



CHANNEL THE DIVERSITY OF IDEAS TO NAVIGATE UNCERTAINTY

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This week's CEEMAN Annual Conference offers us a reminder that companies must be open to a diversity of ideas from all fields to foster social innovation to find sustainable market solutions for today's challenges.

The world's challenges are growing in both complexity, speed and magnitude. Changing leadership mindsets to build innovative partnerships and adopt unusual ideas from diverse sources in fields such as science, the humanities and social innovation would help companies find effective solutions and capture new opportunities for future growth.

While, in the past, some problems could be solved by single actors filling a gap in a market, today, addressing root causes demands a different approach. Single actors just don't have the bandwidth when it comes to resources, networks and, crucially, ideas to address systemic change.

Building collaborative partnerships to generate, test and enable new ideas is one of the ways that the private and public sector can pool resources and expertise to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing and volatile global economy.

Through the [Enterprise for Society Center](#) (E4S), IMD, the University of Lausanne (UNIL), and EPFL (the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) have created such a partnership to pioneer ways to combine technology and sustainability to solve global problems. IMD's [elea Center for Social Innovation](#) is also engaged in finding new answers to these questions by helping the private sector create value for society and the environment.

The theme of this year's [CEEMAN](#) (The International Association for Management Development in Dynamic Societies) Annual Conference is "Ideas and Inspiration for Management Development from Fields Beyond Management".

Indeed, we see more executives seeking inspiration and solutions outside of their industry playbooks. For example, at the conference this week, I will be moderating a keynote session on the role biology can play in management science, led by [Dominique Turcq](#), Founder and President of the [Boostzone Institut](#), which researches trends affecting management and the world of work.

At the conference, there will also be a keynote session on learning lessons from the way the airline industry manages errors with [Jan Hagen](#), an associate professor at [ESMT European School of Management and Technology](#) in Berlin.

Award-winning film and theater director [Haris Pašović](#) will lead a session on the kind of soft skills business leaders can borrow from the arts world, while Slovenian violinist and cultural entrepreneur [Miha Pogačnik](#) will share insights on how to listen in his session: "Post-Corona Corporate Soul Healing".

Businesses and executives stand to gain similar benefits from the highly innovative and agile field of social innovation.

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Just like taking inspiration from the arts and airline industry, by opening their minds to the wealth of ideas and opportunities in social innovation, companies can unlock new ways of seeing their industries and discover new segments that offer growth, while also fulfilling today's business-critical duty to contribute in a positive way.

How can you develop a fresh mindset and open up your business to new ideas from diverse sources? Here are five ways to broaden your horizons.

Embrace systems thinking

Systems thinking offers a method for businesses to look at their activities, the needs of society and new opportunities as part of a whole ecosystem, rather than in isolation. This holistic approach can both support more purposeful and generally beneficial economic activity as well as uncover possibilities that may not have been obvious before.

Build mutual partnerships

Collaboration is key to navigating an uncertain and intricate future. Working with a diverse range of partners, who bring different expertise and perspectives to the table, opens up new opportunities and solutions. It is important to ensure that the benefits are shared among partners to embed sustainability.

Change leadership mindsets

Today's complex challenges and changing expectations in society demand a different kind of leadership mindset in business. This means augmenting necessary hard skills and technical expertise by working towards a deeper level of empathy, ethical awareness, creativity, collaboration, authenticity, purpose and awareness.

Seek out new experiences and contexts

Stepping out of your comfort zone or area of expertise triggers many rewarding lessons and insights, on a professional and personal level. Through IMD's [International Consulting Projects](#), for example, we parachute MBA students into diverse situations to co-create solutions for organisations around the world.

Explore the world of social innovation

Social innovation can provide many lessons for changing the way we look at the role of business in society. It offers a goldmine of new ideas for investing and developing business models from around the world that seek out profitable opportunities by directly solving social and environmental problems and needs, from very local targets to global issues.