We are in a time of hypergrowth, rapid innovation, and technological disruption. Navigating this fast-changing world can be both awe-inspiring and anxiety inducing. It’s a great time to be a Trailblazer, as new tools increase our understanding of the customer, enhance productivity, and generate ever-greater levels of quality in customer experience. Leaders now face the question of how to balance the effects of disruption with their responsibilities to employees and the communities around them.

During the Fortune CEO Series at the World Economic Forum Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, over 80 CEOs convened to explore these dilemmas. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution transforms the world’s economy, the speed of change is prompting company leaders to consider radical action plans to keep pace.

Many of the CEOs who participated in the conversation agreed that the education system needs to evolve at the same speed as technology. Advances in artificial intelligence and robotics will continue to impact jobs at an accelerating rate. The resulting changes in required workforce skills are driving new partnerships between the private and public sectors to fund technology training and to align school curricula with tomorrow’s opportunities.

Trailblazing business leaders are embracing a collaborative model to find win-win solutions. As the way we do business changes, company leaders admit they don’t have all the answers. But one thing that CEOs agree on is that responsibly leading employees into this new, uncertain reality will be just as important as pursuing the technological advances that will define the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

"As Trailblazers, we’re all here to bring our companies into the future."
Growth

Trust in the Fourth Industrial Revolution
In a discussion involving more than a dozen CEOs centered around growth, very few even mentioned the word. Instead they focused on ways to create a positive and inclusive culture that inspires employees to innovate. One CEO said, “Growth isn’t the priority. It’s the outcome of trust.” So as CEOs focus on growth, many are asking themselves: “How can I build trust with my team?”

More than ever, transparency is key to building trust

“Transparency is the single most important ingredient in the recipe for trust,” said one CEO in the food industry. In turn, several CEOs agreed that identifying a company’s purpose is the first step in creating a transparent culture. One company leader said, “Purpose isn’t something you make up with an agency. It’s something people have in their hearts.” An authentic purpose allows employees to connect around shared values and common goals. Establishing such a purpose-driven platform allows leaders to be more transparent with stakeholders and share any news – good or bad.

Avoiding the “survivor mentality” pitfall

Automation will make headlines for delivering products and services at faster speeds with greater customer satisfaction, but advancing technology will also impact millions of jobs. Several CEOs participating in the Fortune CEO Series reported that in the next five years, technology may replace 30% of their companies’ current jobs, while creating new jobs that are difficult to foresee. One CEO said, “There is a role for humans in an autonomous world – we just might not be able to imagine it today.”

Company leaders are realizing that business growth depends on addressing this disconnect. Many employees may already be asking themselves, “Will my position survive the transition to an automated world?” A “survivor mentality” of that kind tends to promote self-preserving workplace behaviors that erode trust and collaboration.

As the Fourth Industrial Revolution unfolds, investing in training and education will allow company leaders to re-skill and upskill their teams to prepare for the future. Effectively evolving the education system will require bringing together both business and government.

Taking action now

- Identify your company purpose to create a set of shared values for your employees and customers
- Create a culture of transparency characterized by honest, open communication
- Make education and employee development a priority in order to maintain the spirit of trust and collaboration during the years of uncertainty ahead

Read the visual notes from the session.
Innovation

AI and the Future of Work
Innovation
Key Insights

Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the defining technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The CEOs participating in the Fortune CEO Series unanimously agree: AI will profoundly change the workplace, the workforce, and the very nature of what it means to work.

One question and one answer
The biggest question is: “How will we — as CEOs, citizens, and people — manage this change?” The consensus is that education is the answer. It means retraining workers whose jobs are disrupted by AI-powered technology in the near-term, while in the longer term changing primary and secondary education to prepare young people for the AI-augmented workplace of the future.

Getting it right
CEOs agree that rethinking education for this new world will require:
• Demystifying the AI conversation. Leaders must acknowledge that AI will change workplace roles while creating new opportunities. Said one CEO, “The average employee has a lot of fear. How do we create the calm awareness that this is coming and that people have to get ready?”
• Solving the issue of labor mobility. The impact of AI isn’t distributed evenly. Business and government leaders must make it easier for retrained workers to move to where their new skills are most valuable. Asked one CEO, “How can we make sure people are in the right places with the right skills?”
• Moving quickly. Unlike the first Industrial Revolution, which took decades to unfold, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is spawning change at an unprecedented speed. One CEO said, “We don’t have 30 years, we have three.”

Who is accountable?
CEOs acknowledge their accountability in closing the education gap. Profound societal change will require new policies at many levels, but government intervention generates mixed feelings: On the one hand, as one CEO said, “The whole system has to change, and we as business can’t change it all.” On the other hand, said another CEO, “Government should facilitate business, not be deeply involved in it.”

Reframing the conversation
CEOs agree these much-needed education reforms could be hampered by resistance to change and anxiety about the future. However, today’s workforce is also passionate about jobs that have a social purpose. If leaders were able to reframe the conversation and speak of AI as a potential ally in improving the world, education reforms might more easily accommodate the workforce needs of an AI-augmented future.

Taking action now
• Work with your employees to pilot new retraining and relocation programs
• Build better partnerships between industry and government
• Take the lead with schools, regulators, associations, and NGOs like the United Nations and the World Economic Forum to create public-private partnerships

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Read the visual notes from the session.

62% of hiring managers believe that AI will transformationally or substantially change the nature of work within the next five years.
Salesforce Workforce Development Survey, May 2017

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
SALESFORCE RESEARCH
Special Report: The AI Revolution
Read the Report
Equality
The Role of Business in Improving the State of the World
Equality
Key Insights

What role do businesses play in improving the state of the world and furthering equality? One city mayor who attended a Fortune CEO Series discussion challenged CEOs to look beyond philanthropy and start looking at equity – equal access to good education and training so people everywhere can access the jobs created by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. As he said: “You can’t guarantee equal outcomes, but you can at least guarantee equal inputs.”

The Fourth Industrial Revolution can be a force for equality

In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, rapid evolution of technologies and disruption of regional job markets have the potential to either widen equality gaps or bridge them. As a result, equality becomes an increasingly important consideration in how we design our technology products, develop our workforce and educate our future generations.

With half a million open jobs in computer science alone, there is great potential to create wider access to opportunities for more people.

CEOs can employ creative approaches to cultivating diverse and inclusive workplaces through mentorship, training, and equitable recruitment practices. One CEO spoke to the increasing importance of skills training: “I think we’ve really got to build in the concept of knowledge transfer – finding the people out there that can do the work and training them ourselves.”

A new role for the CEO

In recent years CEOs have been thrust into a newfound role as advocate, champion, and Trailblazer on social issues ranging from marriage equality to refugee rights.

One CEO said, “Business is actually a force for good in the world. It pays for everything, pays for all the philanthropy, all the tax receipts. Even government activities that are commercial are paid for by business.”

In that sense, pursuing equality isn’t just the right thing to do, it’s also the smart thing. Speaking about a piece of Texas legislature regarding regulation of transgender students’ bathroom usage, which did not pass after CEOs including Marc Benioff publicly opposed it, an elected official stated, “Because business leaders spoke up early, we were able to avoid that catastrophe. It would have been very damaging to our economy and our reputation.”

Taking action now

• Identify key job skills required by your future workforce and work with state and local education departments to evolve their curricula accordingly
• Establish a mentorship program for students, veterans, and disadvantaged youth
• Reach out to elected officials in communities where you have worksites and explore ways of working together to address key social problems

Read the visual notes from the session.

80% of professionals believe businesses have a responsibility to look beyond profit and make a positive impact on society.

“The Impact of Equality and Values Driven Business,” Salesforce Research, July 2017

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
“20 years inside the mind of the CEO...what’s next?”
20TH CEO SURVEY
Read the Report
Questions for you and your leadership team

Chief Operating Officer
• How can I help keep my company competitive as a great place to work on a three- to five-year horizon?
• What programs and educational opportunities can we offer to bridge the gap between today’s job skills and the skills of the future?
• How can I pilot the use of AI and other emerging technologies to accelerate our competitive advantage?

Chief Information Officer
• How am I aligning my IT resources with the rapid pace of change in our business and within our industry?
• How can my technology strategy play a role in equitably distributing the benefits of automation and digitization?
• What is my team’s role in helping our company reinvent and transform our customers’ experiences?

Chief Marketing Officer
• What responsibility do I have for championing my company’s values and culture?
• How can my team leverage big data and AI to further enhance authentic relationships with our customers?
• How can I proactively educate employees whose positions will be directly affected by automation technologies?

Chief Equality Officer
• How well are our employee programs and customer-facing initiatives aligned with our corporate culture and values?
• What are our specific responsibilities in the communities in which we operate?
• How can we partner effectively with government officials, educators, and citizens to improve the education system and develop smart regulations for the future?

enhance your experience with customer and market insights executive programs. we invite you to discover events near you, peer-driven case studies, and benchmarks. https://insightexchange.salesforce.com/
Thank You

Save the date for next year's series to continue the conversation.

London
May 17, 2018

Dreamforce in San Francisco
September 25-28, 2018