

## LEADING PURPOSEFULLY

## Leading purposefully in an era of contextual collapse






H2	ACT	PLAN	TRACK	PARK	OPP	THR	NEU
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The research set out in [this paper from MIT](#) are not aimed directly at higher education - that said, the interviews it is based on include one university president - but many of the findings and recommendations are as applicable to university leaders as they are to business leaders.

The research finds that today's digital workforce expect digital transformation to better reflect and respect their concerns and values, not just boost business capabilities and opportunities. MIT's global survey of more than 4,000 managers and executives, found that 72% of respondents strongly agree that it is very important to them to work for an organization with a purpose they believe in, but only 49% strongly agree that they believe in their organization's purpose. Furthermore, only 36% of respondents strongly agree that they believe in their organization's ability to advance its purpose. This "purpose gap" suggests that senior leaders lack credibility when it comes to aligning their organizations around a shared vision. That lack of credibility puts their companies' long-term competitiveness at risk.

Digitally savvy workers' talent and values appear to be tightly interwoven; obtaining their talent without their values is unlikely. But acquiring their talent and their values creates significant cultural and operational challenges for leadership. If those challenges are not thoughtfully and credibly addressed, that talent will rebel and/or leave.

Leaders who want be purposeful need to:

-  Actively communicate a strategic purpose that explains what the enterprise is trying to achieve in terms of both productivity and humanity
-  Intentionally and systematically measure pursuit of purpose
-  Be transparent about trade-offs
-  Lead by example - and measure how affective (sic) their leadership is
-  Analyze leadership networks to improve culture

## FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING





## The true value of higher education

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Future students will want touch-of-a-button convenience and affordability and will weigh options within and beyond academe, such as [Google Career Certificates](#). They will be more financially and behaviourally risk-averse, socially conscious and activism inclined. They will inquire about institutional investments in safety, well-being and inclusion. They will demand accountability when harm occurs. They will take their tuition pounds elsewhere if a college or university doesn't meet their expectations.

While COVID-19 has elevated the focus on public health, higher education institutions should not regard the current priorities as merely short term or pandemic related. Future students will expect meaningful institutional efforts to prevent and address sexual violence, hazing, racist incidents and the like. This generation of customers supports brands that are investing in social justice and wellness, and it shuns brands that do not. Colleges and universities that make permanent, visible and meaningful commitments to supporting those core generational values will thrive going forward.

Students will demand more than words; they want authenticity and transparency and want to see how campuses are committed to action. A strictly utilitarian approach will backfire. To support the students of the future and stay competitive, colleges and universities should consider adopting the following principles:

-  Evolve to a preventative, not reactive, mind-set.
-  Embrace the role of leaders as stewards.
-  Embrace the role of students as change makers.
-  Think of safety, wellness and inclusion from a curricular perspective.

Customer attitudes and expectations have shifted; inclusion, safety and wellness are student priorities and may eclipse formerly predictive metrics such as ranking, location and amenities. Successful institutions of the future will adapt to and understand these new college customer dynamics.

## FURTHER READING

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