

Creating a Meaningful, Innovative Organization

A new leadership paradigm and growth-oriented cycle view

by Dr. Nicole Pfeffermann - March 1, 2025

CONNECT. CO-CREATE. THRIVE.

Preface

Don't be pushed around by the fears in your mind. Be led by the dreams in your heart.
Instead of worrying about what you cannot control, shift your energy to what you can create.
Roy T. Bennett

My intention is to provide a new perspective on leadership and how leaders can create (more) meaningful, innovative organizations by shifting to a new leadership paradigm and cultivating a sustainable, growth-oriented cycle view for unwavering, long-lasting success.

This White Paper focuses on new concepts and ideas and aims at empowering leaders and change makers to go beyond our current reality and main challenges in business model innovation and value chain transformation in the AI/digital age related to Growth 2.0. This also means to better understand the new role of strategy and leadership—helping leaders to reflect on their capability to lead and cultural transformation in human-centric organizations. For instance, to better understand and respond to the idea of self-directed teams and a new role of leaders who better connect, co-create and thrive with a collaborative mindset.

Beyond creating a new leadership path it is about the openness and curiosity of leaders to shift to a new leadership paradigm for making the world a better place and for *being* a human (self)leader. What it means and how you can become a human (self) leader is part of this paper.

By understanding more about the cycle view leaders can adopt the surfer's mentality to lead more naturally and be more in the flow. They understand how to inspire others, better support meaningful, innovative organizations and embrace a new way of thinking as a foundation for a future society.

Based on my experience and latest publications this paper includes new insights and is also led by my mission to elevate leadership and businesses. It is for business leaders and change makers as well as strategists, HR and individuals who want to advance and build new, future-ready organizations.

Nicole Pfeffermann

Introduction

In the digital economy innovation activities have shifted from new product development to business model innovation and strategic thinking in open innovation. While firms experiment with involving consumers and a crowd in value creation, only a few, however, turn value-based innovation into thriving digital platforms with a powerful business model.

In addition, we lost ourselves in the ‘doing’ world and micro-manage our entire day, weeks, and years focusing on the digital and material world. Relating has become the new status instrument—how many followers, likes, engagement activities, and ‘connections’ on social media channels. Managing innovation means we have to turn a new idea from the creative world into innovation success and new digital businesses. Both communication and marketing are enablers to impact innovation performance.

Leaders have become the facilitator: They envision and shape the future of businesses with new ideas and visions; plan and execute strategy related to innovation; and lead and motivate business units, teams, and individuals to perform open innovation.

What is coming next? According to [Richard Barret ‘The Barret Model’](#), the next steps for leaders are:

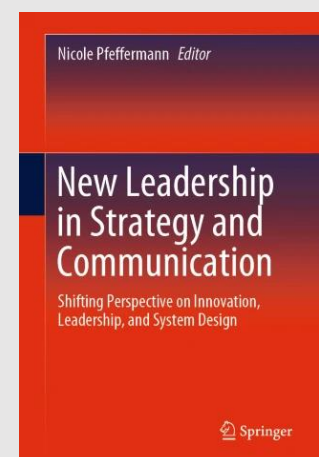
- Authentic Leaders
- Mentor / Partner Leaders
- Visionary Leaders

And new leaders are just the beginning to inspire and empower others, make an impact in the world and care for humanity.

According to **BCG (2024)** ‘a company’s ability to innovate isn’t just an advantage—it’s a necessity.

But organizations have never been as ill prepared to reach their innovation goals as they are today.’

The traditional leadership style of top down management is too slowly evolving into a collaborative approach that empower employees and blurs the lines between boss and worker. **B. Bauer (2020)**



Leadership as a Top Priority

Nowadays consumers have a share in creating value. Value is co-defined and co-created with 'prosumers' and business partners, business model innovation is an on-going process and open innovation is key to succeed in digital business. It requires to get access to new resources, effectively co-ordinate activities, govern capabilities, manage (digitalized) information inside and outside of a firm's boundaries as well as constantly evolve IT-driven operating systems. Consequently, organization design builds a strong foundation for both business model innovation and open innovation. It allows an organization to raise the level of evolutionary fitness (innovation) and develop the innovation capability as a catalyst for growth, prosperity and success.

How do we create a meaningful, innovative organization?

In recent years leadership has become a top priority for organizations to intentionally create a company's future; it involves effectively communicating visionary ideas/thoughts, empowering people to better engage in innovation and transformation and building a culture of empathy & authenticity. In human-centric organizations, for instance, leaders know how to ignite passion, spark curiosity and prioritize selfcare and well-being.

The identified two major growth drivers are:

Leadership and Leadership Communication (Blueprint): Understanding dynamics in fast-changing, unpredictable and disruptive environments and how the role of human individuals. Hence, communication has changed over the years and is essential for managing innovation and creating growth opportunities in systems. The *communication blueprint* is key to understand system dynamics and better lead, connect and interact with human individuals for innovation.

Strategy, Business Innovation and Human Connection: We enter a new human (imagination) era. Innovation is communication and the collective imagination power is key for organizations. Engagement is essential in collaborative

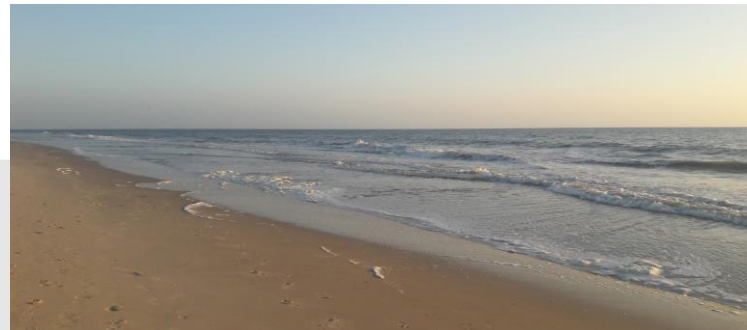
innovation. Connection is, however, far more than engagement. Human connection and leadership in business practice require therefore the right interactions to foster a work culture for innovation, cultivate co-imagination as a systematic process and support digital transformation incl. tools / AI.

'It is not only about individual creativity, but how minds can interact, creating collectively imagination and momentum to turn ideas into new realities. And it is not only about product innovation; it is [important] for business leaders who want to re-envision their entire enterprise and increase imaginative potential.'

[Reeves and Fuller \(2021\) p.6](#); [Reeves \(2023\), The Royal Institution \(youtube\)](#)

It's Easy. New Leaders Are Surfers.

By Nicole Pfeffermann, February 27, 2025



Speaking in the metaphor, as a surfer you are catching the wave in the right moment to surf it. You learn how to surf and practice every day to gain a better understanding of how to ride waves. Surfing is not driven by the idea that you see a wave coming in and then ask your team to surf for you. As a new leader you are completely in your role in a natural way of learning and progressing your skills to get to the next level. You are a role model for team members if you are in the 'line-up' with your team to catch your own wave in the right moment and then let others find and catch their waves, for instance, the right moment to bring forward a new concept or undertake new tasks in agile project teams. You find your own growth zone and enlarge this space every day by moving forward and giving your ideas a space to grow.

Four Recommendations for Becoming a Successful New Leader

- **Learning it!** The big waves are already there, so just learn to surf.
- **Having fun!** Share new experiences and enjoy the present moment.
- **Making a move!** Have the right attitude in moving forward with your ideas.
- **Building a unique culture – never copy!** The only way to success is to acquire new knowledge. That is: Not IT-driven but rather using an environmental lens and relational communication to establish an open innovation culture based on ethical standards.

You can learn more on https://npfeffermann.de/blog_nicole_pfeffermann_1.html.

The New Leadership World / Path

What means growth in the digitalized information economy? It all started with the World Wide Web and rapid growth of new technologies and connectivity among users leading to new investments in fast-growing Internet-based companies and social media platforms. After this period of extreme growth 1.0, most businesses are facing nowadays a variety of challenges in business innovation and digital transformation as they are looking for new ways to achieve growth.

Nowadays the boundaries of management and leadership blur, and innovation and communication are the two essential impact factors when it comes to growth and become increasingly necessary for any organization. Rethinking innovation communication is therefore a necessity and makes a difference for future-ready organizations to grow, successfully transform & thrive, and show up as leaders. Innovation communication is more than a communication field in corporate communication / PR, it is a new way of thinking in leadership, strategic management / top management and strategy. **What has changed in strategic thinking and strategy for growth-oriented leaders?**

Strategy needs a new system design to link strategy with innovation and communication. The Open Strategy Architecture (OSA) is a new system for leaders to consider the meta level of strategy: (1) Strategic positioning with business model innovation, (2) strategy for innovation with visionary ideas of thought leaders, (3) dynamic strategy with co-creation, and (4) strategy innovation with imagination and communication.

The conceptual framework, as illustrated in Fig.1, needs defined implementation activities appropriate to each stage, understanding barriers and enablers, and creating an implementation team. In a second step it is important to consider sub-activities, for instance, business model innovation including communication model innovation and value chain transformation. The OSA framework consists of a set of guiding standards to link strategy and innovation and is designed to be flexible and adaptive, allowing organizations of all sizes to tailor its implementation to their specific needs.

Leaders act strategically and ‘engage employees at all levels in strategic conversations’, as a critical capability of leaders for a changing world, [Harvard Business \(2019\)](#) , p. 9.

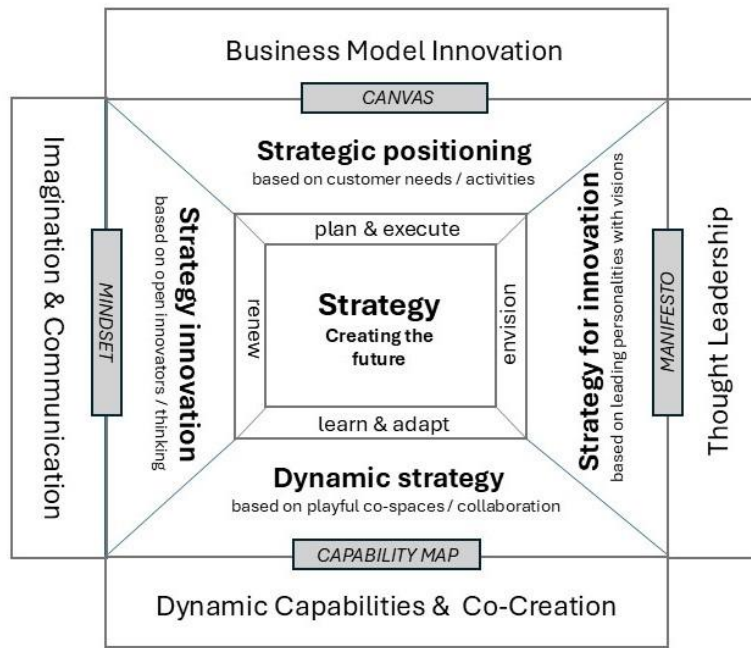


Fig. 1 Open Strategy Architecture (OSA), by the author

Leaders who foster innovation build cultures that make it safe to play with new ideas and try new things. Leaders also enable the collaborations that fuel innovation. And investing in leadership development is a commitment of an organization to unlock the full potential of leaders and elevate leadership both for organizational growth, strategy & innovation success and for making the world a better place. And better leaders create space for people to grow, lead on-going aspiration-based dialogues and be appreciated.

A new way of thinking to develop leadership development:

Leadership Path Development (LPD) is a new strategic framework that helps organizations to bring leadership to the next level: (1) identifying key issues and relevant factors, (2) foster a common understanding for effective collaboration, and (3) create a path for growth--from three current leadership approaches to human (self)leadership. This framework can be adapted and customized to fit a specific context and be strategically relevant for an organization (see Fig. 2).

Strategy plays a crucial role in transformation.

Leadership plays a critical role in building conviction and commitment for a longer-term strategic transformation.

Kevin Laczkowski,
[McKinsey \(2019\)](#)

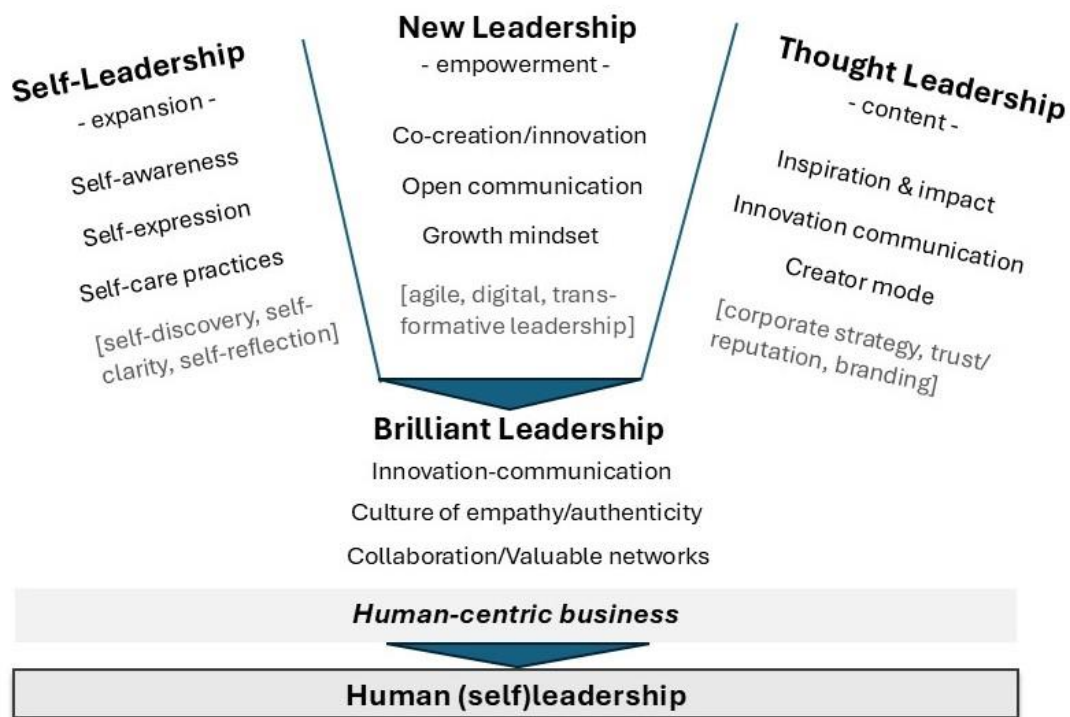


Fig. 2 A new leadership path, by the author

In fact, **human (self)leadership** brings self-leadership and human leadership together. The idea is to go on a journey beyond empowerment (new leadership). Diving deeper into self-concept, self-acceptance and self-awareness is key to self-improve and positively engage with human (self)leaders. Human (self)leaders unlock the leader within and share a positive collaborative mindset. They work on themselves and combine this inner work with new traits, standards,... to better lead and help others to grow and become their best version. It is about prioritizing well-being.

Self-leadership goes hand in hand with human leadership to value and train a unique human skillset leading to co-creation and imagination (innovation) and an invaluable future for humanity.

Human (self)leadership is the next step in leadership development and includes mindful communication, reflective innovation dialogues and an enriching and enjoyable journey to fulfillment and inner peace/calmness including being centered, maintaining dignity and responding thoughtfully. Respect is the core value, and the mind-body way of leading is key for great human (self)leaders.

The Growth-Oriented Cycle View for Leaders (Managers)

True empowerment means to focus our attention on self-improvement. Self-improvement implies to become better, to thrive and achieve a next level. A next level is a new experience, a new understanding of self, and adaptation of our 'navigation system' how we perceive and see a new situation and the world around us. We have three journeys to go and different concrete steps to create, support and lead as a meaningful, innovative organization.



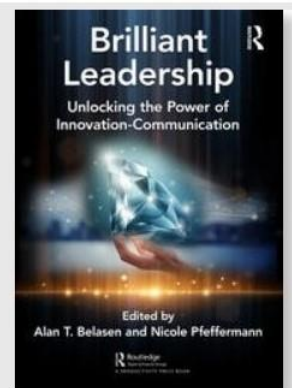
NEW

And the boundaries blur...



Driving innovation through self-management and a redefined leadership coaching style

New leaders focus on growth/innovation and people/communication and engage in consistent leadership development and foster collaborative learning: Unlocking the power of innovation-communication.



What can you do?

Shifting from the old to the new paradigm is essential to stop emotional-mental abuse and imbalance in systems which in turn leads to a better foundation for skyrocket, long-term economic growth. Instead of low standards and values (= low energy exchange systems) and mental-emotional health problems, growth 3.0 means high-value standards beyond contribution, learning, and human connection and beyond the key values of authenticity, integrity, and equality.

From the inside-out perspective, human (self)leaders are great role models in the advanced co-creation age leading to a global WE-mindset, healthy relating and interaction patterns, and self-expression. As a result, new added values are the catalyst for innovation (assets growth 3.0 vs profit growth 2.0).

Here are concrete steps you can do for your journeys 1-3:

- 1. Becoming a human (self)leader**

Invest in yourself and maximize your growth potential.

You can build your influence and grow within your organization by learning more about yourself and what self-awareness can do for you.

- 2. Creating space to grow and transform**

Improve your communication style and create a positive environment for aspiration-based dialogues and sharing ideas, engaging in innovation.

Leadership communication has changed. Learn more about it.

- 3. Implementing the new cycle view**

Build a new understanding for self-improvement and cyclic development.

Commit to the three journeys to create, support and lead as a (more) meaningful, innovative organization.

PLUS: Making yourself a priority is an act of self-love. To be happy and be your best is not only a commitment it includes to take action: (1) Creating space for what truly matters, (2) taking care of yourself physically, emotionally and mentally, and (3) not allowing just anybody into your life... invest in yourself! You can develop your own selfcare guide for your personal wellbeing, a wellness program for employee wellbeing or discover a selfcare concept for a new you...

The New Role of Leaders

Nowadays new business leaders and change makers have the right skillset to adapt, evolve systems and drive meaningful change. They focus on continuous growth and navigating expansion-creation dynamics; at the same time they understand and facilitate employer wellbeing, support networks and flexible work—three key elements of human-centric businesses.

As far as leadership is concerned, being a leader involves commitment and accountability for actions, thoughts and words and every human being should be a self-leader in his or her own life to align and expand. That means as a human being we embrace the impact space, stand ground in our individual growth zone and create new verbal expressions including neuronal pathways to experience new actions, thoughts, and results. We cannot outsource and separate communication from ourselves and at the same time expect to become the person who we want to be and grow, thrive and transform in life—to be a great human (self)leader stands for ‘walk the talk’, ‘speak with conviction’, and engage with other individuals; focusing thereby on shaping the future, our tomorrow, our world for human development and new ideas and realities.

A deep growth strategy is thereby a new way of thinking for (new) leaders when it comes to creating healthy systems, and managing and leading innovation, i.e. understanding alignment and expansion in a deeper way to positively influence management and individuals by offering a deep growth view for systems, as illustrated in Fig. 3.



Focus: CREATING a meaningful, innovative organization with a powerful three-step approach:
(a) *Deep growth strategy*,
(b) communication model innovation, and (c) internal capabilities.

Deep Growth Strategy: A New Way of Thinking

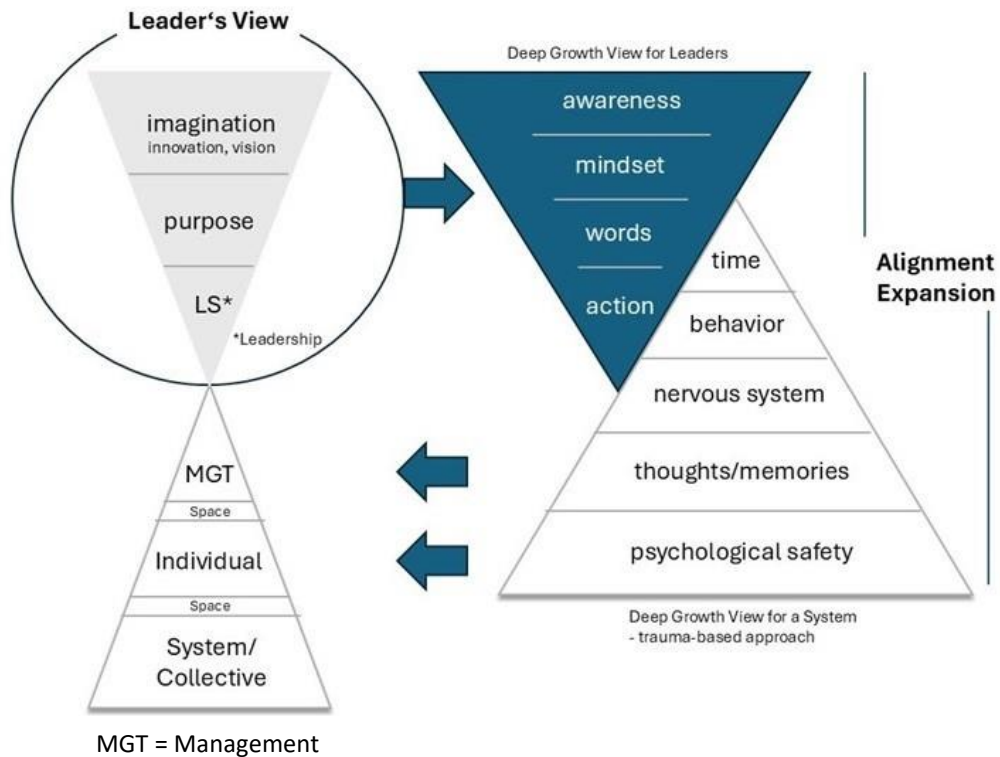


Fig. 3 Deep growth strategy: A new way of thinking, by the author

- 1. Embrace your purpose and passion** Leaders should know their individual purpose and passion and communicate & act accordingly—from purpose to impact. With respect to the innovation-communication view and deep growth strategy that means leaders just be themselves which helps that everything else follows naturally in place [see [Craig & Snook, From Purpose to Impact, HBR, 2014](#)].
- 2. Align yourself to better strategize (= empowered action)** In fact, leaders find their own path and view—true to themselves—to drive change. If you align yourself with the truth—listen inside to your inner voice—you can learn to better strategize before you take action. It's a human voice that can make a difference. [T. Davis PhD, How to Believe in Yourself, psychologytoday, 2023](#); adapted from [The Berkeley Well-Being Institute](#)

In fact, when we talk about transformation and meaningful change we actually talk about new business models and AI/digitalization, new directions to co-create and co-imagine new realities and we talk about visionary ideas of thought leaders... and in leadership we talk about self-leadership and how to self-improve to become our best version and brilliantly lead an organization. The need for transformation starts with innovation, with a new idea / vision and imagination that we translate into a new reality. Innovation stands for growth and advancement. To innovate means to expand minds, see possibilities, advance knowledge, (co)create the future, and make a positive impact for a better organization and world. *And communication makes innovation.*

The idea is simple: Start with self-improvement and growth (= innovation) to master change (communication) and transformation for unwavering, long-lasting success.

If something is new, an inspiration, collectively-shared idea, or new thought and surprising viewpoint, than innovation communication is a practice for individuals, teams and organizations to create the future. Beyond innovation communication, the new innovation-communication view (I-COM view) focuses on the balance between growth (= innovation, advancement, functional view) and communication (= people, trust, relational view) to better lead organizations. Consequently, the new role of leaders is to balance growth and connection, innovation and communication, to build healthy systems.

For the practice: It is important, however, to link innovation communication to leadership & strategy beyond CEO communication and strategy communication. In the future business leaders and change makers need to be ready for creation and a new level of innovation communication. But reaching this new level of impact requires a commitment to invest in innovation communication--a people-centric focus not only a function-centric focus (corporate communication/PR/agency-based campaigns). With a CICO leader (Chief Innovation Communication Officer), who is responsible for evolving systems and helping people to connect, reflect and speak with their human voice or co-imagine with others, a company can better commit to make the world a better place and create a company's future.

Beyond the deep growth strategy communication model innovation is your practice to successfully innovate your business and internal (dynamic) capabilities of leaders are important for long-term growth.

The New Leadership Paradigm

We need a shift from being the best in the world, to being the best for the world.

Richard Barret

Beyond being the best for the world, we need to embody being the best for the unknown tomorrow. Beyond spirituality & serving it is about embodiment. The three embodiment steps are: (1) conscious healer, (2) embodied leader; (3) human (self)leader. In fact, going deeper means you rise higher, shown in Fig. 4.



*[conscious leadership Deckman \(2021\)](#);

**[Amo et al. \(2023\)](#)

Fig. 4 Growth 3.0 – human (self)leader, by the author

The New Arts' Role in Society, Education, and Management & Leadership

In the new leadership world—Growth 3.0—#multiart has become the new lifestyle to empower and inspire other human (self)leaders, for instance, concept showrooms, open learning spaces and authentic co-creating. Arts just is. Multiart is self-expression and co-creation with humans in the flow and in the present moment across the globe. It is an authentic global WE-mindset.

To multiart VERB = Self-expression of one's own personality to be the inspiration; to co-create with individuals in a multisensory, multicultural, and multidisciplinary way

Human (Self) Leadership

- Embodiment -

- Ethical innovation, cyclic innovation
- Invisible presence (beyond words)
- Poise: Being centered, maintaining dignity, responding thoughtfully, and inner peace

[ethics, wholeness, see the human in the human]

Summary: Three Main Characteristics of the New Leadership World

- **WE-Mindset in strategy and leadership:** Mainly focusing on innovation communication with dialog activities for innovation so that others can be involved in strategic conversations and connected as human BEings
- **Healthy relating and interaction patterns:** Working with communication blueprints to help individuals and organizations to balance out information (energy) exchanges and create healthy, functional systems
- **Growth 3.0 - Authentic co-creating and learning:** #Multiart is a new lifestyle and new 'workstyle' for self-expression and co-creation in a multisensory, multicultural and multidisciplinary way

New Leadership World: Growth 3.0 Navigator

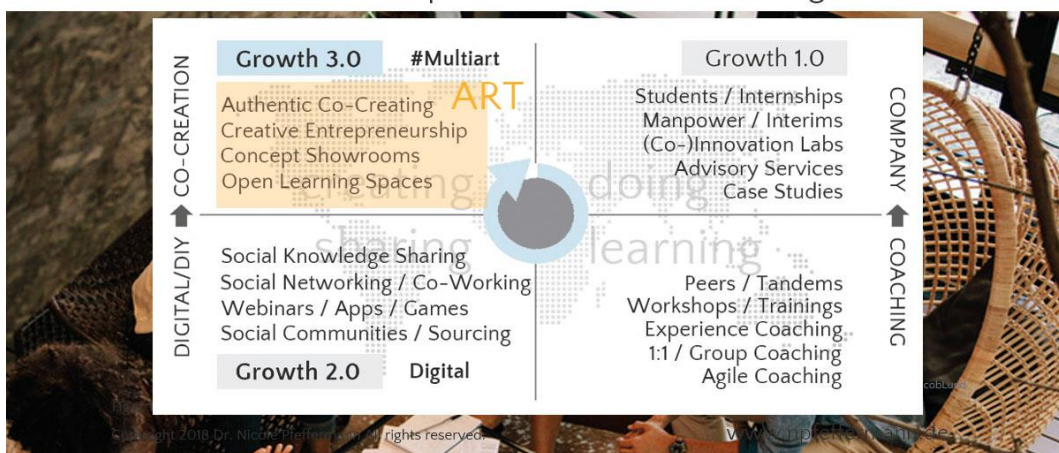





Fig. 5 New leadership world: Growth 3.0 navigator, by the author

Four Journeys

	<p>Tackle most important challenges in innovation and (leadership) communication</p> <p>Focus: CREATING a meaningful, innovative organization with a powerful three-step approach: (a) Deep growth strategy, (b) communication model innovation, and (c) internal capabilities.</p>
	<p>Help with supportive strategic thinking, strategy and an interdisciplinary view</p> <p>Focus: SUPPORTING a meaningful, innovative organization with a new way of doing and being: (a) Enterprise leadership, (b) innovation communication, and (c) AI enablement.</p>
	<p>Empower when it comes to new concepts, imagination, dynamic capabilities...</p> <p>Focus: LEADING AS a meaningful, innovative organization with great human (self) leaders: (a) Growth 2.0, (b) communication value chain, and (c) CIS cycle for leaders.</p>
<p>OUTLOOK: JOURNEY 4</p>	<p>CO-CREATING as a meaningful, innovative organization</p>

Tab 1. Four journeys for leaders; by the author

The fourth journey is important to start the cycle again: The intentional creation of a more meaningful, innovative organization and/or helping to create a (new) meaningful, innovative organization.

Journey 4.0: Three Steps

Co-creating as a meaningful, innovative organization includes three main steps:

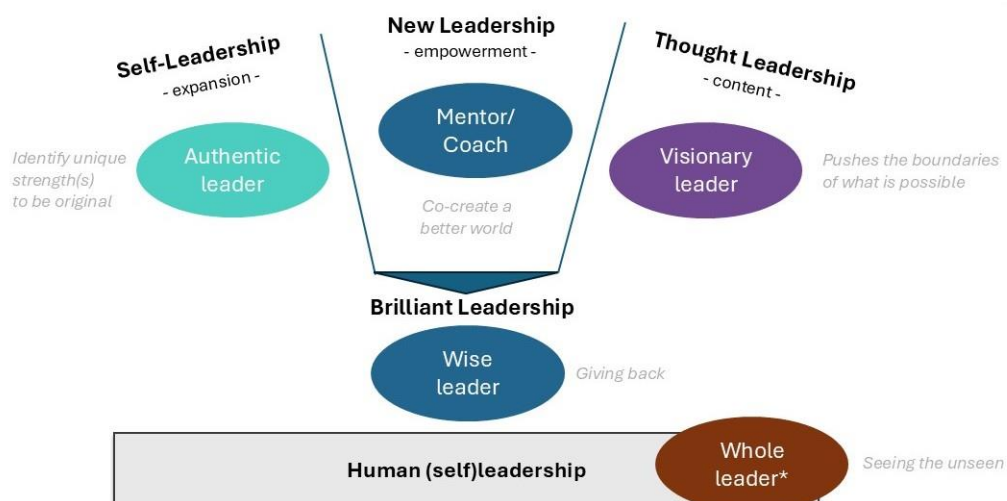
1. Leadership coaching: From authentic leader to a whole leader (see Fig. 6) and Growth 3.0
2. Implementing new tools for art thinking and collaboration, for instance, the *maz showroom*
3. Hiring growth-oriented consultants to enable business leaders to drive change – challenge-based and aspiration-based consulting

This [new] paradigm should be based on vision-guided, values-driven leadership that targets not only the success of the company, but also the well-being of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, partners, society, and the environment. It is nothing less than full-spectrum sustainability.

Richard Barret, 2025

Art Thinking is an agile method that makes it possible to create the improbable with certainty.

Prof. S. Bureau, ESCP Paris



*[Whole-Life Leader Stack, Forbes, \(2019\)](#)

Fig. 6 Leadership coaching – from authentic leader to whole leader

Dr. Nicole Pfeffermann

- She is specialized in strategy/innovation, leadership and innovation communication, more precisely in linking innovation communication to new / self / thought leadership.
- She was a lecturer (BA/MBA/PhD students) in digital business, information and knowledge management and methodologies, co-edited books with inspiring co-authors (new book, Routledge; and Springer publications) and presented her work (Daimler Innovation Day).
- She started her professional path in marketing/market research (Vorwerk & Co., Wuppertal) and corporate communication (Beiersdorf, Hamburg) and worked for clients in strategic management and IT-driven innovation management, for instance, a BMWi-project 'Innovation Communication for Scientific Institutions' and Deutsche Post/DHL-project 'Business Plan for a Robotic Solution'.
- She received a PhD in Engineering (Dr.-Ing./robotics & automation) from the University of Bremen, Deutsche Post/DHL scholarship in an international PhD program, and also received a diploma in Business Economics from the University of Wuppertal. She was visiting scholar at UCLA Anderson School of Management, US and GREDEG CNRS, France. She also worked with scholars from the University of Cambridge, INSEAD, ESCP Europe and SUNY Empire University.

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As we look ahead into the next century,
leaders will be those who empower others.

Bill Gates

