



Program Outline

Next Gen Innovation

When Everything Depends On Ingenuity

www.druckerforum.org

**NOV 4 - 5
2026
HOFBURG
Vienna**

**NOV 6
Master
classes**

DRUCKER FORUM 2026 STORYLINE

Next-Generation Innovation: When Everything Depends on Ingenuity

Most CEOs rank innovation among their top strategic priorities. Yet in survey after survey, the vast majority express disappointment with their organizations' ability to deliver it. This gap between aspiration and execution is not new – but it is growing more consequential. In a world where competitive advantage decays faster than ever, the inability to innovate consistently is not merely a missed opportunity. It is an existential risk.

The gap between aspiration and execution persists because most organizations still operate with management systems designed for efficiency and control rather than exploration and experimentation. As a result, innovation remains confined to the edges – to R&D, to dedicated labs, to special initiatives – rather than woven into every function and activity. The fixes tried over the past two decades, such as design thinking programs, corporate accelerators, open innovation networks, have delivered pockets of progress, but haven't closed the gap.

The challenge is therefore not to produce more ideas, but to make innovation an enduring *organizational capability*.

A New Era of Innovation

This transformation is becoming urgent as the world enters a new wave of technological change and geopolitical upheaval.

Artificial intelligence, biotechnology breakthroughs, the Internet of Things, and e-mobility are re-shaping industries simultaneously – each with the potential to trigger innovation cycles comparable to the major waves of the past.

But realizing that potential requires organizations that can actually innovate at the speed and scale the moment demands. The “how” of innovation – how organizations learn, experiment, collaborate, and adapt—matters more than the “what.” The next era of innovation will depend not only on technological breakthroughs but on management innovation: new ways of structuring organizations, empowering teams, and orchestrating across increasingly complex value chains.

Ingenuity as a Core Competence

In a world of accelerating change, ingenuity – the ability to generate novel solutions and bring them to life – becomes the defining organizational capability. Building it requires a rewiring of the management system itself. Leadership behaviors, structures, processes, incentives, skills, and culture must all reinforce experimentation and learning.

Companies that rewire their management OS faster and more comprehensively will create most value.

From the Individual to the Ecosystem

Innovation operates at multiple levels, each with their own management challenges.

It starts with the individuals who have the curiosity, initiative, and the courage to challenge assumptions. It flourishes within teams that practice collaboration and shared learning. It becomes scalable at the organizational level – and ultimately depends on the broader ecosystem of entrepreneurial networks, educational institutions, regulatory frameworks, and international collaboration.

This multi-level perspective reflects Peter Drucker’s vision of an *entrepreneurial society* in which innovation is not limited to firms but emerges across sectors.

AI and the Future of Innovation

Artificial intelligence adds new dimensions to the challenge of managing innovation. AI can dramatically accelerate experimentation, reveal unmet needs, and expand the scale and impact of novel solutions. The unprecedented investments organizations are making in AI will pay off much more dramatically if they enable innovation, not just automation.

Technology alone will not create innovative organizations. The most successful will be those that *combine human ingenuity with machine intelligence* – developing leaders and teams capable of using these powerful new tools to amplify, not replace, human creativity.

Innovating with Purpose

Excelling at innovation is not just a matter of beating out rival players in well-defined, mature markets. The most consequential innovations of the coming decade will make whole new inroads into fundamental areas of human need – like health, energy, education, and public services – and call on the combined ingenuity of many organizations across sectors, commercial and noncommercial. Increasingly, for-profit firms will recognize that their ability to innovate is increasingly central to their license to operate.

Innovating with purpose will be required and rewarded.

The Role of the Drucker Forum

The 2026 Drucker Forum aims to provide leaders with a system-level understanding of next-generation innovation.

The Forum will explore:

- how innovative individuals develop capabilities to solve important problems and lead high-impact initiatives
- how innovative teams cycle iteratively – and move swiftly – from spotting unmet needs to delivering creative solutions
- how innovative organizations redesign workplaces, processes, and performance management systems to generate wave after wave of new value creation
- how innovative sectors foster rich ecosystems of entrepreneurial activity and technological progress

Combining diverse perspectives, experiences, and examples, the Forum will clarify the key challenges of delivering breakthrough solutions in the 21st century, and equip leaders and their organizations to be “next-gen innovators.”

Building on a Rich Intellectual Tradition

The Forum’s discussions will build on a rich intellectual tradition of inquiring into the workings of innovation – from Schumpeter’s “gales of creative destruction” to Drucker’s framing of innovation as a discipline, and from Christensen’s theory of how incumbent firms are disrupted to Rogers’s diffusion model of how novel offerings take hold.

What they have in common: the insistence that innovation is not merely a technological discovery but a product of complex managerial, economic, and social processes.

The Central Message

The coming decade offers extraordinary opportunities for innovation. Whether they are converted into genuine value and societal progress will depend less on particular technologies (as generative as they may be) than on our abilities to reimagine the forms, purposes, and leadership of the organizations we all depend on to keep advancing human well-being.

The moment we are living in now is one of “poly-crises”—multiple and interacting shocks to global economic systems. In turbulent times like this, it is essential for leaders to gain fresh confidence that the challenges are manageable. In a sense, it is “going back to the basics” to recognize that, when greater value must be created from existing or even reduced resources, the answers will come from human ingenuity. Yet the best ways to inspire, unleash, and channel that creative capacity, as many sessions in November will explore, have been rapidly evolving, too.

The goal for all is to come away energized by the vision of a new age of unprecedented innovation, and better equipped to bring it to the world.

That is the ambition of the Drucker Forum 2026.