



HOW VISIONARY LEADERS CAN RESHAPE BUSINESS FOR GOOD

Elina Teboul

We have inherited a cultural belief system that most of us don't ever think about.

Like the air we breathe every day, we take it for granted and depend on it, and while it remains largely invisible, it also makes it possible for us to operate in the world. The problem is, as long as we remain unaware of it, it runs us—our choices, our values, our behaviors. So, it is time to acknowledge its presence. Then, once we take a closer look at it, we can find out if it is truly aligned with our aliveness and if it supports the larger vision we have for ourselves, our communities, and our world.

The belief system I'm referring to here is the economic system behind our Western capitalist societies. But let me be clear. I am not here to bash it. On the wings of Western capitalism, humanity has come a very long way over the past few hundred years. We have progressed first into the Industrial Age and now into the Digital Age, where driverless cars, robotic manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and other realities that were once the whimsy of mere fantasy and are now integral to our day-to-day human experience. We've constructed a civilization with complex social structures, unprecedented technology, and resources that are infinitely more abundant than humanity has ever dared to imagine in the past. We enjoy longer, healthier life spans, greater levels of literacy and education, and more freedom, leisure, and luxury than at any other time in history. In the West, at least, we are very much a prosperous world.

Yet our mesmerizing, sophisticated world is on fire. A tangle of damaging consequences has emerged from the unchecked exploitation, dominance, arrogance, transactional relationships, and short-term thinking that comprise our current system. Underneath our material achievements, we are drowning in an epidemic of stress and existential despair; we witness discrimination, inequality, and social injustice everywhere we look. This ecosystem of which we are a part is plagued by senseless, violent wars, food insecurity, desperate poverty, and an alarming deterioration of the biosphere. We are killing our own habitat—the very wellspring of resources upon which we depend to survive.

... Our mesmerizing, sophisticated world is on fire.

We are turning into boiling frogs. So, why aren't our business and political leaders marching us toward radical solutions or showing real determination to answer our most threatening issues? Because we have grown to harbor very narrow, impoverished views of what leadership is and what it can be. Leadership is not merely the harnessing of intellectual logic to drive economic growth. And it doesn't come into being by means of titles, status, financial wealth, or X (formerly known as Twitter) following. It doesn't materialize through the acquisition of a corner office, or—for the digital CEO—one with ocean views, or by the thrill of standing center stage with thousands of eager eyes looking up to hear our wisdom. Leadership is not synonymous with the power to command people. It can be so much more than any of these outdated trappings.

And how have we arrived at this juncture? How have we, as a collective, allowed ourselves to forget the highest promise of leadership? Full of hope, idealism, and zeal when we started, how have we just become another cog in the wheel, perpetuating the problems of old? If any of us want to see real progress—that is, a sea change in the priorities and values of our leadership—these are critical questions to think about.

Leadership has the potential to be a personally transformational experience as well as one that oversees organizations that operate as a force for good in the world. It can be a conscious endeavor that charts a new course to a healthier, more fertile, more equitable, and more mutually beneficial future for all of us. It can be based on a deeply authentic sense of purpose, be an expression of our whole, alive selves, and be informed by a profound sense of connection to each other in order to solve society's biggest problems. But to get there, we need to make a bold break from the mistakes of the past. We need to establish a new paradigm based on broader values and empowered by the wisdom of our full selves. To do that, we first need to take the time to delve into the foundations of our existing systems and paradigms and examine the lessons we can now learn from them. The future of leadership must begin now. And it begins with us.

THE UPSIDE OF PROFITS

To be clear, free markets that encourage businesses to earn healthy profits are a good thing when they are awake to the realities of human nature, when they are ecological- and climate-conscious, and when they are built on a foundation of principles and values.

Free markets encourage entrepreneurship and investment, which lead to increased economic growth and technological innovation. The competitive nature of markets incentivizes businesses to develop new products and services and improve efficiency. Free markets can provide opportunities for individuals to improve their economic and social status through hard work and ingenuity, which in turn promote social mobility and reduce economic inequality.

Profits, after all, are the lifeblood of businesses. Without profits, businesses cannot keep the lights on, let alone invest in communities and social impact programs, champion environmental initiatives, take care of their employees, or develop great products for consumers. Besides, many of us in the Western world are shareholders in one way or another—whether we’ve purposefully invested in the stock market or whether our retirement funds are comprised of stocks—and we’d like to see a healthy return on them as much as anyone else. However, there is a large difference between short-term, self-centered profit and long-term sustainable retirement planning and investment.

Full of hope, idealism, and zeal when we started, how have we just become another cog in the wheel, perpetuating the problems of old?

Through the economic turmoil of the Great Recession, all of us players on the global economic playing field had an opportunity to learn something new: when we pursue the greatest possible returns, focus exclusively on profit, and ignore all negative externalities, the system will eventually fail, and people will be hurt. We had an opportunity to finally understand that if we continue to operate a global economic system that's steeped in an age-old self-interest paradigm, we should expect the associated economic and social fallout.

The year 2008 *could* have marked a turning point. Some business leaders started to question the long-held assumptions of the traditional economic model and the ideologies that disregard our human values and environmental concerns. They had a chance to reflect on the ramifications of such philosophies. And for a *brief* moment, they did. However, the momentum toward a more humane and sustainable approach didn't last long. The bold and transformative notion of prioritizing the well-being of our people, communities, countries, and the planet itself was quickly overshadowed by the pressures of profit-driven capitalism and the allure of short-term gains.

Then, in the first quarter of 2023, the collapse of several major US banks sent shockwaves throughout the global financial sector, and its ripple effects were felt by businesses of all sizes. As I write, 2024 is already being filled with the same headlines of unabated financial greed, audacious maneuvers of unscrupulous corporations, and the fall from grace of leaders once deemed invincible. While politicians and economists point to interest rates and other technical factors, the matter is more soundly grounded in psychology.

THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

We are in a fragile moment of transition and transformation, with ecological and social collapse knocking at the door, and we urgently need to establish a new foundation for business and capitalism that is built around purpose and humanity. We need to find new ways for all of us to lead so that we can create a better future, a more sustainable future. Our lens has been too narrow; we must open our eyes and awaken to our own as well as the wider global story. And we must expand our cognitive, emotional, and spiritual capacities to do so.

The world is changing rapidly, and we must change with it. The current conditions of society require a new generation of courageous leaders who are willing to step up and lead us into a fresh era of regeneration, innovation, and transformative workplaces. The current state of the world demands action, and we cannot afford to sit back and wait. We must all take responsibility for our part in creating a better world. It's time to unlearn the conditioning that has brought us to this point and awaken to a new way of being.

We need to establish a new paradigm based on broader values and empowered by the wisdom of our full selves. . . . The future of leadership must begin now. And it begins with us.

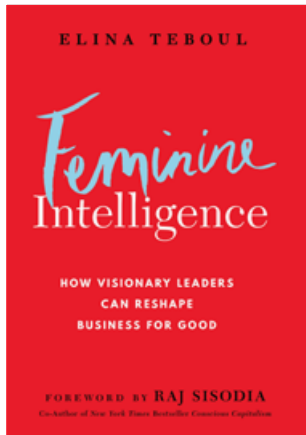
A transformation of our global economic system will require the flowering of a new kind of leader, one who is willing to ignite their own personal power, dare to create change within and without, and embody a holistic and humane approach to leadership that embraces the value of people and planet as much as profits. One who is willing to reject old assumptions, ask more of their organizations, and become a force for good in the world. One who is ready to have their own life enriched with more purpose, authentic power, aliveness, and joy. **Are you ready to usher in an enduring paradigm of conscious leadership?** 🌱

This is an edited extract from the forthcoming book *Feminine Intelligence: How Visionary Leaders Can Reshape Business for Good*, by Elina Teboul (due to be published March 24, 2025 by Wiley).





Info



Ready to dig deeper into the book?
Buy a copy of [Feminine Intelligence](#).

Want copies for your organization or for an event?
We can help: customerservice@porchlightbooks.com
800-236-7323

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ELINA TEBOUL is a leadership expert who coaches influential leaders globally. She holds advanced degrees in psychology and law from Columbia University. A former attorney at Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP and adjunct professor at Fordham Law School, she then pivoted to organizational psychology and started her leadership advisory practice. She dedicates herself to philanthropy, previously acting as global philanthropic advisor at the Allan & Gill Gray Foundation, where she supported strategic investing and social impact initiatives. She is currently on the Advisory Board of the Earth Law Center, championing new perspectives on environmental stewardship. Elina is a writer and advocate for the potential of psychedelic medicines to revolutionize mental health, redefine business leadership, and inspire bold solutions to today's most pressing challenges. *Feminine Intelligence* is her first book—a powerful call to action for leaders ready to reshape business with purpose and heart.

SHARE THIS

Pass along a copy of this manifesto to others.

SUBSCRIBE

Sign up for e-news to learn when our latest manifestos are available.



Porchlight

Curated and edited by the people of Porchlight, ChangeThis is a vehicle for big ideas to spread. Keep up with the latest book releases and ideas at porchlightbooks.com.

This document was created on March 12, 2025 and is based on the best information available at that time.

The copyright of this work belongs to the author, who is solely responsible for the content. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs License. To view a copy of this license, visit Creative Commons. Cover art from Adobe Stock.

Feminine Intelligence will be published on March 24, 2025 by Wiley.

WILEY