






Leading purposefully in an era of contextual collapse

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 organisation with a purpose they believe in, but only 49% strongly agree that they believe in their organisation's purpose. Furthermore, only 36% of respondents strongly agree that they believe in their organisation's ability to advance its purpose. This "purpose gap" suggests that senior leaders lack credibility when it comes to aligning their organisations 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
-  Analyse leadership networks to improve culture