at which next-era leadership should be exercised, studied, and cultivated? (Individual? Team? Company? Nation-based sector?)
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- What remains the *same*, doesn't change with next-era leadership? If we are taking approach of going back to “first principles” or definitional necessities of leadership and questioning all assumptions beyond those, what are those foundations?
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- Has any progress been made in making leadership research more valuable? What has made it difficult to draw insights and lessons in the past, and is anything today making it less difficult?