Rewiring leadership

The future we want, the leadership we need

The University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership

For 800 years, the University of Cambridge has fostered leadership, ideas and innovations that have benefited and transformed societies. The University now has a critical role to play to help the world respond to a singular challenge: how to provide for as many as nine billion people by 2050 within a finite envelope of land, water and natural resources, whilst adapting to a warmer, less-predictable climate.

The University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) empowers business and policy leaders to make the necessary adjustments to their organisations, industries and economic systems in light of this challenge.

Rewiring the Economy

Rewiring the Economy is our ten-year plan to lay the foundations for a sustainable economy. The plan is built on ten interdependent tasks, delivered by business, government and finance leaders co-operatively over the next decade, to create an economy that encourages sustainable business practices and delivers positive outcomes for people and societies.

Executive summary

Businesses must develop the leadership needed today to create the future we want tomorrow.

Leadership development must support businesses to reframe their purpose, strategy and approach to value creation to achieve change at the pace and scale required.

The world is experiencing a 'Fourth Industrial Revolution', characterised by unprecedented changes driven by new technologies, as well as innovations in business models, products and processes. This is creating a volatile context of disruption, risk and opportunity for businesses. At the same time, there are pressing social and environmental challenges, from climate change to wealth inequality, which pose fundamental risks for the stability and wellbeing of our society.

The slow pace and reactive nature of regulation means that society cannot rely solely on governments and policymakers to effectively navigate these challenges. There is growing public expectation that businesses must step up and take responsibility for delivering positive outcomes for society and the environment. The commercial case for business responsibility and action is increasingly clear – and acknowledged by many leading enterprises. It is also increasingly recognised that reconciling commercial success with positive outcomes for society and the environment will require the reframing of the fundamental purpose of business. It will also require the transformation of whole organisations, sectors and value chains – in other words, the 'rewiring' of the economy. **Businesses need to lead this change, not just adapt to it. They need to shape the future we want.**
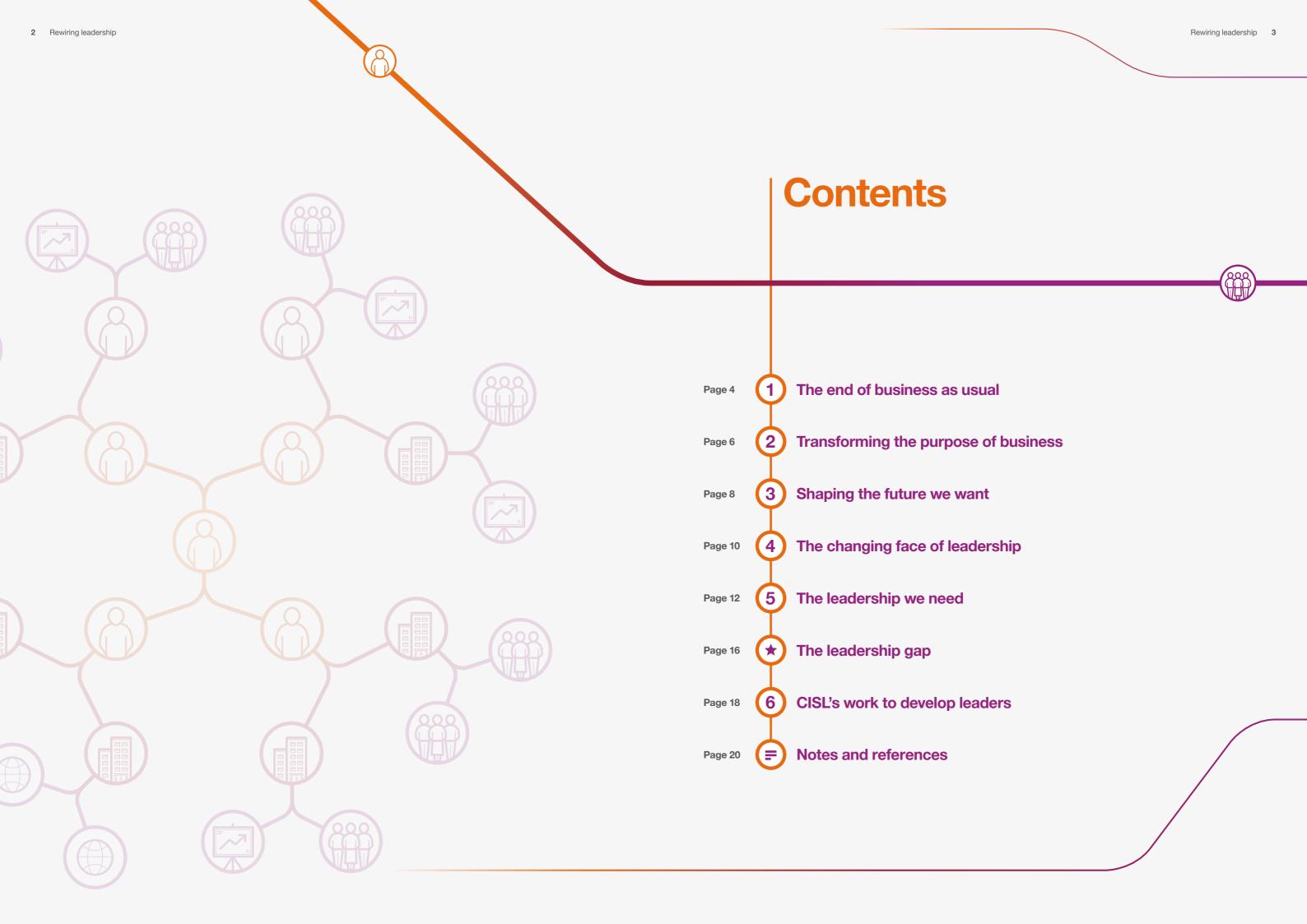
Leadership development and HR teams play an important role in recruiting, training and rewarding individuals to succeed in this context. Employees at all levels need to be equipped with the skills to not only nurture innovation and manage risk, but to transform the economic systems within which they operate, and to deliver on broader societal goals.

This paper outlines the leadership development model applied by the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL), which has been informed by nearly 30 years of delivering sustainability leadership programmes with more than 8,000 business and government leaders around the world. CISL was one of the first providers of executive education to engage with businesses to help them to understand the alignment of sustainability and profitability as an imperative, requiring strategic thought and leadership action before applying technical solutions. We have worked with global institutions to equip their senior teams with a strategic perspective, based on scientific evidence and insights from leading practitioners.

Leadership development must support businesses to reframe their purpose, strategy and approach to value creation to achieve change at the pace and scale required. There is growing consensus around a three-dimensional approach to effective leadership development: the cultivation of thinking (or knowledge), values (or self), and practice (or skills). And there is growing understanding of the specific capabilities that are required to lead change at the level of whole systems, to reconcile profitability and sustainability. However, there remains a huge gap in business commitment to leadership development that will deliver the necessary capacity of individuals, organisations and wider society to tackle these global challenges at scale.

The systemic pressures the world faces today mean that leadership simply cannot be the preserve of a 'heroic' few. Delivering the future we want will require organisations to cultivate leadership at all levels, and to embrace diverse and complementary strengths and approaches. No individual leader will possess all desirable capabilities. Instead, the focus should be on developing collective leadership capacity, with individuals supported and inspired to deliver against their potential, and to contribute effectively within their personal strengths and role.

We hope that this paper will be useful in informing and shaping business approaches to leadership development in the future. As part of a series, it aligns with other papers exploring best-practice approaches in building leadership for long-term business success, and leadership for system-level change.
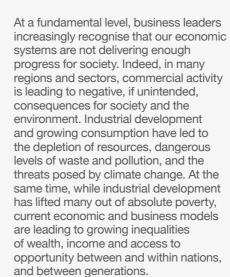
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The end of business as usual

Around the world, business innovation is leading to rapid and transformational changes in technology, consumption patterns and lifestyle aspirations. At the same time, societies are looking to businesses to lead change in response to urgent and systemic social and environmental challenges. These issues pose fundamental risks to the stability and wellbeing of societies, but also opportunities for adaptation. This changing context is driving dramatic shifts across whole sectors and economies, at a pace that requires not only new policy and governance frameworks, but also business responsibility and leadership.

Society is increasingly looking to businesses to embrace a wider responsibility beyond the limits of their own operations. There is an expectation that businesses will be proactive in developing solutions to social and environmental challenges and deliver the future we want.

At a fundamental level, business leaders increasingly recognise that our economic systems are not delivering enough progress for society. Indeed, in many regions and sectors, commercial activity is leading to negative, if unintended, consequences for society and the environment. Industrial development and growing consumption have led to the depletion of resources, dangerous levels of waste and pollution, and the threats posed by climate change. At the same time, while industrial development has lifted many out of absolute poverty, current economic and business models are leading to growing inequalities of wealth, income and access to opportunity between and within nations, and between generations.

These issues create strategic and operational challenges for businesses. These include unstable operating contexts, disruptions to markets and supply chains, increasing costs, regulatory burdens and liabilities, reputational damage, issues of staff retention and motivation, and the risk of dramatic shifts in the value of assets. They also represent significant opportunities, as businesses find new ways to create value through addressing these challenges, from low carbon technologies or water-efficient products, to creating new offerings for low-income groups, or providing services to an ageing population[1].

At the same time, whole market sectors and economies are being reshaped by rapid and transformational technological shifts – 'The Fourth Industrial Revolution'.

These technological advances – if used wisely – have significant potential to provide solutions to many societal challenges, meeting lifestyle needs and aspirations in energy, resource and labour-efficient ways. If mishandled however, this Fourth Industrial Revolution could simply accelerate current energy and resource demands.

These advances are not only technological. Innovations in business models, such as a shift from products to services and the rise of 'sharing economy' models such as Airbnb, Uber and Spotify, fundamentally change patterns of ownership and resource use. These developments have the potential to deliver positive outcomes for society and the environment – and represent huge commercial opportunities for business. However, they will inevitably drive significant disruption to traditional industries, with risks for the livelihoods of affected communities, and new challenges for rights, incomes and access to opportunity for citizens around the world[2].

In this new context, there are rapidly-evolving public expectations that business will respond to these broader social and environmental challenges. The pace of change is outstripping governments' ability to create new policies and regulations and to reshape public institutions. As a result, society is increasingly looking to businesses to embrace a wider responsibility beyond their own current operations, moving towards effective solutions that proactively deliver the future we need.

Businesses have the brightest talent, the global reach to deliver solutions at scale, an unrivalled ability to innovate and develop new technologies, and the entrepreneurial dynamism to find commercially-viable solutions to societal problems. Failure to deploy these assets in ways that make a positive contribution to society risks eroding trust and social licence to operate[3].

Business leaders increasingly recognise that this complex and volatile context is posing fundamental challenges to their organisations' role and purpose within society, and to the ways in which businesses acquire, create, protect and distribute value.

Given the nature and scale of the challenges, businesses no longer have the luxury to choose whether to respond. Indeed, especially amongst businesses working globally, the commercial case for action is increasingly well understood[4]. Businesses can no longer focus only on acknowledging why there is a need for change, but must also consider what action they need to take, how fast they need to move, and how they can develop the leadership they need to deliver transformational change.

2

Transforming the purpose of business

The purpose of business needs to go beyond a general positive sentiment to 'do good'. It must also signal a meaningful and substantive commitment to aligning the organisation's strategy and actions to the delivery of positive outcomes for society.

Many governments, businesses and communities already recognise this need for change. In 2015, the world's governments – with support and engagement from the international business community – agreed on global development outcomes to achieve, both through the Paris Climate Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These Goals serve as a global strategy that must be delivered by business, government and civil society working together to secure the long-term wellbeing and prosperity of society.

Already, some business leaders are driving transformational changes to align their purpose with the delivery of the SDGs and to harness new technologies and innovations to create value for society and the environment. Members of the Business & Sustainable Development Commission[5] argue that business has a unique opportunity and responsibility to find new sources of value creation that deliver for society: "It is incumbent on all of us to make the case for business to be at the heart of an open global economic system… Business leaders need to strike out in new directions to embrace more sustainable and inclusive economic models."

See the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership's report **Towards a Sustainable Economy**[19] for more detail on the commercial case for business action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.

When businesses align their purpose to delivering positive outcomes for society, the benefits are increasingly clear. Work by the Beacon Institute[6] found that having an organisational purpose aligned to the concept of 'doing well by doing good' can enhance business performance. This is achieved by instilling strategic clarity, channelling innovation, providing a force for, and a response to, transformation, tapping into a universal human need and building bridges to enable collaboration.

But to really harness these benefits, and to contribute to change at the pace and scale required, the purpose of business needs to go beyond a general positive sentiment to 'do good'. It must also signal a meaningful and substantive commitment to aligning the organisation's strategy and actions to the delivery of positive outcomes for society. To be effective in ensuring that the business thrives in the long term and is delivering the progress needed by society, its purpose needs to be:

Relevant to the nature and scale of the challenges faced by the global economy and society

To really deliver long-term societal change and ensure future business resilience and commercial success, the purpose of the business must contribute substantially to the system-level change required to achieve the SDGs.

Holistic – spanning the breadth of the business's activities

To avoid accusations of 'purpose washing' and to avoid internal inconsistencies, the organisation's purpose must be relevant to all aspects of its work – in other words, it can't only focus on positive impacts in some aspects of its work, ignoring harmful practices and negative impacts in other areas.

Authentic

The organisation's purpose must be trusted and believed, with full alignment between stated purpose and commercial decisions. Critically, there must be senior leadership buy-in and a commitment to 'walking the talk', through leadership behaviours and actions.

Central to guiding strategy and actions

The organisation's purpose must be specific enough to be a driving force in shaping business strategy and decisions, helping leaders to navigate dilemmas and complexity.

'Owned' across the organisation

It must resonate with and inspire employees. If staff do not understand why the organisation has articulated this purpose or how it relates to their work, it risks being neglected or diluted in day-to-day practice.

1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS	SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The SDGs are a set of 17 global priorities which are:

Interconnected: None of the goals can be delivered in isolation
Universal: They apply equally to developed and developing countries
Comprehensive: There are 17 goals, 169 targets and 230 indications
Ambitious: No country is close to achieving them yet.

3

Shaping the future we want

Identifying and delivering a clear, credible and relevant purpose to society will be important to deliver the transformation needed – but purpose alone is not sufficient. Achieving the future we want will require new business strategies and a different type of leadership.

Critically, it will require businesses not simply to react and adapt to the changing context, but to be proactive and effective in transforming their organisations, sectors, value chains and whole economies, to align commercial success with the delivery of the SDGs.

Put simply, there is a need for businesses – and their leaders – to not only anticipate the future, but to shape the future we want. This is the leadership we need.

This requires a shift in how we think about leadership. It will require a move beyond adaptive leadership, which is important in enabling leaders to navigate complexity, to a more ambitious focus on purpose-led, courageous leadership which is effective in catalysing change and reshaping social and economic systems, with the ultimate goal of delivering positive social and environmental outcomes.

Such purpose-driven leadership, which aims to contribute to change at the level of economic systems, is undoubtedly a more ambitious and demanding agenda for business, yet getting this right will be critical to creating and protecting value for business and society for the long term.

See the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership's report **Rewiring the Economy**[20] for more detail on the opportunity for transformational change at the level of whole economies and the implications for business.

Put simply, there is a need for businesses – and their leaders – to not only anticipate the future, but to shape the future we want. This is the leadership we need.

Individual leadership

Building and aligning the values, thinking and practices needed to lead purposeful change.

Business performance

Creating long-term commercial value and building organisational resilience that is aligned with the delivery of positive social and environmental outcomes.

Systemic economic transformation

Proactively working to transform the economy to create an enabling policy and market context for long-term, resilient business success.

Positive social and environmental outcomes

Delivering results at the scale and pace required to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

4

The changing face of leadership

Businesses have always had to change and adapt in order to thrive. As the former Chief Executive of GE, Jack Welch, said: "When the rate of change inside an institution becomes slower than the rate of change outside, the end is in sight."[7] For the most part, it is leadership within businesses that has driven change in economies and societies, through developing and harnessing new technologies, finding new ways to meet societies' needs, and driving new consumption patterns and lifestyle aspirations.

Those businesses that have experienced long-term success have often done so through innovation in business models, products and processes, shaping as well as adapting to external trends and changes. They have successfully recruited and secured individuals with the talent, skills and knowledge to mitigate risk and spot opportunities in a changing marketplace. Leadership development and HR teams have played an important role in recruiting, training and rewarding individuals to succeed in this context.

With the increasing pace of change and the evolving role of business in society, traditional leadership development approaches have evolved to equip leaders with the confidence and skills to be resilient within a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA[8]) world. This has led to many new ways to frame leadership development, such as 'future fit leaders', 'leading in complexity', 'leadership in a changing world' and 'leading for change'. Within this context, new programmes have tended to focus on one or more of the following:

- developing leaders who are adaptive and able to learn[9]
- cultivating approaches for leading in complexity and complex systems[10]
- harnessing individual purpose as a driver of superior performance[11]
- committing to leading change through experimentation[12]
- encouraging self-aware, authentic and empathetic leadership approaches[13].

Emerging leadership challenges and dilemmas

These developments are important and represent significant progress. But our research and experience tell us that, although these are critical dimensions of leadership, they are not sufficient.

Effective leaders for the future will be motivated by a purpose that aligns commercial success with delivering positive outcomes for society. This will require them to be committed to shaping, and not just adapting to, the future, and to be equipped to address the specific challenges inherent in achieving this goal.

Traditional frameworks and approaches – with their focus on succeeding within current economic and social systems, rather than on transforming these systems – do not yet acknowledge many of these challenges, and do not equip leaders to navigate them. These tensions and dilemmas include:

- **balancing long-term transformation with the delivery of short-term results**
- **making progress in the context of market signals that reward only the creation of value for shareholders and not for wider stakeholders**
- **setting targets informed by science, rather than what is currently possible or convenient**
- **delivering against social expectations, when no conventional business case can be found**
- **determining 'fair' boundaries for business responsibility**
- **identifying points of leverage within the economic system**
- **understanding how to advocate for change at the level of whole systems**
- **making a positive impact upon 'wicked' problems such as poverty and inequality**
- **undertaking international, cross-sectoral collaborations amid rising geopolitical uncertainty, trends towards more protectionism, and fundamental differences in worldviews.**

To navigate such tensions, leaders will need to be equipped with a clear sense of purpose, as well as with the necessary values, thinking tools, knowledge, attitudes and skills to deliver change at the pace and scale required. This has significant implications for the way that leaders are developed.

Growing consensus about key leadership capabilities

Despite the variety of approaches to leadership development, there is a growing consensus around a general three-dimensional structure of effective leadership practice: thinking (or knowledge), values (or self), and practice (or skills)[14].

Fostering these three domains of leadership is at the core of CISL's approach to leadership development but – critically – interpreted in the context of our view on the nature of leadership that is needed.

Whilst thinking has always been an important dimension of effective leadership, the new challenges that leaders face require equal – if not more – weight on character, underpinning values, ethics as well as personal worldviews, attitudes and sense of agency, and on the specific skills and capabilities that are important to deliver change[15].

Moreover, leadership programmes must distinguish between 'leader' and 'leadership' development[16]. The former focuses on the development of the individual, while the latter instead works to build collective capacity, considering the diversity and strengths of individuals across the organisation as a whole. Taking a multi-level approach, which embraces the capacity of individuals, organisations and wider society, can ensure that leadership is not simply seen as the preserve of a 'heroic' few[17].

Traditional leadership frameworks and approaches do not yet acknowledge global challenges and do not equip leaders to navigate them.
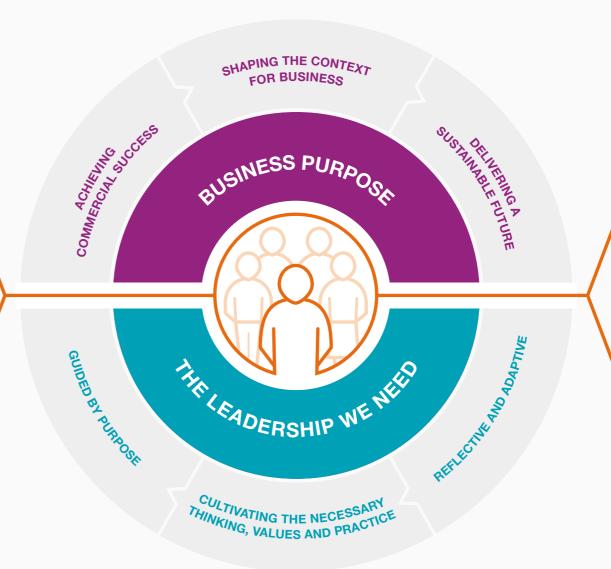
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The leadership we need

Informed by CISL's work with over 8,000 leaders around the world, the Cambridge Impact Leadership Model describes the leadership we need to deliver value for business, society and the environment.

It is leadership that is:

1 Guided by a purpose, to align business success with the delivery of positive social and environmental outcomes, and a commitment to transform economic and social systems to achieve change at the pace and scale required.

2 Built on thinking, values and practice to deliver on this purpose:

Values: Developing the values, sense of agency and worldview consistent with achieving purposeful leadership.

Thinking: Developing the contextual insight, mindset and knowledge base necessary for innovating new forms of commercial and societal value.

Practice: Nurturing the leadership practices, specific skills, and the personal resilience to experiment and deliver results in line with purpose.

3 Reflective and adaptive; continually learning and unlearning and holding itself accountable to actual measures of progress in order to deliver the results required:

– ensuring consistency and integrity, 'walking the talk'

– letting go and 'unlearning' historic or legacy practices or approaches that are no longer fit for purpose in the context of new evidence and insight

– ensuring that the level of ambition is determined by what is needed and that targets are set according to the latest science, rather than what is currently convenient or possible

– seeking out, analysing and sharing data and evidence of progress – and being willing to adapt and evolve targets and strategies in line with this.

Figure 1: The Cambridge Impact Leadership Model

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP ACROSS BUSINESS

Delivering the future we want will require organisations to cultivate purposeful, reflective leadership at all levels, and to embrace diverse and complementary strengths and approaches.

LEADING CHANGE FOR A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Aligning commercial success with the delivery of positive social and environment outcomes and delivering progress at the scale and pace required.

SHAPING THE CONTEXT FOR BUSINESS

ACHIEVING COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

DELIVERING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

BUSINESS PURPOSE

GUIDED BY PURPOSE

THE LEADERSHIP WE NEED

REFLECTIVE AND ADAPTIVE

CULTIVATING THE NECESSARY THINKING, VALUES AND PRACTICE

5

Values

Thinking

Practice

This purpose-driven, systems-focused leadership has implications for the thinking, values and practice that must be cultivated – individually and collectively.

Delivering the future we want will require organisations to cultivate leadership at all levels, and to embrace diverse and complementary strengths and approaches.

No individual leader will possess all desirable capabilities. Instead, the focus should be on developing collective leadership capacity, with individuals supported and inspired to deliver against their potential, and to contribute effectively within their personal strengths and role.

Connect to personal and collective values to unlock commitment, courage and inspiration.

- Understand what inspires and gives a sense of meaning.
- Know what you stand for – the principles and convictions that underpin courageous action.
- Align values and purpose with commercial success that delivers positive outcomes for society and the environment.

Build a sense of agency and responsibility for leading the change required.

- Develop an appropriate sense of accountability and commitment to be part of the solution.
- Nurture clarity of purpose and intent in individual contributions and intended outcomes.
- Cultivate a sense of agency to influence change that parks 'ego' and works alongside others.

Surface worldviews and understand the implications for judgement and decisions.

- Surface underpinning assumptions and worldviews, and explore how these influence judgements.
- Clarify position on moral concepts such as 'fairness', 'inclusion' and 'responsibility' and how these shape decisions.
- Address biases, barriers and inconsistencies in aligning purpose and practice.

Develop insight into the changing context for business and evolving societal expectations.

- Analyse and have confidence in the science and data behind the trends that shape the operating context for the business.
- Develop agility in scanning for, and assessing, consequent risks and opportunities.
- Understand the wider stakeholder context, and changing societal expectations.

Develop the mindset and thinking skills necessary for leading change in complex systems.

- Nurture 'big picture' thinking about the whole system, with a focus on identifying intervention points.
- Engage with inconsistency, dissonance and complexity, and adapt and evolve thinking as required.
- Interpret short-term priorities and decisions in light of a longer-term vision of a different future.

Build a knowledge base for innovating and creating new forms of value, both commercially and for wider society.

- Critically analyse leading practice in innovation and transformation.
- Understand how to innovate business models, products and processes to deliver business performance and wider societal outcomes.
- Recognise where business has specific opportunities and capabilities to reshape or create new value beyond the current business case.

Nurture leadership attitudes and practices that are required to deliver the system-level change required.

- Develop the drive, commitment and tenacity to get things done, alongside the wisdom to understand critical windows of opportunity.
- Cultivate an active appreciation for diverse perspectives and contributions, and an inclusive and empathetic approach to engaging with others.
- Actively experiment, nurturing creativity, adaptability and agility, to drive innovation.

Develop specific skills and capabilities to have impact at system level.

- Develop the strategic thinking, planning and change-management skills to deliver change at the level of whole systems.
- Build capacity to collaborate effectively beyond traditional boundaries, through active listening, dialogue, building trust and navigating tensions.
- Cultivate the ability to use personal and institutional voices, and harness the power of storytelling to influence the wider system.

Clarify personal role and contribution, and build confidence and resilience in taking action.

- Appreciate the range of roles involved in bringing about change, building confidence in one's own contribution and when to use the leverage of others.
- Build personal and collective resilience to sustain ambition and motivation over the long term.

The leadership gap

The current state of leadership development in practice: businesses are not yet developing the leadership we need to deliver the future we want.

In a significant number of businesses, Board members and management teams were most out of touch with the new context.

In 2017, CISL undertook practitioner research to deepen understanding of how multinational companies are defining and developing their leadership and talent pipelines in order to thrive in an increasingly complex business environment, while simultaneously contributing to long-term social and environmental goals[18]. This work was informed by conversations with sustainability professionals, Human Resources (HR) managers and Learning and Development (L&D) experts from more than 20 multinational businesses, based in Europe, Asia, the Middle East and North America.

The key conclusions of the report were:

- Businesses that are equipping their people to consider social and environmental performance alongside commercial success have realised tangible benefits, including increased employee engagement, and attraction and retention of talent, as well as enhanced approaches to innovation and a positive impact on brand and reputation.

- However, many organisations recognise that they are missing out on these benefits because many employees, at all levels, do not possess the necessary knowledge and capabilities. This is often because of lack of alignment and collaboration between the sustainability, HR and learning teams.

- In a significant number of businesses, Board members and management teams were most out of touch with the new context. They lack the regular front-line contact that would enable them to see the implications of social and environmental challenges in the markets in which they operate – resulting in a lack of leadership and motivation to drive transformational change. Yet, in many businesses, these top-tier executives are perceived to be too experienced to require development themselves.
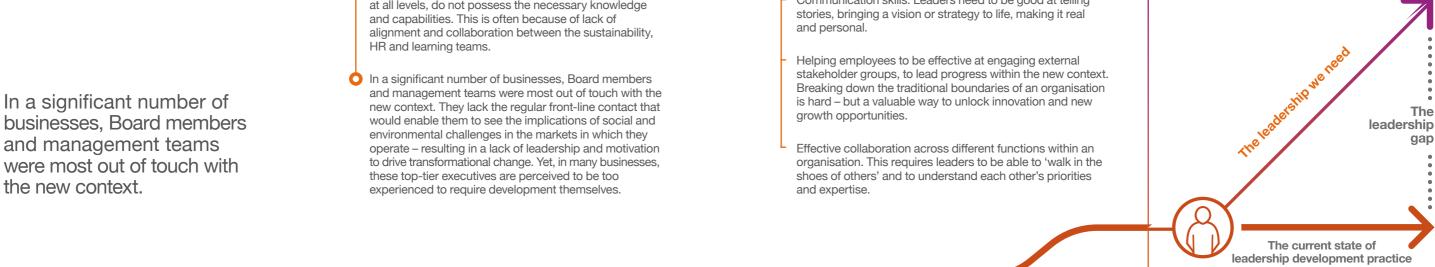
- Building leadership for sustainability isn't as simple as adding a 'one size fits all' briefing module into existing programmes. It is about diagnosing the knowledge, thinking, values, attitudes and capabilities gaps, understanding the leverage points and developing the right approach to meet these needs. Among the organisations CISL spoke to, important recurring requirements included:

  - The need to help leaders to develop emotional intelligence and empathy, the ability to actively listen, to be aware of and address unconscious bias, to be open-minded, inclusive and curious.

  - The need to inspire and harness employee passion. Integration of sustainability into strategy and objectives is important but it isn't enough if people don't have the passion and mindset necessary to lead change.

  - A need for people to think more innovatively and creatively. Sometimes all that is needed is to define the ambition, give permission for creative responses and then create space for innovation. At other times it is about creating mindsets or providing thinking tools, while sometimes it is about instilling courage and resilience.

  - Communication skills. Leaders need to be good at telling stories, bringing a vision or strategy to life, making it real and personal.

  - Helping employees to be effective at engaging external stakeholder groups, to lead progress within the new context. Breaking down the traditional boundaries of an organisation is hard – but a valuable way to unlock innovation and new growth opportunities.

  - Effective collaboration across different functions within an organisation. This requires leaders to be able to 'walk in the shoes of others' and to understand each other's priorities and expertise.

Overall, one of the greatest challenges that businesses face with this agenda is the struggle to reconcile short-term business needs with long-term planning and performance. In many cases, businesses have acknowledged the commercial impacts of global trends, but have not translated this understanding into the leadership development curriculum. The emphasis has been on mandatory compliance training, process and procedure, and there is little time for a longer-term needs assessment and leadership development.

For businesses to be successful in shaping the future we want – aligning commercial success with the delivery of positive social and environmental outcomes – we will need to see a significant shift in the development of leadership capacity, with new collaborations spanning HR, L&D, sustainability and executive teams, and with an investment in leadership capacity right up to Board level.

The leadership we need

The leadership gap

The current state of leadership development practice

6

CISL's work to develop leaders

CISL develops leadership by:

The principles underpinning our work in the field of leadership are:

For nearly 30 years, the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership has been at the forefront of defining and catalysing the leadership needed for a sustainable economy and the future we want.

Nearly 8,000 executives and practitioners have participated in our educational programmes, which seek to develop and empower those who will lead change through business at every level. Our global Alumni Network is itself a powerful vehicle for change, providing a virtuous circle of learning, as alumni return to participate in research, teaching and case studies. Through these interactions, the Institute is continually learning from cutting-edge practice as it emerges, which we then integrate into our teaching.

Our work has benefited from the global perspective that comes from working with executives from the world's largest companies, as well as international institutions such as the World Bank and mayors from China's major cities. Each year we work with more than 100 companies and organisations in some way to develop their leadership positions. By working with individual companies, and by convening groups of leading organisations and policymakers on issues such as banking and sustainability, natural capital and climate change policy, we have a deep understanding of the strategic issues faced by companies and leaders, as they attempt to align their strategy and action with the future we want.

The leadership model outlined above distils what we have learned into an approach to inform leadership development programmes for ourselves and for others to follow.

Helping companies to assess their leadership needs and develop a strategy to respond through our advisory services.

Building the capacity and commitment of individuals to lead through a rapidly changing global context, through both graduate and executive education.

Supporting organisations to prepare for the future by enabling them to understand and manage risks, harness opportunities for long-term value creation, and shape an enabling context for sustainable business.

Catalysing collaboration between organisations to lead systemic change by co-creating solutions, taking leadership positions and making targeted interventions.

We are mission driven. All our work contributes to our vision for a sustainable economy.

We seek to align commercial success with the outcomes that society needs, and work with companies to help them understand and achieve this alignment.

Our work is underpinned by research and evidence from the University of Cambridge and beyond, wherever the best thinking may be.

We are challenging and rigorous, yet supportive, championing a level of ambition and accountability equal to what the science demands. We encourage rigorous thinking and expose companies and individuals to diverse perspectives, whilst providing expert support.

We are solutions focused. Many of the world's problems are well understood. We work to help find ambitious yet pragmatic solutions, through promoting new approaches and collaborations, by harnessing innovation and technology, and by sharing our learning for wider impact.

We look for collaborative economic solutions to global challenges. Together, leaders from business, government and the financial sector can 'rewire' the global economy to deliver sustainable outcomes, characterised by the UN SDGs.

We unlock change by creating a space for constructive dialogue and innovation. We provide a trusted space with expert facilitators to explore fundamental questions of purpose, values and worldviews – whether for groups of individuals, or groups of companies – and to surface and explore new ideas and solutions.

Our interdisciplinary and diverse approaches aim to work across traditional silos. We support collaboration between business, government, finance, academia and civil society, and bring our own insights from working with many sectors and regions to address a breadth of social and environmental issues.

We design all of our programmes around the needs of the learner. We ensure that leaders are inspired and engaged throughout the process, and beyond their work with us, by taking time to understand client as well as learner needs and motivations, and the pressures and trends shaping their individual and organisational contexts. We recognise and embrace different learning styles and support the development of strong and ongoing peer networks.

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