



# FUTURE-PROOFING LEADERS FOR 2030 AND BEYOND

1. What are future-proof leaders?
2. What are the qualities of future-proof leaders?
3. How do we develop the future-proof leader?

Considering how many disruptive changes we have seen in the last 10 years, we have little idea of what the world will be like after the next 10. This will have major implications for the leaders who will be driving companies' success and survival in the not-too-distant future.

## 1. WHAT ARE “FUTURE-PROOF LEADERS” ANYWAY?



“Future-proofing” is a concept used in different areas of expertise that need to anticipate and minimize the effects of future events: Think product design, engineering, architecture, and mobility.

Futurist and author **Jack Uldrich** defines a future-proof leader as “someone who takes the time to become aware of how fast the world is changing, aware of various trends that might affect his or her business.” There is grave danger that leaders assume that the current state of the world and business will continue as-is, enabling them to simply maintain the status quo.

**“By 2030, 30% more time at work will be spent learning”.**

Source: The New Work Smarts

## 2. WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF FUTURE-PROOF LEADERS?

There are, however, some general traits that we argue leaders should have today that will help them, their teams, and their organizations in an increasingly VUCA\* world.



### Critical Thinking

As information grows and circulates with increasing speed, leaders will need to sharpen their ability to think critically, testing their assumptions using concrete evidence. They will need to not only formulate various future scenarios but understand the variables that can affect their decisions and ensure that they have tangible and verifiable facts on which to base those decisions.



### Curiosity & Innovation

The current business environment is full of surprises and uncertainties, which makes forecasting the future a difficult, if not impossible, exercise. Leaders need to be able to look away from their own industry or sector regularly to see innovative changes occurring elsewhere and think about how emerging trends will impact their business – for better or worse. Leaders will need a high-level of curiosity and imagination to grasp threats and leverage opportunities that the future will bring, as well as the open-mindedness to “unlearn what they have learned.”



### Emotional Intelligence

Leaders will need the skills to build and support a culture of collaboration, bringing together experts with different specialties to share knowledge and create cross-functionally. To achieve this, they will need to foster an open environment in which team member can contribute and be heard, regardless of seniority.



### Tech-savviness

Leaders need to be aware of evolving digital technologies and the ecosystems behind them, what they mean for the business, and which ones the organization needs to adopt. Instead of adding a shiny new technology for the sake of it, leaders will also need to articulate the importance of new technologies so that everyone is clear on the “why”. In addition, leaders will also need to be comfortable working with digital teams, high-performing millennials, and startups, while also discussing large amounts of data, insights derived from it, and the informed decisions they make.

\*VUCA: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous

### 3. HOW DO WE DEVELOP THE FUTURE-PROOF LEADER?

In order to develop leaders who can navigate their businesses through the next ten years, those responsible for leadership development should consider several approaches.



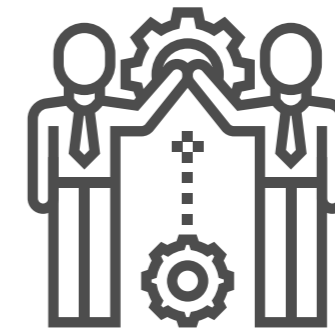
#### Develop skills and self-awareness through experiential learning

Skills such as emotional intelligence, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking are learned over time through experience and reflection. Building experiential learning elements into leadership development initiatives provides an excellent, risk-free opportunity to do this. Assessments such as a 360-feedback process will also provide individuals with more self-awareness and help them understand any skill gaps that they can address. Also use the opportunity to provide delegates exposure to new disciplines and functions so they develop a more well-rounded view of the business.



#### Look beyond "high-potential" candidates

In many organizations, high potentials are frequently labelled so because they fit the mold of what a current leader should be in the organization, not what will be needed in the coming years. Consider identifying candidates who exhibit the traits and behaviors of the future-proof leader and start their development early, with initiatives targeting more junior candidates.



#### Don't ignore the current leadership

While the desired outcome of leadership development initiatives should be to create and impact leaders of the future, it is important to engage their managers - the current leadership, and ensure that they at a minimum support the development process. Ideally, managers will adopt and role model critical behaviors.

A RECENT STUDY SHOWS THAT EMPLOYERS WANT "UNIQUELY HUMAN SKILLS" AND THAT SOFT SKILLS ARE CONSIDERED VERY IMPORTANT.

74% Ability to listen

70% Attention to detail & attentiveness

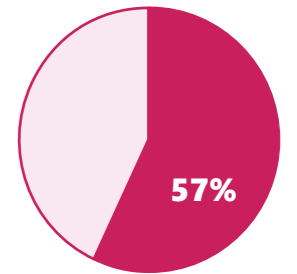
67% Critical thinking

69% Effective communication

65% Strong interpersonal abilities

65% Being able to keep learning

Source: Cengage by Morning Consult



"57% of senior leaders say that soft skills are more important than hard skills".

Source: LinkedIn

StratX supports Fortune 500 companies in the development of current and future leaders using a blended, experiential learning approach that enhances the on-the-job performance of delegates, their teams, and their organizations. Contact us to find out how we can support yours today.



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