

The imperative of moral leadership is more evident than ever before.

Today, the world is fundamentally fused and morally activated. Each of us has the power to do good or harm at a scale like never before. With one swipe or post, we can put ourselves into intimate proximity with one another, regardless of our distance. These connections can deepen our empathy, but they can also spread vitriol and disinformation with breathtaking speed.

At the same time, artificial intelligence has redefined how work is done. Increasingly, machines are not just outproducing and out-processing us; they are outthinking us. This challenges us to focus on and scale the unique ways humans contribute and create value.

Together, these unprecedented forces have radically reshaped our world, often faster than we have yet been able to reshape ourselves, our institutions, and our leadership. Organizational leaders across all sectors must no longer just do the next things right—tasks machines can easily do—but rather do the next right things.

Human systems cannot function without formal leaders. Some of us are parents, some coaches, some educators, some managers, some

MORAL LEADERSHIP PILLARS

LET PURPOSE LEAD

Leaders gain moral authority when they define a worthy, valuable, and noble purpose, one connected to human progress, and frame the path ahead as a journey.

INSPIRE AND ELEVATE OTHERS

Moral leaders create an atmosphere where people feel trusted, are passionate and loyal to the mission, and are willing to take the risks inherent in striving towards achievements of significance.

BE ANIMATED BY VALUES AND VIRTUES

Moral leaders live their values and act on their principles, even when uncomfortable, difficult, or inconvenient. Their behavior is animated by virtuous qualities of character—for instance, patience, courage, and empathy.

BUILD MORAL MUSCLE

Being a moral leader requires constant wrestling with questions of right and wrong, fairness and justice. Moral leaders regularly ask themselves if what they are doing is compatible with their purpose. They build moral wisdom by inviting others to join in these discussions and by taking responsibility for their behavior.

executives, some elected officials, and the list goes on. Take a moment to reflect. Each of us leads, in some way, every day of our lives.

But what makes organizations—and ultimately all the institutions that make up our society—really work is when formal leaders have moral authority too. While formal authority can be seized, won, or bestowed, moral authority must be earned by who you are and how you lead.

Above all, moral leadership is about how leaders touch hearts, not just minds. Only moral authority can build trust, inspire others, create meaning, and help people imagine a different and better future—enable them to contribute their fullest talent, realize their deepest humanity, and do the next right things.

Moral leadership is a precious resource, but it need not be a scarce one.

MORAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

START WITH A PAUSE

When we hit the pause button on a machine, it stops. Yet when humans pause, we begin. Moral leaders reflect on the current situation, reconnect with their moral commitments, rethink current approaches, and reimagine what is possible.

SEE THE HUMANITY IN EVERYONE

Moral leaders see other people not as means but ends in themselves. They build unique and deep relationships. They take the time to discover other people's hopes and aspirations, struggles and dreams. And because they see humanity in others, they are more inclusive, and they listen and learn from those they lead.

FOSTER FREEDOM

Moral leaders cultivate a culture of interdependence and responsibility, where people extend trust, are guided by shared values, and are supported in taking the informed risks necessary for achieving aspirations and scaling collective impact.

DEMONSTRATE HUMILITY

Moral leaders are confident when confidence is warranted, but they also acknowledge the limits of their knowledge and make meaningful amends for their mistakes. They make themselves smaller than the moment, creating the space for others to join them and to rise to do big things—together.

UPHOLD ETHICAL STANDARDS

Moral leaders celebrate and model the highest standards of integrity and ethical behavior, especially when it is difficult or unpopular. Ethical standards and the situations that test them are not constraints but rather opportunities to reveal to others and ourselves what we most value.

SEEK THE TRUTH

Doing what is right requires a sincere, rigorous, and concerted effort to find the truth in every situation. When moral leaders have the curiosity and patience to wrestle with nuance and consider multiple perspectives, they forge trust and demonstrate commitment to the values they espouse.

ACT WITH COURAGE

Moral leaders do not sacrifice their principles for short-term gain. They take on the risk of stating the truth and standing up for what they think is right, for they know that the risk of indifference is the greatest of all.