Evolving Trust

Embracing Change

Edelman
Trust Institute

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INTRODUCTION

The world is attempting to navigate a period of rapid and often turbulent *change* at a time when the public's trust in leaders and societal institutions is unusually low.

Breakneck advances in technology, geopolitical upheaval and crises such as climate change and rising economic inequality are posing unprecedented challenges to decision-makers across government, business, media and NGOs – making the need to rebuild trust as urgent as it is difficult.

What can be done to rebuild trust is the theme of this collection of essays, edited by Matthew Bishop, former business editor of *The Economist*, with advisor Rik Kirkland, former editor of *Fortune*. This third annual publication by the Edelman Trust Institute offers insights from trust-building experts on how to overcome the trust deficit and help humanity to emerge from this time of change, better able to face the future with confidence.

Evolving Trust, *Embracing* Change

Matthew Bishop
Journalist and Innovator

Today our world seems increasingly troubled. We are living in a time of "polycrisis," with the Covid-19 pandemic followed by unexpected high inflation, signs that climate change may now be hitting hard, and probably more misery of various kinds to come.

Violence and war, and the threat of both, are on the rise. Change is accelerating everywhere, a lot of it apparently for the worse – and even change that could potentially be hugely positive, such as the rolling out of new generations of Artificial Intelligence, brings with it possibly massive negative (maybe existential) consequences. So it is hardly surprising that in many countries the public's trust in mainstream leaders and key societal institutions is unusually low.

This may matter more in 2024 than in most years. Elections loom in many of the world's most significant democracies, including India, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, Britain (no later than January 2025) and, above all, the U.S. In each case, trust and distrust will play a crucial role. Will AI turbocharge the recent trend for fake news and targeted misinformation to drive mistrust and polarization? How much will efforts to weaken the public's trust in the operating systems of democracy influence voter behavior?

Above all, how will divisive populists who build trust in themselves by championing their own tribe while

demonizing outsiders (so-called "othering") fare against candidates seeking to build trust more broadly through policies that aim to unify voters, not divide them? The recent elections in Argentina and the Netherlands provide a stark reminder that a certain type of crowd-pleasing populist, promising to take a chainsaw to the political mainstream, can still win big.

How leaders can retain and build the sort of broad-based trust needed to successfully navigate massive geopolitical, economic and technological changes is the theme of this third annual collection of essays for the Edelman Trust Institute's, "Evolving Trust, Embracing Change." Much of the change now underway is unstoppable. But trusted leaders can help manage the process of change so that its upsides for humanity and the planet are maximized and the downsides are limited. As our essays show, our understanding of how to be a trustworthy leader in times of change is evolving rapidly, in very practical ways.

In politics, for example, unifying leaders should focus on rebuilding trust by repairing a social contract that in much of the world is badly broken, argues economist Eric Beinhocker. This is especially true where rising inequality and other evidence of unfairness has left a lot of people "feeling screwed." Crucially, these politicians must acknowledge that the social contract is indeed broken, if they are to channel the justifiable anger at that failure in more productive directions than the populists are doing. Focusing on finding instances where trust remains alive – more often at a state or local level than nationwide – and building on that is likely to work best, he argues.

If trust is low within countries, the world's multilateral governance system is trusted even less. The COP process, for example, is widely distrusted, not least because countries don't stick to their goals or provide transparent information on how they will reach them. But Brazil has an opportunity to restore trust in COP, as it prepares to host in the heart of the Amazon in 2025, argues Marina Grossi of the Brazilian Business Council for Sustainable Development. One big idea is that Brazil should showcase ways to simultaneously tackle climate change and deliver economic development, for instance by incentivizing local people to steward important carbon sinks, such as rainforests, rather than chop them down.

Consistent messaging is crucial to building trust. When the British government hosted global leaders at an Artificial Intelligence Safety Summit in November, it chose a symbolically perfect venue: Bletchley Park, where

cutting edge technology was deployed to break the secret codes of the Nazis and help the Allies to victory in the Second World War. But British prime minister Rishi Sunak undercut his own message of reassurance by conducting a fawning pre-summit on-stage interview with Elon Musk, regarded by many as exactly the sort of rampaging capitalist governments need to be tough on if AI is to be deployed safely. Days later, the farcical firing then rehiring of Sam Altman as chief executive of Open AI raised further questions about whether today's tech leaders, and the monied interests behind them, can be trusted to roll out this game-changing innovation in ways that produce positive benefits to humanity, rather than court catastrophe.

To get the AI rollout right, look to the decidedly mixed history of the Internet, which celebrates its 50th birthday next year, writes Mei Lin Fung. With "father of the Internet" Vint Cerf, she cofounded a non-profit, the People-Centered Internet, to refocus this world-changing technology less on just making money and more on making human life better. In the same spirit, she calls on governments and business to prioritize working together to ensure that AI benefits everyone, not least by closing the digital divide (which on current trends, AI seems likely to increase significantly). She also urges corporate leaders to tread carefully with AI. Time and again, she says, when a cool new technology breaks through, businesses mess

Photo by ALASTAIR GRANT/POOL/AFP via Getty Images

Delegates sit at a roundtable during a plenary session of the U.K. Artificial Intelligence Safety Summit at Bletchley Park, in central England, in November 2023.

Much of the change now underway is unstoppable. But trusted leaders can help manage the process of change so that its upsides for humanity and the planet are maximized and the downsides limited.

up by deploying it without really understanding it, often with negative consequences for employees, customers and shareholders alike.

Another new technology with huge potential benefits for humanity, but which also generates high levels of distrust, is mRNA-based drug innovation. This made a triumphant breakthrough during peak Covid-19 by delivering the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines. In his interview with me, Noubar Afeyan, the cofounder and chairman of Moderna, described Covid-19 as an unprecedented case study in how "with social media, mistrust can be weaponized." Given the high probability of future pandemics, and other global disasters, he says there is an urgent need for a serious effort to learn from the pandemic – what worked, what didn't – so that next time, a lack of preparedness, particularly by government, does not lead to further mistrust and chaos.

The pandemic added to a long-term fall in trust in the K-12 education system in many countries, as parents were frequently disappointed by the response of schools to the challenges posed by Covid-19. For many people, school is their most common exposure to the public sector, so declining trust in schools may be contributing significantly to lower trust in government more broadly. Policymakers would therefore do well to prioritize rebuilding trust in schools, argues Rebecca Winthrop of the Brookings Institution. This should include an overhaul of the curriculum to focus more on teaching the skills needed to thrive in the 21st Century; and a push to increase trust at the personal level between students, families and school staff, including training teachers to communicate better, especially with parents. "Longitudinal studies in the U.S. have shown that the existence of trusting relationships between communities and schools – namely school leaders, teachers, and families – makes it *ten times* more likely for a school to be improving students' outcomes across academic learning and socio-emotional wellbeing," she notes.

Several essays present accounts of the author's personal trust-building efforts. A fast-growing "trust-based philanthropy" movement aims to reverse long-established top-down power dynamics between charitable donors and beneficiaries. Zainab Salbi and Casey Rogers describe the many challenges they faced putting this into practice at Daughters for Earth, a new fund and movement launched with Jody Allen in 2022 to support women-led climate action. They were particularly struck by the extent to which, despite the best intentions, their foundation staff displayed a lot of unconscious distrust in the competence of the women on the frontlines to whom they were supposedly yielding decision-making authority. However, since they discovered ways to overcome this distrust, the power shift has gone well.

Margaret Talev, a veteran journalist who now leads Syracuse University's Institute for Democracy, Journalism & Citizenship, is working to build trust and reduce political polarization by helping people become better consumers of news and so avoid being manipulated by the agenda of any individual news provider. This is a task for everyone. "Yes, news organizations, governments, non-profit groups and schools and universities can and should organize media literacy and civic education and engagement efforts," she says. "But ensuring they really take requires creative and sustained involvement from major employers and people

Photo by Lev Radin/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

People bike and walk through smoke from Canadian wildfires in New York City in June 2023.

working in marketing, technology, professional sports, food, music, entertainment, and the military. And not just 'leaders' like CEOs, or ex-presidents, or Taylor Swift, or somebody else who isn't you."

As a precocious climate activist, Rena Kawasaki had developed a deep distrust of older people, especially Japanese business leaders, who she had criticized in a documentary calling out corporate greenwashing. This started to change when, at age 15, she was hired as the Chief Future Officer at Euglena, a Japanese biotech firm. Her work at the firm centered on transforming the corporate culture by fostering engagement between Gen Z people, like herself, and older colleagues. Later, the city government of Tokyo sought her help in engaging young people in policy discussions. In 2022, Kawasaki was awarded the International Children's Peace Prize for her work in bridging the generation gap.

Still only 18, Kawasaki is the sort of young leader who readily inspires trust. Fred Swaniker is currently training around 250,000 young leaders a year in Africa, through the three arms of his African Leadership Group that he has founded since 2004: the African Leadership Academy, African Leadership University and ALX. His goal is to equip them to "meet the global challenges posed by AI, climate change, geopolitical fracturing, and deep-rooted inequities in health and wealth."

The key to this, he says, is showing future leaders how to "put building and maintaining trust at the core of their mission," particularly in order to make a difference at scale. Being trustworthy is crucial to running a big organization like African Leadership Group and Sand Technologies, the for-profit AI business he is now growing. Swaniker expects Sand to have 1 million employees in Africa within 15 years and over $40 billion in revenue, a good part of which will be used to train many more trustworthy African leaders.

Other parts of the world would do well to copy this bold African innovation. Ambition on this scale offers us all some welcome grounds for optimism as a pivotal new year begins in unpromising circumstances. We desperately need leaders willing to find more convincing ways to inspire our trust. We hope this collection of essays will at least give them some practical ideas.

Trust After *Covid-19:* A CEO's Lessons

Dr. Noubar Afeyan

Cofounder & Chairman,
Moderna and Founder & CEO,
Flagship Pioneering

Noubar Afeyan, Cofounder & Chairman of Moderna and Founder & CEO of Flagship Pioneering, discusses how trust intersects with Covid-19, drugs, innovation, capitalism and more with Matthew Bishop.

Matthew Bishop: Moderna was one of the firms to develop an effective vaccine against Covid-19, which you might think would increase trust. Yet there are some signs that as the pandemic eased, the public's trust in vaccines declined. What do you make of that?

Noubar Afeyan: One of the interesting things the Covid-19 pandemic brought to light is the degree to which trust is influenced by context. For example, when you're desperate, you tend to trust more, because you're desperate to get out of the situation you're in. Then when you're no longer desperate, you start using rationality and introducing doubt, especially when you don't really understand the topic. To me, trust is a way in which we can act without having all the information. Because if you have the necessary information to act, then why do you need to rely on trust? Trust is a subconscious way to propel yourself, even though you don't have all the information needed to make decisions or act.

In that regard, in the early stages of Covid-19, people were forced into the state of mind that most allowed them to act without a lot of information, in other words to place trust in the advice of experts. Yet as the pandemic continued, there were countervailing forces, including the way most governments acted and wanted to look like they knew what

was going on and that they were in control. They would make pronouncements one day to do this, the next day to do the opposite, and as their stories were changing, people started worrying and thinking they shouldn't be quite as trusting in that moment, even if they were desperate. That contributed to the short-lived nature of trust in so-called experts on the pandemic, which was on top of the conscious kind of anti-vax sentiment or anti-science sentiment that existed pre-pandemic.

This was the first mass health challenge in the age of social media, and we got to see how that can amplify misinformation. When people were living in their own microcosms, it would have been hard to spread this level of mistrust. But with social media, mistrust can be weaponized.

MB: Thinking about the risk of future pandemics, what lessons are there about how to win or retain public trust?

NA: It's still too early to judge whether lessons have been learned. So far, I think we're in a mode where people have wanted to forget the pandemic and the widespread pain and suffering and dislocation it caused as quickly as possible. I don't really see a sufficient effort to recognize what worked, what didn't work.

I'm unaware of governments that are trying to hold themselves truly accountable for how the pandemic was handled, let alone hold various other constituencies accountable. Because nobody is going to come out looking all that good.

Still, I'm hopeful that there will be learnings with the passage of a little bit of time. We need to find the courage to go back and revisit this and decide to do certain things differently. Especially because this pandemic was just a dry run for many further pandemics, whether they're infectious disease borne or climate-driven or something else. The extent to which governments are not ready to deal with those is going to be a further basis for mistrust and chaos.

MB: Did governments do anything particularly well that we can learn from?

NA: The most positive thing that was done, at least in the vaccine space, was the relatively early-on assembling of what became Operation Warp Speed, which was a kind of a private-public partnership to enable action in the face of uncertainty. The key to this approach was how it created optionality, as opposed to picking winners — backing six alternative vaccine approaches, many of which had never before been scaled, and systematically facilitating them,

financially, logistically and in clinical execution, by eliminating barriers, including the regulator becoming part of the solution.

All of those things are positive lessons, and it would be a shame for us to forget because parties changed and elections happened. Operation Warp Speed is probably the single most successful thing that was done anywhere, maybe comparable to the U.K.'s rapid establishment of its large-scale diagnostic infrastructure that allowed the tracing of the evolution of the virus and its prevalence.

MB: What about trust in science, which also seems to be declining alarmingly?

NA: In scientific circles, they're talking about that. But unfortunately, what they're doing is lamenting the distrust in science. I think it's a bit more complicated.

Non-scientists usually have to trust in scientists in order to act, as they don't have the expertise that scientists have. But when you're confronted with unknowns, then actually, there's a limit to the trust you can place in experts, because of what they too don't know.

That's essentially the situation we found ourselves in at the start of the pandemic. As a society, we're going to find ourselves in that situation again and again, with climate

U.S. Department of Defense photo by Lisa Ferdinando

Navy Petty Officer Second Class Blythe Turney receives a Covid-19 vaccine in front of an Operation Warp Speed sign at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in December 2020.

and other calamitous things where people are going to want the experts to know more than they actually do, so they can trust and rely upon what they are saying.

There's a tendency, I'd say, for experts to feel like they need to say things that sound like expertise, regardless of whether they know the topic or not. And that unfortunately fosters mistrust.

I really do think that experts would do better to say, "Look, I don't know, but here's what we're going to do to try to find out, and as soon as we do, we're going to tell you that." As opposed to saying, "It's going to take four years to develop a vaccine," which is what most experts said. In that context, the person who says, "How about six months?" looks untrustworthy, even though actually the assertion of four years was purely based on a historic knowledge that was not applicable to the situation we were in. For instance, one of the reasons vaccines typically took four years to develop is the long testing process. Yet during a pandemic, you can find 30,000 people to sign up to a trial in weeks. In a pandemic, you can actually go more quickly for reasons like that, without skirting regulatory corners.

MB: So experts need more humility and more nuance?

NA: The funny part is that I view science as being about the unknown, whereas most people think of science as being about the known. If you're a scientist, you're supposed to excavate the boundaries of the unknown. Science is built on hypotheses, which are essentially made-up extensions of the current art. You should never trust a hypothesis. Right? You just need to do the experiment.

MB: During the pandemic, what could you personally have done differently to help address trust concerns?

NA: Probably, we over-focused on just doing our job. Several hundred people were working essentially 24 hours a day for months and months, just trying to do a heroic act — not to be heroes, but rather, to defy the odds. And I don't know that we spent enough time thinking about how this is going to be accepted by societies, by governments, and what we could do to better anticipate, for example, the issue of inequity of vaccine access. That probably was a foreseeable challenge for us. But since we were a startup, and we'd never developed anything, let alone a vaccine, let alone for a pandemic, it was not in the first instance top of mind.
Had it been, we would have recognized that major governments had essentially signed contracts that made it impossible for us to ensure

vaccine equity. Then we would have been able to say upfront, "We'll sign the contracts, but you have to take on the responsibility of distributing these vaccines to other places, otherwise, it's going to blow back at us." We lost some of our brand value, unnecessarily, when we were attacked for not supplying vaccines to various low- and middle-income countries at a time when we were bound by contracts to send all our supply within the U.S. and EU.

MB: Related to that is the allegation of profiteering, that in pharma you are all being paid too much for doing this work.

NA: I view that as kind of an indictment of the entire system, not just our manifestation of it. There's a baseline amount of distrust in capitalism, the way it works. In and of itself, capitalism can be a basis of mistrust because ultimately people are giving you investment dollars in order to create breakthroughs and generate high returns for them and, in fact, for society. If the government paid for all this, and took all the risk, then it could decide how to price it and there would be no concern about that. But we raised and invested a billion dollars of private capital, before the government gave us resources for this project. And we spent it alongside the government's money.

MB: Did the pandemic make the case for changing intellectual property rules?

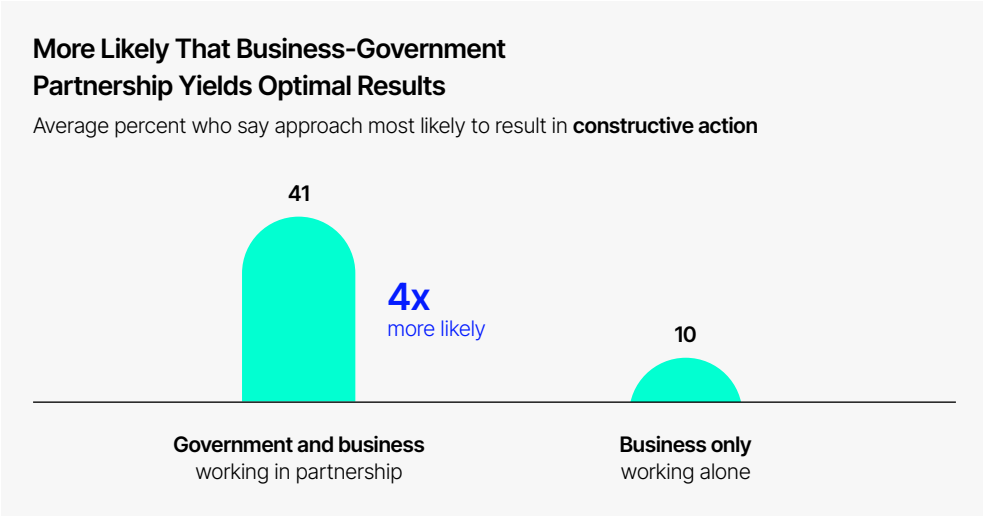


Fig. 1: 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer
25-country average

NA: In October 2020, before we had a vaccine that was known to work in a phase-three trial, we announced that we would not enforce our patents on mRNA used for a COVID vaccine while the pandemic lasted. Why did we do that? Nobody asked us to do that. There was no World Health Organization calls related to IP at the time. We just voluntarily adopted, as a matter of principle, a policy of not enforcing our patents during that period because we felt it would help us all fight the pandemic. What drove us was our concern about equity and about trust, in order to maintain our license to operate. If you're creating a totally new technology, a totally new thing, it behooves you to maintain that license to operate. In this case, however, people didn't focus on what we did for the longest time. Even the WHO came to us and said, "Would you agree a year later to make the technology available?" And we replied, "We've already promised we're not going to enforce our patents."

MB: You gave a speech earlier this year about artificial intelligence and the way that it can really accelerate innovation. But can we trust AI?

NA: AI is a lot of different things. One of them is that machine learning AI can be quite good at pattern recognition, and can make good medical diagnoses, even though we don't quite know how these algorithms actually work. Yes, like humans, AI can make mistakes — though actually fewer mistakes than humans. But in the case of humans, we can fault the human. In the case of a machine, we don't have a human to fault. I think the lack of trust comes from that: not that the algorithm is less reliable, but that it is less accountable.

We need to separate out different aspects of AI and understand where the fear is coming from. The most recent generative AI is by its name generative, which means that it's creating new things. That, too, is something that humans do, creating things that have made up stuff in them. It's called imagination. Yet when an AI does it, we say it's hallucinating.

I view much of AI as just augmented human intelligence. The version of AI that replaces humans is a different matter. Then accountability is the key question. Think about military use. I can assure you that the military can use AI to do phenomenal targeting, differently than it's ever been able to do. Because no human can deal with the kind of complexity of data that we're gathering. But they still want somebody to be held accountable for a decision – and rightly so. The issue is not the trustworthiness of the technology, per se. Trust issues arise from the way it's being offered to

you. Because if it's taking a human out, now you have nobody to blame.

MB: You have developed your own theory about when trust is needed, and when it isn't.

NA: I look at trust between people and between organizations as a temporary replacement of alignment. What I mean by that is if we have time to align, to exchange facts, to share common goals, so that we can do something together, some form of cooperation, then I don't need trust. I've done the work needed to align so trust is unnecessary. If I don't have time to do that, or the means to do that, or if we can't speak the same language or have the same level of expertise on the subject needed to align, then I need trust. But that should only be temporary. If trust replaces alignment, I think that's a very dangerous thing. Because then you never try to figure out how to get aligned. You might be super misaligned, yet you're trusting each other. That situation could easily go wrong.

I find in our own work, that at the speed we go at, the number of things we have to do in parallel and the level of uncertainty we face, trust is a good thing to use in the short term. But alignment is much better to create cooperation.

The whole notion of "trust, but verify" I think stems from what I'm saying, because verify is the way you achieve after-the-fact alignment. If

Photo from Flagship Pioneering

Noubar Afeyan in the lab at Flagship-founded Inari with the company's leadership team in 2023.

I need trust, temporarily, to give me enough time to go verify, then that's OK. Verification is passive alignment. Active alignment is discussion, actually sharing goals and saying, "We agree, I want to go here, you want to go here. We're going to go there. We're aligned."

Yes, I have to trust that you're not going to change your mind. But that's a different level of trust than that when we don't even know where we're going.

MB: In this time of massive change, how do we build alignment so we don't have to rely on trust so much?

NA: For one thing, I believe these massive societal changes we are facing, or going to face, need involvement by governments, not in a dictating way, but rather, in a really collaborative way, where the goal of achieving the end result supersedes questions of who's got the power and who gets to tell who what to do.

Sure, governments can regulate and through that insinuate themselves into anything they want. But that's a coarse tool for achieving alignment. It's alignment by fear of being shut down.

The better path to alignment is what happened with Warp Speed. Nobody had to trust Moderna, nor were we trusting the government. We just had a mechanism by which we could align our interests, align the value that we would receive if we delivered, align on how we could clear out all the obstacles. We acted more confidently and were willing to take greater risks because we were aligned.

Something similar could be done to tackle challenges such as climate and food security. In climate, however, this isn't happening because governments are unwilling to set a price for removing carbon from the atmosphere. Until they do that, you cannot achieve alignment. Innovators need certainty of what it is they're innovating towards, yet instead, in the case of carbon, they have to embrace massive uncertainty due to the possibility it's never worth much. If there was a price, there would be so much more innovation.

Mistrust arises because there's no mechanism to cause alignment. I think we can create mechanisms to do this. And we should, especially because in our world of one crisis after another, people have to eliminate mistrust to be able to fight against crises.

MB: So we need to put those alignment mechanisms in place?

NA: Yes. I think alignment is a way to cope with either a lack of trust or an absence of trust and still act. And it's

Alignment is a way to cope with either a lack of trust or an absence of trust and still act. And it's also a way to achieve trust.

also a way to achieve trust. Because once you are aligned, then trust is a luxury. You know you don't need it, but you brought it along anyway. A spare tire in a car.

To me, trust is faith in the other. The less you know about the other, the less the other is aligned with you, and the more you are going on blind faith.

Making *AI* Work for Everyone

Mei Lin Fung
Cochair & Cofounder,
People-Centered Internet

The sudden rise of Artificial Intelligence worries many people, for plenty of reasons. Some fret about truly existential challenges, like that AIs might start developing consciousness and even turn on their human creators. My concern is more here and now.

I worry that, once again, business leaders are rushing to show they are cutting edge by deploying a technology they barely understand.

I've seen this movie before. As one of the early pioneers of Customer Relationship Management 30 years ago, I have closely tracked CRM and subsequent rollouts of innovative digital technologies – which has all too often been done in ways that have had harmful consequences. I was one of those who watched with horror in 2016 when the CEO of Wells Fargo was confronted in Congress with the "cross-selling scandal." The bank paid billions in fines and endured substantial reputational damage that continues until now. Much of that was enabled by the disastrous use of the CRM technology I helped invent at Oracle.

Right now, the consensus among the bosses of business, especially in Silicon Valley and other centers, is that AI's long-awaited moment has arrived. But too often, when new tech gets installed before the people in charge really understand it, they flail about, trying to figure out exactly how

it will improve their company's operations, sales or service. More importantly, for the rest of society, they also don't know how to think ahead about the risks that innovations can be used for evil, illegal or harmful purposes.

I have too often heard CEOs make jargon-laden endorsements of new technology to signal they are on the cutting edge. Leaders then found themselves on the "bleeding edge" with the crash of the "dot-com" boom in 2000 and the Great Recession in 2008. I have seen first-hand the damaging effects on cash flow in companies up through the Fortune 500 and the subsequent layoffs due to betting on technology with high hopes and insufficient concern for the unforeseen consequences.

Right now, bosses feel tremendous pressure from shareholders and their peers to have a cool, future-forward AI strategy. These are fertile conditions for needless and thoughtless technology adoption, with potentially large negative consequences for employees, customers and shareholders alike.

CEOs and political leaders can constructively engage with customers and citizens – and tech companies – to find clear positive uses for AI with truly concrete benefits. Indeed, it may be helpful to think of AI less as artificial intelligence than as augmented human intelligence. Rather than getting carried away by the seemingly unlimited, almost mystical and yet all too often imprecise, transformational power of this technology, leaders should focus on identifying specific ways in which it can improve things for humans.

Too often such technologies are deployed "top-down" with disastrous or unfortunate consequences. So another piece of advice is to take practical steps to balance that tendency by engaging stakeholders in the AI rollout from the beginning, bottom-up. More fundamentally, those deploying AI must learn from how previous phases of the digital revolution went wrong in crucial ways.

Next year the Internet turns 50. In many respects, it has brought huge benefits to the world – especially in democratizing connectivity and access to knowledge. Yet, especially in this last decade since its 40th birthday, the way it evolved has had terribly destructive side-effects for our societies. These range from severe mental health effects (especially for teenage girls) to the pernicious spread of misinformation and consequential social polarization, which is now undermining trust in important institutions, especially in democracies.

A decade ago, with Vint Cerf, one of the original fathers of the Internet,

I cofounded an organization called the People-Centered Internet (PCI). It aims to address these downsides and ensure we achieve the people-centered vision that was central to the non-commercial Internet at its origin, when it organically spread from university to university, from country to country, animated by a central intrinsic presumption: that anyone anywhere can participate in shaping a better future.

Our mission at PCI has been to work to deliver an Internet that works for the people and with the people, not against them and without them. The rise of AI makes this ever more urgent. The remarkable power that AI has to process and learn carries the potential to make the downsides far worse. Vint and I are now partnered with Jascha Stein, an expert in AI and psychology, to expand PCI's mission beyond the Internet to a People-Centered AI and digital future.

Done right, in an inclusive, people-centered, energy-efficient way, the strengths of AI and other digital technology can help enable us to reverse the widening digital divide and enable a thriving society and flourishing planet. We are not pessimistic about AI's power, only about how it is overseen and managed: PCI served as the chair of Digital Regulation for the UN General Assembly Science Summit in 2023 and will be cochair for 2024.

One priority should be to ensure equality of access to AI. Under the next generation leadership of 40-year old Jascha Stein, PCI and its partners are launching a global campaign that promotes the importance of peoples' participation, entitled "Without You, the Future of the Internet and AI will be Lost." Greater digital equity can be achieved by designing applications that usefully augment our social and human intelligence, like population and precision health and learning. AI

Tech CEOs Seen As Lacking Societal Leadership

Percent who agree

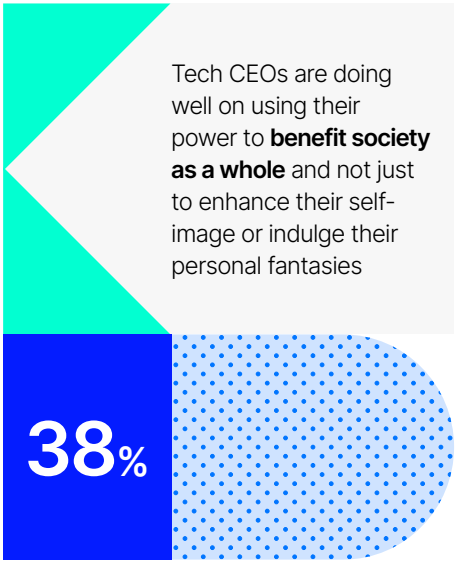


Fig. 2: 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust in Technology
15-country average

It may be helpful to think of AI less as artificial intelligence than as augmented human intelligence. Rather than getting carried away by the seemingly unlimited, almost mystical and yet all too often imprecise, transformational power of this technology, leaders should focus on identifying specific ways in which it can improve things for humans.

can help the whole world be healthier and better educated affordably. But we need to ensure these tools are available all over the world via mobile phones (and not just the newest, smartest ones). If AI can be deployed while demonstrating clearly how it can benefit humanity, that will increase trust both in this incredible technology and in the businesses that deploy it well.

AI support for multilingual access to services is a great example of

Photo by Mario Tama/Getty Images

A Writers Guild of America member holds a sign that reads "Humanity vs. AI" during a strike outside the Warner Bros. Studio in Burbank, California in August 2023.

expanding services and markets with the help of AI. Forward-looking companies are engaging their employees and customers in fine-tuning context-sensitive language translation. In the process, they gain greater insight into customer intentions and needs.

I recently visited Bangladesh, which introduced the critical and much-needed concept of #ZeroDigitalDivide to the United Nations General Assembly in September of this year. Bangladesh is harnessing digital tech to set a clear path to becoming a middle-income country. For trust to reverse its decline at the highest level, the divide between digital haves and have-nots must be bridged, and Bangladesh is showing us a pathway to do it.

For instance, Google with a2i in Bangladesh worked on an AI flood forecasting initiative called FloodHub. It tracks how rivers ebb and flow, as well as tide anomalies, and can give local authorities early warnings. The system has already enabled up to 40 million people to take prompt action-for collective evacuation. It also aids the protection of water resources.

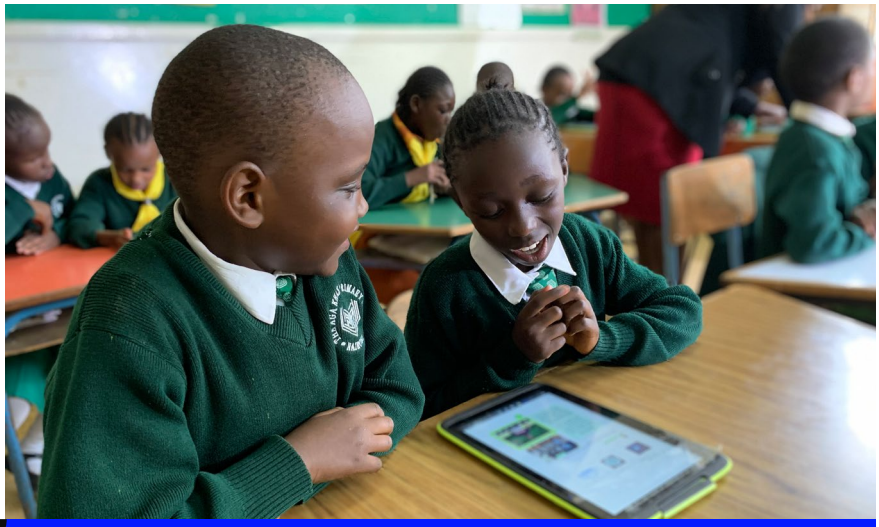
Second, society at large must be deliberately engaged in the debates and discussion about how to deploy AI, and in providing feedback on how it is rolled out. The giant platform companies have in-house processes for running thousands of parallel experiments daily. By sharing their approaches for use in shared public and private data cooperatives, their processes, tests and procedures could make a huge positive difference in how we design, implement and adapt technology and AI that serves people and planet.

The rise of AI makes even clearer the need for greater transparency of use and broader stakeholder governance of data and experimentation, giving a meaningful say to users and the broader community, not just to providers. At the People-Centered Internet, we call these strategies "community learning and living labs" where data cooperatives benefit science.

Models of such labs exist in other parts of the economy and could be adapted to democratize the rollout of AI to ensure a more people-centered AI. In the U.S., for example, there are Federally Qualified Health Centers in 10,000 locations. These centers work together in Breakthrough Collaboratives to improve the quality of community health. In the European Union, leaders are convening Citizens Panels to engage public participation in understanding and meeting the challenges of online disinformation with tools for content verification and for empowering people to become active creators of trustworthy information.

Such community learning and living labs require the enthusiastic participation of the businesses that are developing and deploying AI. All those innovative startups and hard-charging Fortune 500 companies require digital public infrastructure in order to do their business. Engaging in such community-centric initiatives would be one way of paying back the favor. Tech companies often say they are serious about stakeholder capitalism. This is a way to show they mean it. Any other approach would simply continue the old profit-maximizing, shareholder-centric model that has caused so many problems until now.

Advances in digital public infrastructure (DPI) in the wake of Covid-19 add up to one of the biggest business opportunities in generations. It is fueled by an ongoing surge of investment in digital transformation by the nations of the G7 and G20 and supported by lots of lending in emerging economies by the World Bank, the IMF, other multilateral development banks and the United Nations Development Program. At the AI+DPI Summit in Bangladesh, the opportunities highlighted included: India's Unified Payments Interface, which facilitates 12 billion transactions monthly, and Indonesia's digital identity system, which has reduced registration time at 6,000 financial institutions from 60 to five minutes. In Uganda, the Accessible Digital Textbook developed with UNICEF helped hundreds of children with disabilities to graduate



Julie de Barbeyrac, 2019, for UNICEF

Two deaf students learn through a sign language video from an Accessible Digital Textbook at the Aga Khan School in Nairobi, Kenya.

For trust to reverse its decline at the highest level, the divide between digital haves and have-nots must be bridged.

from primary school. India's Open Network for eCommerce expanded to 230 cities and added 36,000 merchants in the first year.

If we manage this right and deploy it alongside systems of public participation and stakeholder input, such spending will enable the world to avoid potentially costly mistakes. It will help generate trust among the public that in the long-run AI will be a force for good. And what better year to launch this new approach to governance than 2024, as we celebrate the Internet's 50th birthday?

Want to Become a Master of Scale? First Build *Trust*

Fred Swaniker

Founder & CEO,
African Leadership Group
& Sand Technologies

I've spent my career building leaders. Growing up in Africa, a continent rich in resources — not least in its human capital — but plagued by weak institutions, I soon came to believe that even one good leader could make a huge difference.

To meet the continent's dire need for better leadership, I founded the African Leadership Academy with several colleagues, based on a plan that a team and I hatched in 2004 as students at Stanford Business School. Ten years later, this two-year university preparatory program outside Johannesburg was joined by the African Leadership University — which is now 10 times the size of the Academy and will be 100 times bigger in the next five years. Three years ago, we scaled up yet again with a hybrid learning organization called ALX, which offers a mix of in-person and online learning to train software engineers across eight countries.

As a result, an organization that started by reaching just 250 students a year now trains 250,000 of them annually. Overall, we aim to create 3 million new African leaders by 2035. And these will be leaders with a strong sense of purpose. Rather than choosing a major, students at our African Leadership University choose a personal mission from 14 "grand challenges" or "great opportunities," ranging from urbanization and healthcare to agriculture and empowering women. At ALX we insist our software engineers complete a four-to-eight-month leadership foundations program before they even begin learning to code. This module helps ensure they have the critical problem-solving

and communication skills, as well as the ethics and values that effective future leaders at every level require. Most importantly, we ensure all our young leaders graduate into good jobs in the private and public sectors or create their own paths as for-profit and social-impact entrepreneurs.

What are the broader lessons from this journey so far? Radically reimagine solutions to seemingly intractable problems and deploy the right technology at speed in order to grow. Such principles, which have been critical to our success, will be essential for anyone trying to meet the global challenges posed by AI, climate change, geopolitical fracturing and deep-rooted inequities in health and wealth.

But what I've also come to realize is that to drive and manage change at scale, leaders must put building and maintaining trust at the core of their mission. There are at least four ways this trust equation has played out in our ecosystem.

1. Large organizations run on trust.

In today's world the most effective big enterprises try to push decision-making down as close as possible to the front lines. For leaders, that requires a huge amount of trust in your people. This is especially so when you are hyper-scaling across multiple locations. With enrollment soaring by almost 500,000 percent in three years, we opened 29 campuses in just four months. Given our increasingly virtual world, and with multiple sites operating at once, I could no longer walk around and see what was going on. I had to lead differently — I had to learn to trust. So I replaced an all-powerful 12-person executive committee with a smaller four-person executive committee. We empowered 40 entrepreneurial leaders below Exco and pushed almost all day-to-day decision-making down. In such a structure, a strongly held

Radically reimagine solutions to seemingly intractable problems and deploy the right technology at speed in order to grow. Such principles, which have been critical to our success, will be essential for anyone trying to meet the global challenges posed by AI, climate change, geopolitical fracturing and deep-rooted inequities in health and wealth.

common purpose helps provide the foundation for the trust that such delegation requires.

2. Great data systems verify trust for all stakeholders.

Radical transparency is the essential enabler of a decentralized cross-border operation. Real-time digital dashboards give me as CEO a clear window into how every piece of our ecosystem is performing on an hourly basis. Transparency also builds trust with stakeholders. To track progress on our 2030 employment goal, we have built a real-time digital dashboard with detailed daily breakdowns of where our graduates are getting jobs, at what levels, with what pay and much more. We are now using this system to provide our funders and other key stakeholders with a dynamic, transparent view of our impact.

3. In-person engagement is an essential trust-builder in a hybrid world.

Coming out of the pandemic, we have all had to learn to work and trust each other in virtual settings. But interactions over screens still can't replace the deep connections, the tacit knowledge and the cultural bonds forged during in-person meetings. To mimic the "water cooler effect" that existed when we all worked in office environments, we put a premium on gathering our top leadership every quarter for seven to 10 days at one of our campuses.

Photo from Fred Swaniker's archive

Fred Swaniker speaks to students at an African Leadership University campus.

Here we exchange ideas, meet stakeholders and students and build the kind of trust that only face-to-face encounters can foster.

4. Social media is critical to earning trust from the rising generation of workers.

A few years ago, a young Gen Zer, gave me some candid feedback: "If we don't see you on social media, we can't trust you." It made sense. Long ago, I could meet all the 250 students at our first academy in the auditorium and let them hear me or ask questions, as I tried to share my vision and values. I could walk the halls of the office and see my management team. Now that's impossible. But social media — and for me that's mainly LinkedIn posts for content and Instagram for images — offers an effective channel for projecting authenticity and transparency, both to the broader world and to my primary audience, which is my staff and students. It helps underscore, as another young staffer put it, that "there is no gap between what you say you are doing and what we see you actually doing."

Two years ago, we opened the latest chapter in African Leadership Group's ongoing story: We bought a small technology company in Silicon Valley, plus two others in Romania and the U.K., and created a for-profit entity called Sand Technologies. We're already employing a number of graduates from ALX at Sand and

Photo by Per-Anders Pettersson/Getty Images

Joseph Munyambanza, a student from the Democratic Republic of Congo, gets ready for the inaugural African Leadership Academy graduation ceremony in June 2010.

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developing AI-based solutions for European insurers, British utilities and a number of industrial clients around the world. We're also deploying the same trust-building techniques that we honed in our non-profit endeavors. Prospective clients who want to feel and touch the goods, for example, can visit one of our eight capability hubs in Africa, among them a state-of-the-art real-time Health Intelligence Center we have built for one of our clients.

Our 15-year goal with Sand is to create a company with over $40 billion in revenue and 1 million employees. Doing that would make us one of Africa's largest employers. But we would still account for just a fraction of the 595 million jobs the continent will need to generate to ensure prosperity for its soaring young population by 2050. That's why the real impact at scale, we believe, will come from our ability to funnel part of the earnings we generate back into subsidizing even more training and education for the millions of future leaders in business, government and civil society that our ecosystem aspires to produce.

Leaders can only create the future solutions our change-driven world requires by mastering scale. And they can only master scale if they also build trust.

Trust, Populism and the Psychology of Broken *Contracts*

Eric Beinhocker

Professor of Public Policy Practice at the Blavatnik School of Government and Executive Director of the Institute for New Economic Thinking at the Oxford Martin School, University of Oxford

For 23 years, the Edelman Trust Barometer has studied public trust in key institutions around the world. While levels of trust have ebbed and flowed year to year, over the last few years there has been a worrying decline in faith by the citizens of many countries that institutions, including government and the media, are doing what is right.

In parallel, over the past decade there has been a sharp rise in political populism — particularly authoritarian populism rooted in racial, ethnic, national or religious identities — in countries as seemingly different as the U.S., Brazil, India, Turkey, Hungary and the Netherlands.

Many explanations have been offered for this lack of trust and rise in populism: economic dislocation, demographic shifts, immigration and, of course, the growth of social media. All have certainly played a role. But given the diversity of societies affected, it begs the question of whether there might be a deeper, more universal explanation. Recent research suggests there is: When human beings feel their sense of fairness is violated — or to put it more crudely, when they feel "screwed" — they react in ways that seem on the surface to be irrational and even harmful to themselves and their societies. But

these highly emotional, seemingly irrational reactions have an underlying logic to them.

To understand why the emotions of fairness violation may be playing a role in shaping politics and society today, we need to begin by looking into our ancestral past. Humans are among the most cooperative and social species on the planet. As Harvard evolutionary biologist Martin Nowak puts it, we are "super cooperators." Throughout our history, individual survival was often tied to group survival, so our species evolved strong instincts to initiate and sustain cooperation. Those instincts have a positive side, what researchers call "prosocial behaviors," such as generosity, reciprocity and the desire to build trust in relationships. But they also have a dark side. When people feel they have been cooperative and contributed, but others have not played their part and have instead been free riders who lie, cheat and take advantage of the nice cooperators, they then react with a sense of moral outrage and a desire to punish those who have violated cooperative norms.

In fact, experiments show that people are willing to dish out punishments that are more costly to themselves than any possible benefit. We see this not just in the lab but in the real world. Consider acrimonious lawsuits or divorce cases where the aggrieved parties sue each other into financial oblivion. While standard economic theory might say such behavior is "irrational," it makes sense from an evolutionary perspective. When people go a bit crazy and dish out punishments that are costly for themselves, they are in effect taking one for the team and helping enforce norms of cooperation for the group as a whole. Researchers call this "altruistic punishment," and it means that potential cheaters and free riders pay a higher cost for their bad behavior than if every individual was strictly "rational." Further experiments show that without altruistic punishment, free-riding and cheating go up, and it is very hard for groups to establish and sustain cooperation.

Another common reaction when people feel fairness is violated is to team up with other people who feel cheated as well. If cooperation is broadly breaking down, it makes sense to seek out people like yourself, who you can trust, and fight back together against the perceived violators. In history, the notion of "people like me" has often meant people who share some common identity (e.g., ethnic, religious, regional, cultural). So, when larger-scale societal cooperation breaks down, identity-based tribalism often goes up.

Before the advent of agriculture around 10,000 years ago, cooperation

happened mostly in groups ranging from a dozen to 150 or so individuals, mostly of kin, near kin and others with close, personal bonds. By contrast, our 21st century world is predicated on complex, large-scale cooperation among "strangers." Firms, markets, global supply chains, governmental bodies, religious communities, cultural organizations and many other groups consist of thousands or even millions of people cooperating toward shared ends, most of whom will never meet. Instead of personal bonds, in modern societies we rely on institutions, ranging from informal norms and codes of conduct to formal structures, such as the law, government, business and civil society, to help build trust and cooperation. However, as the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer shows, with the exception of business, key societal institutions are not trusted or seen as competent. It is thus not surprising that we have seen a rise in identity-based politics and inter-group conflict, as well as the heightened emotions that come with it.

This fraying of trust in institutions eats away at the core of what political philosophers and social scientists call the "social contract." Such a "contract" implies a two-way mutuality of commitments: An individual voluntarily aligns their behaviors with the interests of a collective, agrees to contribute effort and resources toward shared goals and submits to being governed by social arrangements enforced by the group, in

Photo by Matthew Hatcher/AFP via Getty Images

Members of the United Auto Workers picket outside the Michigan Parts Assembly Plant in Wayne, Michigan during a strike.

exchange for the collective providing some set of benefits in return. These benefits are made possible by the gains generated from large-scale cooperation. In theory, everybody gains more from submitting to a social contract than they ever could realize by acting on their own.

But here's where fairness again comes into play. A core claim of social contract theory is that individuals who voluntarily submit to being governed by such arrangements must by definition view them as fair and legitimate — or at least "fair enough." When they do not, the response is to either withdraw their cooperation or only submit to collective governance when made to do so. Examples of responses to feelings of a broken contract include disengaging from politics and refusing to vote, refusing to pay taxes, political protests, labor strikes, disengagement at work, increased corruption ("If everyone else is doing it, why shouldn't I?") and conflicts with groups perceived to be doing the contract-breaking (e.g., governments, political parties, big business, media, elites generally). Much of the discord we see today is symptomatic of feelings of broken contracts.

Divisiveness Takes Over

Percent who say their country is
more divided today than in the past

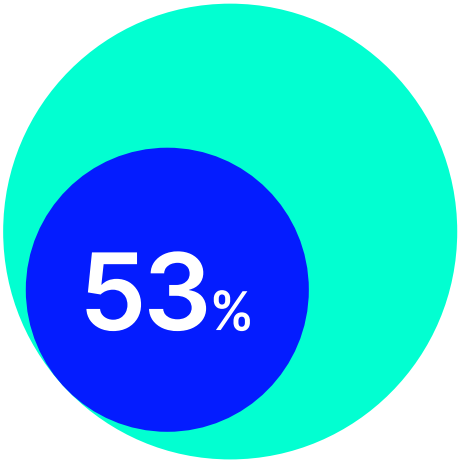

Fig. 3: 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer
25-country average

The final piece of the puzzle is getting clear on what we mean by "fairness." While the evidence is somewhat circumstantial, people's perceptions of fairness in social arrangements seem to anchor around three dimensions: process fairness, relational fairness and distributional fairness. Imagine you are a child on a playground playing a game. The game seems fair if we're all included, all know the rules, all follow the rules and the rules are equally enforced. That's process fairness. And conversely, a game that doesn't have those characteristics would be perceived as unfair.

Relational fairness captures how the players interact with each other. If everyone is contributing, playing their roles to the best of their abilities, working well together as a team and

sharing in the benefits of the game, then that's fair. And if hierarchies on the team are based on merit and help everyone achieve their shared goal, that too is fair (e.g., the team captain is the best player). Again conversely, if some players are shirking, not cooperating, free riding and hogging all the glory, then that's not fair. And if the coach takes a bribe and appoints the worst player captain, that's not fair either. Relational fairness thus tends to anchor around feelings of reciprocity, trustworthiness and deservedness.

Finally, distributional fairness refers to whether we perceive the outcomes of the game as fair. If the game process is fair and relations between the players are fair, then we expect the outcome will be fair too. We will accept the score of the game. And again, the converse is true. If we think the process is bad and relations between players are unfair, we will not trust the outcome to be fair.

But exactly what constitutes a fair outcome — and specifically whether an equal or unequal outcome is fair — depends on the nature of the game. For example, if the game is a room full of people flipping coins, we would say a highly equal outcome, where most people flipped roughly half heads and half tails, was fair. And if one person flipped an extremely improbable sequence of heads, we would suspect that person of cheating. But on the other hand, if the game was a 100-meter running race pitting random people against world record holder Usain Bolt, we would expect a highly unequal outcome. And if everyone crossed the line at the same time, we would suspect the race was rigged and unfair. So, it is possible for either equal or unequal outcomes to be perceived as fair — it depends on the nature of the game and people's expectations.

In the game of the economy, people don't expect equal outcomes. They know that people have different levels of skills, creativity, drives to work hard and other attributes that influence economic success. So, in judging whether it is fair that someone is very rich when lots of other people are very poor (a distributional outcome), people will typically ask questions about how that rich person made their money

Exactly what constitutes a fair outcome — and specifically whether an equal or unequal outcome is fair — depends on the nature of the game.

(procedural fairness) and how they treated people along the way (relational fairness). Likewise, people will look at distributional outcomes as a signal of procedural or relational unfairness — e.g., if people expect modest levels of economic inequality but then things rise to robber baron levels, they will start to suspect that wealthy people are rigging the system and abusing their power.

Which brings us back to today's discord and unrest. There is growing evidence that people believe our society's economic and political games are unfair, that their social contracts as workers, consumers, voters and citizens have been broken. There's not much Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders agree on, but one belief they and their supporters share is that the system is "rigged."

These widespread perceptions of a broken contract have roots in reality. In the U.S. and other countries since the 1980s, worker productivity has gone up significantly, but the gains of those productivity increases have not flowed into worker wages, going instead into the pockets of the wealthiest 10 percent. Likewise, economic security for many families has declined, with more volatile employment and income, less health and retirement security, higher costs for housing, childcare, college and other pillars of middle-class life, and more families are just one missed paycheck away from disaster. According to a 2023 Pew Research Center poll,

Photo by Gideon Mendel/Corbis via Getty Images

Children at Marner Primary School in London jump rope during their playtime. Playground games illustrate our strong instincts for fairness.

only 23 percent of those surveyed said the economic system "is generally fair to most Americans."

If the economic contract has been broken, then the political contract in many countries has been shredded. Political scientists have documented how the political systems of the U.S. and other democratic countries have become less responsive to voter concerns and more captured by special interests. Combined with scandals, corruption, perceptions of incompetence and a media environment that feeds off outrage, it's no wonder voters have lost faith in the elites who govern them. And while those feelings began to grow several decades ago, they have been amplified by traumatic events such as the 2008 global financial crises and Covid-19.

Populist politicians exploit this broken contract anger. They stoke feelings of tribalism and dangerously create "others" as the violators who deserve that anger — foreigners, other racial, ethnic or religious groups, immigrants, other regions, opposing political parties and elites. While the most high-profile populist politicians have tended to be on the political right (e.g., Trump, Bolsonaro, Orban), these feelings of broken contract anger cross the political spectrum. In the U.S, for example, those on the left express outrage at excessive corporate power, the rich not paying their fair share of taxes, ongoing injustices based on race, gender and sexuality, and the wanton destruction of our natural environment. On the right, the outrage tends to be directed at welfare cheats, illegal immigrants, foreign countries and others who allegedly aren't playing by the rules and taking advantage of those who are. While the targets of outrage differ, the psychological structure of that outrage is the same; it stems from feelings of process, relational and distributional unfairness, provoking feelings of moral righteousness and a desire to punish those perceived to be violators and to restore justice and fairness.

What we are seeing is not just a decline in trust and rise in populism, but a dangerous breakdown in the very bonds of cooperation that hold complex societies together. History and the research discussed would suggest we now have two choices: We can let things continue to spiral down in accelerating doomloops of outrage, recrimination, othering, tribalism, punishment and potentially even conflict and violence. Or we can try to rebuild the social contract, re-establish fairness and rein in the forces that profit from driving us apart.

The challenge is immense. Reform on any one of the issues that today trigger broken contract outrage

— immigration reform, limiting corporate power, welfare reform, tax reform, trade reform or improving economic security and opportunity for working families — would be a heavy lift in the best of political circumstances, and we are not in those circumstances.

The specific issues and challenges differ by country, but a common theme is this widespread perception of broken political systems. So, political reform — limiting the power of special interests, rooting out corruption, showing that governments can be competent and get things done and making systems more responsive to what voters actually want — must be at the heart of any changes aimed at social contract repair.

The behavioral research suggests that there is a job of emotional repair too. The strong emotions (and underlying neurophysiology) of fairness violations only begin to reset when people feel heard, their anger channeled, and their trust is carefully rebuilt step by step. Leaders in politics and business must be honest about the failures of the current system and the legitimacy of people's feelings. They must also find ways to redirect strong emotions away from blaming others and toward a zeal to make real changes that will restore the contract. And finally, they must look for places and pockets where trust still exists and rebuild from there. For example, in many countries, governments at the state and local level are more trusted than the national government. So, starting reforms at the local level, building coalitions, showing they work and creating confidence to scale up to the next level can be an effective strategy.

We can try to rebuild the social contract, re-establish fairness and rein in the forces that profit from driving us apart.

When the social contract is broken, it is very hard to put the moral outrage genie back in the bottle. But history shows it is possible. Late 19th century America saw bloody labor strife, historic levels of inequality, bitter divisions following the Civil War, stresses from immigration, political scandals, corruption, a series of devastating financial panics and the rise of fire-breathing populists like William Jennings Bryan. Yet, that period was followed by one of the country's most consequential eras of reform, most famously led by Teddy Roosevelt, but made possible by the courage, actions and leadership of countless reformers in politics, business and civil society. We need that kind of leadership again.

Bridging the *Generation* Trust Gap

Rena Kawasaki

Winner of the 2022 International Children's Peace Prize

Growing up with news of corruption cases and the declining state of our climate and society as the backdrop, mistrust of the older generations and leadership was ingrained in my viewpoint of society.

But my perspective started to change in 2020, when I was presented with a unique opportunity.

I was encouraged to apply for the position of Chief Future Officer at Euglena, a Japanese biotech start-up focused on environmental challenges. This paid executive position, the first of its kind, was only open to someone under the age of 18 and had been created and filled for the first time just a year earlier. The idea of the position was to integrate the opinions of youth into the business, through proposing and implementing policies that would help the company do better in its mission to prioritize sustainability.

At first, I was skeptical about applying. As a then-15-year-old environmental activist, leading the national chapter of the NPO Earth Guardians, who had researched and created a video essay attacking corporate greenwashing, I didn't want to find myself the face of a tokenistic "youth washing" exercise. The role just seemed too good to be true.

So, I put this fear at the core of my application, making clear that if I did get the job, I would challenge

traditional power structures and call attention to any gray areas in the company's policies or behavior.

I found myself impressed when, rather than skirting my questions, Euglena's two top executives, Mitsuru Izumo and Akihiko Nagata, provided in-depth answers and made it clear that this was exactly what they were hoping for when they created the position. The company's first Chief Future Officer had called on the firm to stop using plastic in 100 percent of its products and packaging — and they had done so, despite the significant cost. They promised the company was ready to take significant financial risks to deliver improvements, especially in the areas of diversity and sustainability. I was convinced.

To ensure the position had real influence, the Chief Future Officer was an official member of the company board, with direct access to the CEO. It helped that the other members of the company board were relatively young and open-minded, especially by Japanese standards. The role included leading the firm's Future Summit, a group of other under-18-year-old hires. We had the right to ask for immediate meetings with anyone, as well as access to any company documents. All this was supported by a team of senior staff who advised me. Such a flexible, open structure was very different from the typical Japanese corporate culture and unusual even for a dynamic, young company like Euglena.

After over a year of researching and proposing, the company responded by launching a series of initiatives under the banner of "Well-Being Innovation." These included something we called the "Parents Policy." In this program each new recruit got assigned two older colleagues who serve as mentors during their first few months. The mentors help them take specific requests to the right person in the corporate hierarchy and help them feel generally more at-home. Over a year after its implementation, the program has made it much easier for young recruits to express their ideas and concerns.

But my Future Summit colleagues and I did more than change internal policies. As the result of an idea contest we launched, the company changed its articles of incorporation to include a commitment to pursue the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, we persuaded Euglena to partner with a local ramen chain to set up a shop in Tokyo to showcase microorganisms that the company makes as nutritious food supplements and to sell Fair Trade drinks. We also hired employees from minority communities in Japan and proposed policies to help

make the company a safe and healthy working environment for them.

By the time my term as Chief Future Officer ended in June 2021, these initiatives had helped reshape the corporate culture at Euglena, making it significantly less top-down. Today's youth typically want to work in environments where innovation is constant, where ideas flow from bottom to top instead of just from top to bottom. By making that more of a reality, we increased the trust younger employees had in the fast-growing company, which now employs around 1,000 people.

While we have had many requests from other companies for us to run workshops on how to drive sustainable innovation by listening to youth voices, so far none of these companies have opted to appoint their own Chief Future Officer or do what it takes to institutionalize the changes we made. I don't claim Euglena is perfect, but I am confident that it got one thing absolutely right: Top management was willing to be open about the company's issues and challenges. Too often corporations are unwilling to be vulnerable about their flaws and struggles and encourage young people to genuinely share what they think. This ongoing failure represents a big missed opportunity, not just for Japan, but for the world.

My work as Chief Future Officer also prompted the city government of

Photo from Euglena Co.

Rena Kawasaki leads a meeting with Euglena's Future Summit in 2020.

Tokyo to get in touch. It too wanted to tap into the voices of young people who mistrust the political system even more than they do the corporate world. The average age of Japanese politicians is one of the highest in the world, so it's no wonder that my peers in Gen Z feel ignored and irrelevant.

My team and I proposed to the head of the Government of Tokyo that they should not just focus on older youth, such as college students, but also seek out the voices of even younger generations, such as Generation Alpha (those born in 2010 or after). Together, we came up with ways to make government seem less intimidating through crowdsourcing techniques that used gamification to surface policy choices. The government embraced these quickly, to my amazement, and used some of the ideas generated by young people in the design of a new development in the Tokyo Bay Area. Later, working with the government of the city of Niihama, we implemented a crowdsourcing approach built on a QR code to help citizens propose ideas for city policy more easily. This QR code system helped shape large-scale policy changes such as a new environmental policy for the city.

Local governments are especially well-placed to foster trust through engagement because of their proximity to the community, especially its younger members. The key is to

Photo by SEM VAN DER WAL/ANP/AFP via Getty Image

Rena Kawasaki receives the KidsRights International Children's Peace Prize in November 2022 for her campaigns in Japan.

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ensure that when they do engage, young people have positive experiences — especially opportunities to challenge the status quo and not find themselves dismissed or brushed off.

My positive experiences with both governments and the company have certainly increased my own trust in the possibility of effective intergenerational cooperation. Previously, I never thought anyone older would want to listen to a 15-year-old ranting about sustainability, but when adults whom I respected took my criticisms and ideas seriously, I was motivated to build more and deeper connections and work with other institutions to find solutions.

In 2022, I was honored for this work by being awarded the International Children's Peace Prize, following in the footsteps of previous winners including Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg. Although I greatly admire both of them, my approach is different from theirs. I am focused on building cooperation between youth and government to bridge the trust gap by fostering genuine engagement between generations.

There are real differences between Gen Z and those who have preceded us. If we can work together effectively and give older and younger generations a positive experience engaging with each other, then distrust can be replaced by trust.

Fighting *Climate Change* by Putting People (and Nature) First

Marina Grossi

President,
Brazilian Business Council
for Sustainable Development

The need for rapid progress in the fight against climate change has never felt more urgent. Like much of the rest of the world, my home country of Brazil is experiencing both extreme heat — thermometers soaring far above normal spring temperatures toward 42°C (almost 108°F) — and extreme weather events.

Heavy rains in the Southeast and South regions have caused more than 100 deaths over the past year, while in the North, in the hitherto humid Amazon biome, a severe drought has brought incalculable social and economic losses to 58 municipalities and around 500,000 people.

Over the next few years, Brazil has a major opportunity to change the narrative around climate for the better. In part, that is because we will host the 30th UN Conference of the Parties (COP) in the Amazonian city of Belém in 2025. But the deeper reason is this: As someone who has participated in climate COPs for almost 30 years, I believe we in Brazil are increasingly clear that two priorities must be tackled simultaneously to rebuild trust in our collective ability to stop the inexorable concentration of greenhouse gases

in the atmosphere. These are 1) the need to hold governments and others properly to account for the promises made at COP, and 2) the need to ensure that solving the climate crisis is done in ways that improve the quality of life for all people, especially the poorest and most marginalized.

There have been recent calls to restore trust in the COP process, because countries have tended to make commitments without providing details on how they will achieve them. The disappointing result of that approach was made clear this year by the first official Global Stocktake (GST), a periodic review mechanism agreed to by signatories to the 2015 Paris Agreement. The GST, which concluded recently at COP 28 in Dubai, found that governments' existing pledges will not only fail to prevent global temperatures from blowing past the Paris target of limiting warming to 1.5ºC by 2050, but also will likely put the world on track to warm by 2.5ºC.

Brazil, for instance, has strengthened its Nationally Determined Contribution this year by following the UN's recommendation to start setting economy-wide goals. For 2025, we went from a 37 percent reduction in emissions (compared to 2005) to 48 percent, and for 2030 we went from a 50 percent reduction to 53 percent. We still need to do more work to provide an integrated vision of how existing mechanisms and policies will roll up to achieve the country's increased mitigation ambition.

What's clear, however, is that setting economy-wide goals should take place in tandem with establishing more short- and medium-term decarbonization goals. In the absence of these, targets for the distant future, such as 2050, can easily present a misleadingly upbeat picture by ignoring the lack of a credible pathway to those goals and the likely cascading negative impact of inadequate action in the here and now. Declaring

Climate Crisis Universally Recognized

Percent who say they believe that **climate change poses a serious and imminent threat to the planet**

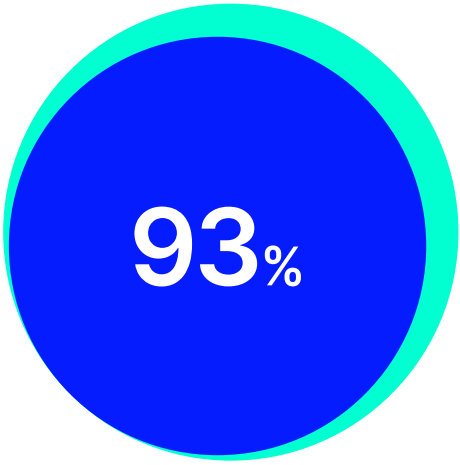


Fig. 4: 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer Special Report: Trust and Climate Change
14-country average

more interim goals for, say, 2027 or 2030 – doing at the national level something similar to what many companies have done in setting out their net-zero commitments – would help deter the kind of backsliding from pursuing long-term climate targets that all too often occurs when governments confront inevitable short-term crises.

The second key to restoring trust in the climate fight starts with understanding the process needs to do a much better job than it has traditionally done in putting people first. We need a rapid transition to a new development model, one that combines progress on environmental goals with parallel progress on addressing social issues.

The Brazilian Amazon can be a hugely influential innovation sandbox for finding effective ways to do this. As the world's largest tropical rain forest, it plays a widely recognized central role in the fight to prevent further climate change. Almost half of Brazil's overall greenhouse gas emissions come from changes in land use, mainly through the persistent advance of deforestation.

The Amazon is also home to some 30 million people, equivalent to roughly half the population of the U.K. Most of them are concentrated in cities, rather than in riverside communities or on indigenous lands. Many are poor. With 1.3 million people, Belém ranks a lowly 56th among Brazilian cities in per capita income. It trails its peers in providing residents with universal access to basic services, such as clean water, sewage, electricity, education and connectivity.

What is urgently needed is a way to combat deforestation and sustain biodiversity, while addressing the pressing need to improve the lives of local citizens. So while, of course, there should be demanding targets and effective inspection and repression measures to contain the loss of forests, especially as a result of criminal activity, these must be introduced alongside a raft of policies that give locals an economic stake in forest preservation – recognizing that the standing forest has considerable economic value and that those living there have valuable knowledge about how to maintain and enhance the forest.

In short, Brazil has a great opportunity to demonstrate the potential of what are known as Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) – investments in maintaining and strengthening the existing ways in which the natural world underpins human economic development. While this potentially powerful approach is still mostly talk in many places, in Brazil it has moved to the forefront of our thinking and

The process needs to do a much better job than it has traditionally done in putting people first. We need a rapid transition to a new development model, one that combines progress on environmental goals with parallel progress on addressing social issues.

planning. Brazil alone accounts for approximately 20 percent of the (mostly still untapped) global potential to use NBS, with around two-thirds of this potential coming from conservation of natural forests.

It's still early days, but we are already learning a great deal about what it will take to make NBS successful. Step one is to ensure the private sector moves hand-in-hand with governments and non-governmental organizations to create economic value from the socio-bio economy of the forest (including through innovative instruments for public- and private-sector financial investing, in so-called "nature markets").

Such cooperation is at the heart of a "best practices" study that the

Photo by MICHAEL DANTAS/AFP via Getty Images

Smoke rises from forest fires in Manaquiri, Amazonas state, in September 2023. Brazil is facing a historic drought and significant deforestation.

Brazilian Business Council for Sustainable Development, the organization I head, launched in 2022. Further lessons emerged as we analyzed some 143 NBS initiatives in the Amazon, involving 53 different companies. All combined a resolute determination to combat illegal deforestation with development approaches that engaged local communities, valued biodiversity and channeled investment into advancing a circular, low-carbon economy.

A three-year-old partnership between a multinational tire manufacturer, NGOs operating in Brazil and abroad and a local government highlights how to generate employment and income from more sustainable production. This project aims to generate positive economic impact for 3,800 local families, while also preserving – through careful management – some 6.8 million hectares of Amazonian Forest. Initially the company agreed to buy just 700 tons of rubber produced, according to agreed social and environmental standards. As the program evolves and becomes fully integrated into the larger corporate supply chain, production is expected to expand sustainably.

Scaling NBS initiatives like this one will be essential to preserving the sprawling biodiversity of the Amazon and simultaneously meeting the needs of its human population.

Is it possible? We believe it is, especially as more and more companies

Photo by Kyodo News via Getty Images

The first day of the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, known as COP28, kicks off in Dubai in November 2023.

adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to community development – one that includes nature, and the essential services it provides, as one of its key stakeholders.

The symbolism of hosting COP 30 in Belém can be powerful in focusing global attention on the possibilities for allying, protecting and regenerating nature with human development, rather than pitting them against each other.

As Brazil prepares for that event, our goal is to build a coalition of local and international businesses that can accelerate the development of NBS in the years ahead. Crucial to the success of this coalition is that it must include significant (potential and existing) providers of the investment capital needed, including firms and other institutions involved in international climate financing, prepared to defend and value the world's two greatest sources of wealth: nature and people.

The symbolism of hosting COP 30 in Belém can be powerful in focusing global attention on the possibilities for allying, protecting and regenerating nature with human development, rather than pitting them against each other.

Only by focusing on both together will we be able to overcome the crisis of confidence that is holding back our progress in tackling the climate emergency, while preserving a planet that delivers the best possible living conditions for everyone.

The Wise Daughters Effect: How *Philanthropists* Can Learn to Trust

Zainab Salbi

Cofounder,
Daughters for Earth

Casey Rogers

Founder & CEO,
Telea Insights

Though the fundamentals of philanthropy are based on generosity, it operates within the same flawed power structure that has caused some of the challenges private philanthropy tries to address.

People in power or living in powerful countries or circumstances are making decisions on things that impact people in other parts of the world or in different socio-economic realities without having a lived experience of what it means to be on the sharp edge of the challenge itself. Too many philanthropic leaders trust their own decision-making more than they trust the people closest to the situation they seek to improve.

The intentions are generally good. Philanthropists, after all, are mostly interested in solving problems to help create a better world. But the methodologies the philanthropic community has used often do not challenge the underlying power structure. That is why "trust-based philanthropy" has become a hot topic, albeit one much more talked about than acted upon. (A similar conversation has also started in international aid circles, where leaders, such as Samantha Power at USAID, are also wrestling with how to move away from traditional top-down power dynamics.)

So, what does it mean to challenge the philanthropic power dynamic? What role can trust play in challenging, and moving beyond, the current norm? At Daughters for Earth, we believe that trust is essential to remake philanthropy – and what we have learned from trying to turn the traditional grantmaking model upside down has been eye-opening.

Too many philanthropic leaders trust their own decision-making more than they trust the people closest to the situation they seek to improve.

Let's start at the beginning. Daughters for Earth is a new fund and movement, launched in 2022 with Jody Allen, that aims to find, financially back and celebrate women-led climate actions. When we first started, we worked with an experienced U.S.-based philanthropic team who helped guide and structure our giving model. We worked hard to find the best nominees for grants, handheld each nominee to understand what they needed and how best to support them, and vetted proposals to select the best projects. But when it came to final decision-making, it was taken for granted that this ultimately would fall in our laps. We were, after all, a group of well-intentioned women who managed to raise resources from the Global North to distribute it to women worldwide – with a particular focus on indigenous, women-led efforts.

Photo from Zainab Salbi's archive

Zainab Salbi (right) has dedicated her life to women's rights. This photo comes from her visit to Rwanda as the founder of Women for Women International.

None of us at the leadership level had lived experience in direct climate actions or with indigenous groups. Good intentions are sometimes not enough. This borrowed power we had to give money away created an amazingly good feeling in each of us, but it also perpetuated the same power dynamics we were telling ourselves we were solving. So we decided to be honest with ourselves and flip the structure on its head.

We created a new decision-making body, the Wise Daughters Council, designed to turn those who had been grantees into the ones with the power to hand out money. Traditional recipients of philanthropy would, instead, be invited to become philanthropists. Members would represent a diverse range of ages and geographies. All would have deep field experience in their regions, and some would come from indigenous groups.

In principle everyone loved the idea. Nonetheless, as we tried to implement it, we ran into a series of unexpected implementation hurdles, all of which had at their heart the problem of lack of trust.

Some appeared among our own team. This started with who was nominated to be Wise Daughters Council members. At first, most of the candidates were American or European women living in Africa, Asia or Latin America. True, they were experts in conservation and climate change. But they were not from countries where we were looking to guide our philanthropic giving. Our well-intentioned team simply overlooked women of these countries and cultures who were not Americans or European, even though they were clearly experts in the field. This blind spot stirred a defensiveness, as they saw that the nominations were essentially all white American and European women.

Some lack of trust arose among the women to whom we were looking to cede power. A few Wise Daughters Council members asked if we would truly cede decision-making power or respect their time and expertise. They asked if they and the other Wise Daughters Council members were merely tokens chosen to demonstrate an inclusive process? While this reaction was an initial surprise to our team, it reminded us, among other things, that activists are asked to give a lot and their time, and all too often their expertise, is not properly valued.

To address these concerns, we established three core principles.

First, the Wise Daughters Council members' time would be respected through payment of an honorarium and holding to the agreed upon

scope of work. If our expectations changed, the compensation would need to change too.

Second, leaders of Daughters for Earth could attend the Wise Daughters Council, but only to listen and learn, without making any other interventions.

Third, the Wise Daughters Council had the ultimate decision-making power. It was not making recommendations to be approved (or not) by a higher authority. It made the final grant decisions.

Even then, our trust problems were still not fully resolved. We had underestimated the extent to which members of our own team in the U.S., who were used to making such decisions themselves, would resist outsourcing their power. Much of this was passive resistance and took the form of raising an endless stream of concerns. The team remained especially skeptical about whether council members would come prepared to the meeting or be able to arrive at final decisions in the time allotted.

The resistance in our own team eventually melted. Some of those who initially were most opposed have become great advocates for the Wise Daughters Council. This has been met by a similarly positive response from Council members to the final process. Some of the Council members said it would help them

Photo from Zainab Salbi's archive

Zainab Salbi (middle) is photographed in Kenya with a member of the Wise Daughters Council visiting potential grantees and experts on climate to discuss women-led climate actions.

do better in fundraising. Others, that making funding decisions is harder than they expected and that they appreciated the new knowledge they gained about conservation efforts in other parts of the world.

Everyone involved has come to understand that trust-based philanthropy is not simply about saying the right words. It is about truly letting go of one's power, challenging your own norms and comfort zones, and confronting unconscious biases and attachments.

For philanthropy to evolve and act on the values of inclusion and equity that are often espoused, we must try new approaches. We must trust that there are many leaders on the ground who are well-equipped to advise on and lead the distribution of resources. At Daughters for Earth, we found that to start to change entrenched power dynamics we had to trust the women closest to the challenges we seek to solve.

We must trust that there are many leaders on the ground who are well-equipped to advise on and lead the distribution of resources.

Photo by Matthew Hatcher/AFP via Getty Images

Casey Rogers visits water conservation efforts led by Imbereheza Gahunga with support from Daughters for Earth.

Solving the Trust Equation in *Schools*

Rebecca Winthrop
Senior Fellow & Director
of the Center for
Universal Education,
Brookings Institution

Rarely do schools feature in the debates about the public's trust in institutions. But they should. More than any other government institution, schools are on the front lines of providing services, building community, developing a shared identity and navigating change.

Put simply, a key part of what schools do is the hard, on-the-ground work of building and sustaining trust. Yet forces from the pandemic to the changing nature of work to increasing polarization are eroding schools' ability to serve as trust-building institutions with their communities. There is an urgent need to reverse this worrying trend before it is too late.

The Power of Schools to Influence Trust

The power of schools to influence trust is far-reaching. For instance, the 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer found that globally 64 percent of respondents saw teachers as a unifying force in society, higher than any other group listed – from NGO and business leaders (46 percent and 41 percent, respectively) to government leaders (33 percent).

National education systems, and the schools that comprise them, play a powerful role in connecting people. The history, values, and stories taught each day shape national identities, creating in the words of historian Benedict Anderson "imagined communities" where citizens feel a sense of belonging with people they have never met. The power to shape young people's worldview, and by

extension that of their communities, is an awesome one that has been used to both bring people together and to sow division. The last century is rife with disturbing examples: Belgian colonial textbooks in Rwanda falsely contrasted the "good and able" Tutsis with the "lesser than" Hutus, helping seed a genocide. More recently, curriculum revisions that promote Hindu nationalist beliefs have been advanced in India. And one in five states in the U.S. have proposed legislation that would limit climate education, including proposing that children should be taught that the science behind climate change is controversial.

Schools are the most visible form of government service delivery. With approximately 80 percent of young people globally attending government or government-supported schools, it often provides the main daily interaction citizens have with their governments. Teachers are one of the largest groups of government civil servants. Delivering education services in a way that is equitable tends to build trust in government and strengthen the public's commitment to the society in which they live. It matters a great deal whether schools are accessible to everyone, whether they are of reasonable quality for everyone and if they prepare everyone well for the future.

Indeed, scholars studying the drivers of armed conflict have found that equitable delivery of education

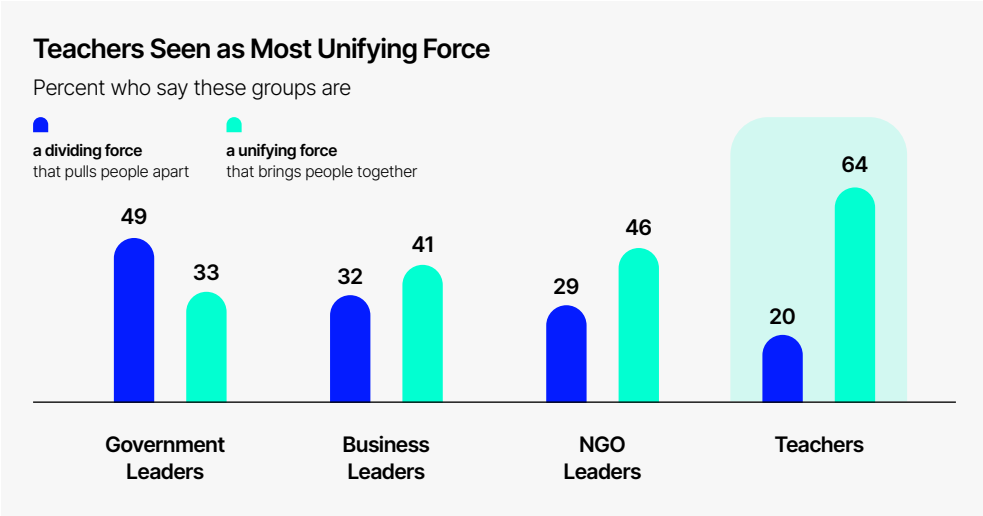


Fig. 5: 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer
25-country average

"breeds peace." On the other hand, inequitable provision of education, with some groups in society systematically left out, can lead to deep grievances, a breakdown of trust in government institutions and increased likelihood of armed conflict.

What it takes to offer equitable education today is changing. Increasingly,the skills young people need to learn and what is required to teach them necessitates grappling with a world suffused with generative AI as well as one roiled by climate change, political polarization and more. It is no longer sufficient for students to develop strong analytical skills in key academic subjects and demonstrate their knowledge by producing the right answer. They also need to learn to ask good questions. They need to learn to put their skills to use across disciplines to create solutions to hard problems by working with others. They need to master the art of learning new things and to practice the habits of being constructive and involved citizens engaging across divides in their communities.

In short, young people need to be taught differently, assessed with a richer set of measures, and given the opportunity to practice applying, not just showing, what they know. It is no longer enough for this type of schooling experience to be reserved for the elite. Equitable provision of education today means all schools will need to help all students develop this breadth of skills, including academic and 21st century competencies.

Yet, all too frequently, schools have not communicated why and how education needs to change to their students' families and communities. A few years ago, I interviewed over 100 innovative education leaders across 15 countries, from India to Ghana, Argentina to the U.S., who were shifting in their schools and education systems how and what young people were taught. As I reported in a book, *Leapfrogging Inequality: Remaking Education to Help Young People Thrive*, the leaders' innovative strategies were sound and could help young people develop the full breadth of skills they needed: more hands-on experiments, increased trips into the community to apply what they learned and more play-based learning. But these changes made school look and feel very different – which led to significant challenges. Parents and families became concerned that the new methods weren't rigorous enough. Should students really be spending so much time playing in school? Were leaders experimenting on their children? The community controversy was enough for most leaders to roll back the very changes that their students needed to get a high-quality education.

The leaders were not missing innovative education ideas, they were missing strategies to build trust in times of change. Longitudinal studies in the U.S. have shown that the existence of trusting relationships between communities and schools – namely school leaders, teachers and families – makes it ten times more likely for a school to be improving students' outcomes across academic learning and socio-emotional wellbeing. Schools with high levels of trust are much more likely to make the type of bold changes needed to improve students' learning and skills.

Strategies to Build Trust

Trust between communities, families, students and educators in schools does not just magically appear. Training and professional development for education leaders and teachers on how to build strong relationships with families and communities is lacking or, at best, an afterthought in most countries. Feedback loops to facilitate dialogue with families and communities are often narrow and limited to students' report cards, events at school and occasional meetings between parents and teachers. The education community has not prioritized relational trust sufficiently, evidenced by the lack of a rigorous measure of trust between schools and families (though we are developing one). Far more time is invested in researching other elements of education, such as teacher training and curriculum development.

Photo by Hyoung Chang/The Denver Post via Getty Images

Superintendent at Aurora Public Schools welcomes a first-grade student before the first day of school at Jewell Elementary School in Aurora, Colorado.

Nor has this been a priority for donors: By one estimate, less than four percent of U.S. education-focused philanthropic funding goes to strengthening community-school relationships. This is despite a growing demand from families for increased communications and engagement with their children's school coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the past five years, I have led, together with Dr. Emily Markovich Morris, a Brookings Institution team dedicated to strengthening family, school and community collaboration. With our partners in our Family Engagement in Education Network, 60 organizations across 18 countries, we have developed evidence, insights and practical tools for building trust with families and communities. In 2021, we published our findings and recommendations in *Collaborating to Transform and Improve Education Systems: A playbook for family-school engagement*. Since then, we have been working with our partners to pilot a range of tools and strategies.

Together we have learned that starting with intentional conversations on the purpose of school can be a game changer in the effort to nurture and develop trust. Our findings across the 16 countries show that often families and teachers have misperceptions about each other. For example, in Colombia, the majority of secondary school teachers we surveyed in 2023 believed the most important purpose of school was to help prepare young people to be active citizens and community members, while the majority of families thought it was to prepare their children for further education. Furthermore, families were not aware of teachers' beliefs and thought teachers shared their vision of preparing children for further education.

Building strong relationships between communities and schools starts with families, educators and students understanding each other's perspectives and developing a shared vision. Insights uncovered through intentional conversations have led our partners in Colombia, for example, to identify strategies for schools and communities to forge closer bonds with each other through increased communication, sharing and opportunities for collaboration on student learning and school improvement. For teachers in Colombia, developing the skills and competencies to be constructive citizens, from teamwork to creative problem-solving, is essential as the country emerges from five decades of war. Forging stronger partnerships with families will only strengthen the role of schools in building trust in society.

With our partners, next year we will release a set of internationally

validated, free to use conversation-starter tools for any school to use with their communities to hold intentional conversations about the purpose of education and to develop strategies for building stronger partnerships and collaboration. We will also release our newly developed measure of relational trust, which looks at the extent to which educators feel trust with families and the level of trust students and families report with educators.

Building strong relationships between communities and schools starts with families, educators and students understanding each other's perspectives and developing a shared vision.

This will be just one small step in the right direction, of course. Our broader hope is that there will be a huge focus on building better collaborations between schools and families. From governments to funders to business leaders who are looking for ways to support the communities they are in, it is time to invest in supporting increased relational trust between schools and families, helping pave the way for more equitable education systems that deliver what young people need while strengthening the social fabric of our societies.

Cajon Valley Union School District

Rebecca Winthrop talks with a student from the Cajon Valley Union School District in El Cajon, California.

Learning How to *Read* All About It

Margaret Talev

Kramer Director,
Syracuse University Institute for
Democracy, Journalism & Citizenship

Americans, like news consumers everywhere, not only need but want to have better media literacy, a better grasp on how government and the economy work, and the skills to avoid being manipulated or misinformed. But most people don't know where to get these, or whom to trust.

Millions of people hate how political polarization, anger and tribalism dominate our culture, work and personal lives — and make it harder to trust the news we consume or people we elect. They also fear isolation or cancellation and crave belonging. And the social media revolution that's given us endless scrolling and new worlds to imagine also leaves many feeling overwhelmed or passed by. Even young people and consumers with the newest phones and access to high-speed internet face more fragmentation, more blurred lines between fact, falsehoods and fantasyland. Add generative AI and the ascension of deepfakes to the mix and there's your brave new world.

My views on how to address these challenges are shaped by decades of work as a journalist covering news and politics, from Florida to California to the White House, and studying public opinion, the fallout from Covid-19 and the events of January 6, 2021 at the U.S. Capitol. They are at the core of my newest assignment as the founding director of Syracuse University's D.C.-based non-partisan Institute for Democracy, Journalism & Citizenship. My colleagues Johanna Dunaway, our research director, and

Joshua Darr, our senior researcher, are national experts on the relationships between polarization, news consumption and how local news can help.

The challenges to democracy and journalism are deeply intertwined. At Syracuse, we are testing a new course called "Democracy, Journalism & Citizenship" that gives undergraduates an enormous amount of data from sources including the Edelman Trust Barometer, as well as Pew, Gallup, Ipsos and Harris polling. We look at trust trends, polarization of media consumption, mapping of news deserts, education around ethics and a guided tour of media literacy and civic organizations through which students can learn or get involved. The core idea is that understanding the divisions and efforts underway to address them is the first step.

Separately, several months ago, I convened with Catherine Gerard, of Syracuse's Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC), a session for students and staff on how to have difficult conversations productively. Given the timing, we had anticipated discussions around abortion rights and affirmative action. Instead, the questions that students found most compelling touched on personal experiences with rejection, isolation or division: how to navigate abandonment by friend groups or a parent's descent into conspiracy groups, especially descent driven by online misinformation masquerading as news. These conversations have prompted us to think more about the interconnectedness of polarization in individual lives and in society.

Each spring, I also teach a graduate course at Harvard's Kennedy School called "Engaging the Media." It is primarily for non-journalists. My students have included future candidates for office, diplomats, housing and immigration advocates, presidential advisers, ER doctors and entrepreneurs with start-ups. What they have in common is a desire to demystify the media ecosystem and better understand how to reach splintered and skeptical audiences.

Finding the data is the easy part (just start your search here). Convincing whomever you are trying to reach that the information you are giving them is factual or relevant turns out to be the trickier part.

Getting this right is a priority for all communicators. Yes, news organizations, governments, non-profit groups and schools and universities can and should organize media literacy and civic education and engagement efforts. But ensuring they really take requires creative and sustained

involvement from major employers and people working in marketing, technology, professional sports, food, music, entertainment and the military. And not just "leaders," such as CEOs, ex-presidents, Taylor Swift or somebody else who isn't you.

I'm talking about *you*.

How can you start to become a better news consumer, one who not only improves your own understanding but is more able to connect with others across those partisan divides?

Three frames for delivering this trust-increasing change have captured my imagination: "The trouble with amber." "Panic responsibly." "Tell me three things."

The Trouble with Amber

This idea was articulated beautifully at a recent get-together with current and former journalists and digital, tech and business strategists now involved in research, teaching and philanthropy. One colleague observed that the critical mistake local news publishers made early in the advancement of digital was trying to preserve their old business model in amber.

I love the look of amber — a beautiful golden-orange, translucent yet durable, so primordial it's modern. My late mother had an amber necklace, bracelet and brooch, and when I wear any of these, I remember her. Real amber is fossilized ancient tree resin that once protected bark

Photo courtesy of Syracuse University

Margaret Talev moderates a panel discussion for Syracuse University's Institute for Democracy, Journalism and Citizenship titled "Are We the Problem or Solution?" in Los Angeles in March 2023.

from gashes and hungry bugs. The trouble with amber is that no living, breathing thing can change, grow or survive if it's encased in it. Just ask all those mosquitos frozen in their final pose for eternity.

Jeremy Gilbert, of Northwestern University, a former director of strategic initiatives at the Washington Post, summed it up like this: "Newspapers, radio, broadcast TV, cable and The Pony Express all thought they were brilliant and essential. But they had monopolies, all broken by new technologies."

Today, there's massive experimentation — and significant investment — to modernize and rebuild news, through streaming, social media, audio or reinventing for profit and non-profit models for local news. These have not yet offset the business collapses and structural challenges. And we face new hurdles including deepfakes, AI, shortening attention spans and public news exhaustion and desensitization. So news producers must innovate to survive.

But a lot of that innovation is also raising new challenges for news consumers. Old assumptions about the accuracy and trustworthiness of a single source, which may once have made sense, no longer do, as old producers cut costs and corners as they struggle to survive. Even worse, some news providers have never set much store by facts and trust, instead making their money from engaging consumers, not edifying them.

For consumers, the best way to avoid finding themselves trapped in the amber of old habits is to get outside their comfort zones and broaden the brands and platforms through which they read and watch. If you usually stick to domestic news, focus on international coverage for a few days and see how that reframes your thoughts. Adopt the same trial approach if you do not typically understand or gravitate to coverage of finance, sports, science and tech, and so on. Spend an hour flipping from CNN, to Fox News, to MSNBC and back, noting the substantive and style differences, the chyrons, the cultural cues, the feel. Understanding just how different these universes are may help you understand people's frame of reference — and how to connect with different audiences.

Through all of this, though, make factual information your North Star. If you read or see something shocking in one outlet, seek confirmation in large, reputable mainstream publications and consult fact-checking websites. If the claim is true, it won't only be reported in one place or by one type of outlet.

Panic Responsibly

I learned this phrase from Anchor Change CEO Katie Harbath, an AI thought leader and former director of public policy at Facebook. "Panic responsibly" has become her mantra, printed on stickers and other merch that she shares with audiences who hear her speak about the challenges, threats and possibilities around artificial intelligence.

Writing on Substack, Harbath describes a fear that "pushing the panic button on everything might inadvertently contribute more to the decline in trust in our institutions and electoral processes rather than make us more resilient." The risk is that generalized panic will "negate the positive benefits of pre-bunking" — or preemptively debunking misinformation — "and other work to educate the public." That could mean "we all get pushed into 'our proverbial corners' and just shout at one another about how the other is responsible for the decline of democracy, rather than working together to find a new path forward."

Harbath set five parameters for how to responsibly discuss issues such as misinformation and AI — or any panic-inducing topic:

1. Distinguish clearly between speculation and what's actually happening.
2. Acknowledge complexity and nuance rather than

Jeffrey Greenberg/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

Commuters lock into their phones in the Wan Chai MTR Subway Station in Hong Kong.

attribute too much impact to any one incident, approach or person.

3. Instead of demonizing tech company employees with a broad brush, acknowledge the many on the front lines who do care about the impacts of their products on society.
4. Recognize that society is reshaping norms around speech and accountability for speech
5. Don't take the "panic bait" without first critically examining the claims.

Harbath, who hails from Green Bay, told me that her inspiration for "panic responsibly" came from a slogan on a T-shirt in her closet that reads: "Drink Wisconsinbly." Perhaps maintaining one's sense of humor should be a sixth principle.

Tell Me Three Things

This one sprang from an impromptu exercise with my undergraduate students one heavy Monday night in October.

I had asked how they were processing Hamas' attack on Israel, Israel's response in Gaza and the resulting distress on college campuses. Beyond repudiating terrorism and grieving for the loss of innocent lives, they also were navigating indirect anxieties: pressure to become overnight experts on centuries of conflict, make statements on social media they did not feel equipped to make, say the right thing and not say the wrong thing and not be accused of word salad. They feared misstepping, misspeaking, hurting others or feeling unsafe themselves. What if their friend groups split or cut them out?

We had been reading Chris Stirewalt's thought-provoking industry critique, "Broken News," for class. Our discussion focused on the human pattern of giving ourselves, or our allies, the benefit of the doubt even as we were attributing negative motives to strangers engaging in the same behavior. For instance, imagine you cut someone off in traffic. You might tell yourself you had a good reason, say, needing to get to a meeting or pick up your kid on time. Yet, you are less likely to empathize with a person who cuts you off, especially if they seem "other" than you or if anything superficial triggers you ("Of course the jerk driving the Tesla cut me off!").

I suggested an experiment: Look at me. What are the top three traits you think define who I am or why I behave the way I do? "White" and "woman," or "woman" and "white" in that order, were the first traits

the students cited. For a third trait, one said, "mom," while another said, "nice clothes." Another said, "You look tired." One said, "confident."

But which traits did I believe best explained me? I told them, in this order: 1) Immigrant family. 2) Outsider. 3) Short.

What they thought motivated me was quite different to what I felt drove me most. Their descriptors were physical and largely touched on assumptions about privilege and gender, while mine stemmed more from childhood experiences with otherness and weakness, and a drive to outlast skeptics' doubts about my place at the table.

Each student eagerly took a turn. For an hour, with each one's consent, I guessed what traits drove them. The person in question would then reveal their often quite different answers, contextualized with stories about their family dynamics, childhood experiences and positive and negative reinforcements. In this circle of trust, we shared a lot. There were tears and laughter. We all left class that night understanding one another much better than we had imagined to be possible.

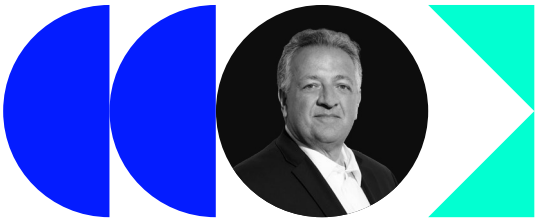
These were accidental yet profound revelations: Your guess about what's motivating another person is much less useful than finding out what's actually motivating them. And knowing their motivation may give you an entirely different perspective on them.

Basing decisions on accurate information and helping others to do the same — these are essential to protecting our democratic freedoms and repairing trust in each other.

Basing decisions on accurate information and helping others to do the same — these are essential to protecting our democratic freedoms and repairing trust in each other. So is adaptability: Pivoting when change requires it. Channeling panic into an informed response. And moving past our often superficial assumptions about the motivations of the 8 billion other people on Earth to a deeper level of understanding.

That process of building trust by increasing mutual understanding can only happen one interaction at a time. There is no better time to start than now.

Acknowledgements

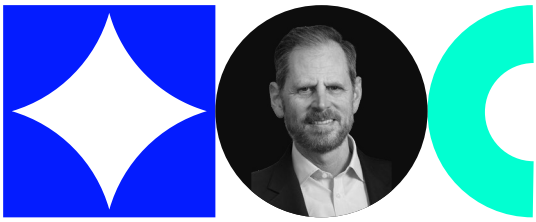


Dr. Noubar Afeyan

Dr. Noubar Afeyan is founder and CEO of Flagship Pioneering, a company that creates bioplatform companies to transform human health and sustainability. An entrepreneur and biochemical engineer, Dr. Afeyan holds more than 100 patents and has cofounded more than 70 life science and technology startups during his 36-year career. He is cofounder and chairman of the board of Moderna, the pioneering messenger RNA company.

Noubar entered biotechnology during its emergence as an academic field and industry, completing his doctoral work in biochemical engineering at MIT in 1987. He was a senior lecturer at MIT's Sloan School of Management from 2000 to 2016, a lecturer at Harvard Business School until 2020, and he currently serves as a member of the MIT Corporation. He teaches and speaks around the world on topics ranging from entrepreneurship, innovation, and economic development to biological engineering, new medicines, and renewable energy. In 2022, Noubar was elected to the National Academy of Engineering.

Dr. Afeyan has received multiple awards for his passionate advocacy of the contributions of immigrants to economic and scientific progress. He is the cofounder of the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity and a number of other philanthropic projects.

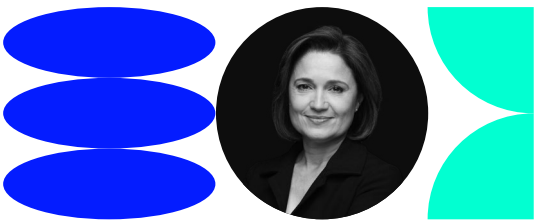


Eric Beinhocker

Eric Beinhocker is a Professor of Public Policy Practice at the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. He is also the Executive Director of the Institute for New Economic Thinking at the University's Oxford Martin School. Beinhocker is also a Supernumerary Fellow in Economics at Oriel College and an External Professor at the Santa Fe Institute. Prior to joining Oxford, Beinhocker had an 18-year career at McKinsey & Company where he was a partner and held leadership roles in McKinsey's Strategy Practice, its Climate Change and Sustainability Practice and the McKinsey Global Institute. Beinhocker writes frequently on economic, business and public policy issues and his work has appeared in the *Financial Times*, *Bloomberg*, *The Times*, *the Guardian*, *The Atlantic*, *Newsweek* and *Democracy*.

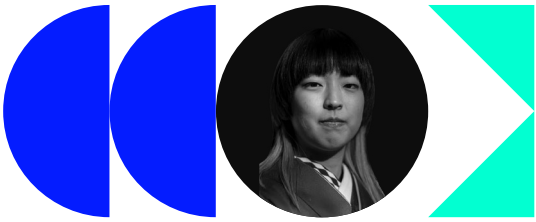
Matthew Bishop

Matthew Bishop spent 25 years as an editor and writer at The Economist, including as business editor and New York Bureau Chief. He also launched and moderated several Economist conferences, including on Fintech, the Future of Work, and Investing for Impact. He then led the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center, convening global experts to develop practical solutions to some of the world's most urgent challenges. He is currently a visiting senior fellow at the Brookings Institute; and the Sorenson Institute. He has authored several books, including Philanthrocapitalism; The Road From Ruin; and Economics A To Z. A sought after speaker, media commentator and advisor, he has interviewed/moderated many leaders from politics, business and entertainment. He is a cofounder of the Social Progress Index, #givingtuesday, 17 Rooms and Catalyst 2030. He was honored by the World Economic Forum as a Young Global Leader. He served on the Sykes Inquiry on Restoring Trust in the Investment System and on the G8 Taskforce on Social Impact Investing.



Marina Grossi

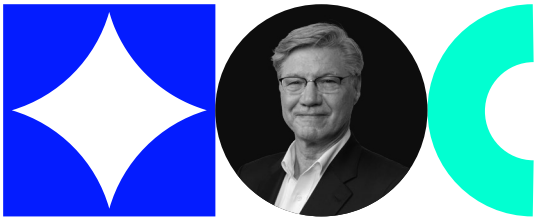
Marina Grossi is an economist and a pioneer in corporate sustainability in Brazil. She has over 20 years of experience in climate change and sustainable finance. She is the President of the Brazilian Business Council for Sustainable Development (CEBDS), which is part of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Marina is also a member of the Board of Directors of Neoenergia, Norte Energia, as well as the Independent Council of Climate Experts at Edelman and the Council for Sustainable Social and Economic Development of the Presidency of the Republic. She has worked at the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology, and from 1992 to 2001, served as a climate negotiator for Brazil at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



Rena Kawasaki

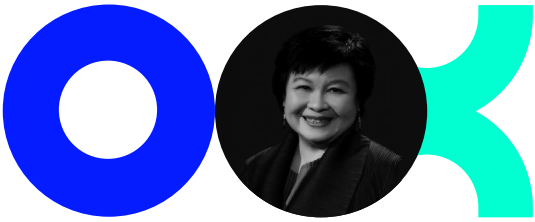
Rena Kawasaki is a Japanese social justice activist who is passionate about youth participation in politics, the environment and society. Rena is the winner of the International Children's Peace Prize 2022, an initiative of the KidsRights Foundation.

Rena made a breakthrough for youth participation in Japan when she was only 14 years old, as she managed to link Japanese youth to local politicians. She is also included within the government's Tokyo Bay Environmental Social Governance infrastructure project, which is aimed at creating a sustainable city that will impact 37 million people in the region. Rena was the youngest ever Chief Future Officer for a bio-fueled jet company in Japan. She is currently studying at Yale University.



Rik Kirkland

Rik Kirkland is a leader in business publishing. As Director of Publishing, he led McKinsey & Company's global print and online activities from 2008 to June 2020, growing its audience fivefold. From 2000-2005, Rik was the editor of FORTUNE magazine, which under his leadership was three times nominated as a finalist for general excellence by the American Society of Magazine Editors and won numerous other awards. Previously he served as FORTUNE's Washington editor, Europe editor, International editor and Deputy Editor. A member of the Council on Foreign Relations, he has been a frequent guest on CNN and CNBC and a moderator at the WEF in Davos, FORTUNE's Global Forum, Bloomberg's New Economy Forum and the Microsoft CEO Summit. Currently Rik is Chair of Douglas Knowledge Partners and serves on the advisory board of the Edelman Trust Institute, the boards of Touch Health and the International Center for Journalists, and plays in a rock band, The Prowlers.



Mei Lin Fung

Mei Lin Fung is the cochair of People-Centered Internet, which she cofounded with Vint Cerf. She is an early pioneer of CRM, working with Tom Siebel and Marc Benioff at Oracle, and also worked at Shell and Intel. Mei Lin studied finance at MIT under two future Nobel Economics winners. She served as Socio Technical lead for the US government Federal Health Futures, was finalist in the GSA Citizen Engagement GEAR challenge and chairs the IEEE Technical Committee on Sustainability. She organized the Program for the Future in 2008 with Douglas Engelbart and the 40th Anniversary of the Internet (www.tcpip40.com) in 2014 with Vint Cerf. Mei Lin curates the People Centered Internet's Digital Cooperation and Diplomacy network and coauthored G7 policy contributions. She initiated and chaired the 3-day series of 60 speakers, including ITU Secretary General Doreen Bogdan Martin, Bob Kahn and Vint Cerf, the fathers of the Internet, as part of 10 panels on Digital Cooperation, Governance and Regulations at the UN Science Summit in September 2023. She is currently organizing the 50th Anniversary of the Internet with the IEEE History and David Gonzalez, IEEE Ambassador.

Casey Rogers

Founder and CEO of Telea Insights, Casey Rogers brings forth over 20 years of experience in the nonprofit, philanthropic, and business sectors. She works from a longview perspective of positive change with a focus on tangible impact and bold results. Casey strives to partner with and amplify the voices of women and conservationists of color, who are often underrepresented in the field. Casey joined Daughters for Earth cofounder, Zainab Salbi, to conceptualize the women-led climate movement and in 2023 joined Daughters as Chief Mobilizing Officer.

Zainab Salbi

Zainab Salbi is the cofounder of Daughters for Earth, a fund and a movement of Daughters rising up worldwide with climate solutions to protect and restore Mother Earth. She has frequently been named as one of the women changing the world by leading publications ranging from Newsweek to The Guardian. Zainab received the Times100 Impact Award in 2023.

When she was 23, Zainab founded Women for Women International, a humanitarian organization dedicated to women survivors of wars. She is the author of several books, including the best seller, *Between Two Worlds: Escape from Tyranny; Growing Up in the Shadow of Saddam* (with Laurie Buckland). Zainab is also the Executive Editor and Host of several shows, including "Through Her Eyes" with Yahoo News, "#MeToo, Now What?" with PBS, "The Zainab Salbi Project" with Huffington Post and "The Nida'a Show" with TLC Arabia.

She is a Young Global Leader with the World Economic Forum and serves on the Boards of Vital Voices, International Refugee Assistance Program (IRAP), and Synergos International.

Fred Swaniker

Fred Swaniker leads the African Leadership Group, an ecosystem of organizations that are catalyzing a new era of ethical, entrepreneurial and digital leaders in Africa. Over the past 15 years, he has founded and led the pre-university African Leadership Academy, African Leadership University and African Leadership Network. This year Fred launched Sand Technologies, a global technology services company headquartered in the USA with engineers across Silicon Valley, France, the United Kingdom, Romania and various emerging markets. Specializing in industrial AI, Sand Technologies is helping companies develop world class technology products, build great technology teams and deliver outstanding customer experiences. Through Sand, over 200,000 young leaders are also receiving technology and leadership skills training, with a goal to develop three to five million digital leaders by the next decade.

Fred previously worked as a McKinsey consultant before earning an MBA from Stanford and becoming an entrepreneur. He is an Echoing Green Fellow and Aspen Institute Fellow, and he was recognized as one of TIME Magazine's most influential people of 2019.

Margaret Talev

Margaret Talev is the Kramer Director of the Syracuse University's Democracy, Journalism & Citizenship Institute in Washington, D.C. and a senior contributor at Axios. She appears regularly on CNN, Sirius XM and NPR and is a professor of practice at the Newhouse School of Public Communications and an adjunct lecturer at Harvard's Kennedy School. She is a past president of the White House Correspondents' Association and the Washington Press Club Foundation, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and serves on the Board of Visitors for the Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland in College Park, her alma mater. She got her start reporting local news in Plant City, Fla., aka "The Winter Strawberry Capital of the World," and has covered Florida and California politics, Congress and Presidents Joe Biden, Donald Trump and Barack Obama, as well as Hillary Clinton's 2016 campaign and Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaigns.

Rebecca Winthrop

Rebecca Winthrop is a senior fellow and director of the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution. Her research focuses on education globally, with special attention to the skills young people need to thrive in work, life and as constructive citizens. Dr. Winthrop works to advance education systems transformation, including exploring how education innovations and family-school collaboration can be harnessed to leapfrog progress, particularly for the most marginalized youth. She advises governments, international institutions, civil society organizations, foundations and corporations on education issues. Dr. Winthrop has authored numerous articles, reports, books, and book chapters, including most recently *Transforming Education Systems: Why, What, and How* with Hon. Minister David Sengeh, *Collaborating to Transform and Improve Education Systems: A Playbook for Family-School Engagement* with Adam Barton, Mahsa Ershadi and Lauren Ziegler and *Leapfrogging Inequality: Remaking Education to Help Young People Thrive* with Adam Barton and Eileen McGivney.

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