Dear Members,

To commemorate its 15-year anniversary, World 50 has compiled 50 ideas generated from the remarkable conversations you and your peers made possible.

Some of these ideas are from fellow members; others are from special guests who helped spark the conversations. Each idea was selected to succinctly provide insight or perspective.

World 50's mission is to help its members and their organizations accelerate success, and World 50 exists only because of your support and participation, for which we are exceptionally grateful.

Warmest regards,

The World 50 Team

Build a talent bank.

"I set out to build a talent network, and twice a month for 20 years, I'd meet with someone from any discipline or corporate function that I might want to work with in the future. By the time I got to Campbell's, I had a talent bank of people. I knew what good looked like in all disciplines, and I could make decisions faster. The time for you to be attracting and recruiting talent is before you actually need it."

– Doug Conant, Former President and Chief Executive Officer, Campbell Soup Company





Traditional job requirements are dead.

"A job candidate's educational background doesn't meaningfully predict their success as an employee, so our company's recruiting algorithms are trained to ignore the academic degree on a résumé."

– Leena Nair, Chief Human Resources Officer, Unilever

Take respites from email.

“As the actual day of my climb drew nearer, I intentionally contracted. I stopped responding to emails. I had a lot of time by myself to distill life down to its essence. I kept my full focus only on the things that mattered most, and it helped me prepare for the challenges facing me.”

– Alex Honnold, Rock Climber; First to Free Solo El Capitan





In crisis, spare no expense.

"A crisis is not the time to save money. Hire the best people and experts, and pay them overtime. Describe in great detail your vision for leading the company out of the crisis and back to positive growth."

– Frances Townsend, Former Assistant to the U.S. President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism

Disrupt yourself.

"We're too busy disrupting ourselves to worry about who else is trying to come into our space. Rather than focusing on competitors, Delta looks inward, focusing on creating a culture of continuous improvement. In a changing world, you want to be the driver."

– Ed Bastian, Chief Executive Officer, Delta Air Lines





Start meetings with 30 minutes of silence.

"We are in the practice of using six-page memos to present proposals for evaluation. Each meeting begins with everyone in the room silently reading the document for 30 minutes. Then, participants use the rest of the meeting to discuss possibilities, ask questions and share ideas. A well-written narrative gets you right to the core points. I find that we make better decisions faster because smart people are better educated through the narrative."

– Andy Jassy, Chief Executive Officer,
Amazon Web Services, Amazon

Forget the daily battles. Fight the war.

"You have no time in the political world—or in your businesses—to make decisions. You have to try and carve out time for strategic thinking. Otherwise, all you do is fight the daily fights. Looking back, you'll be proud of the big, strategic challenges that you took on, but the daily battles—you literally can't remember them. Spend time on the big things."

– David Cameron, Former U.K. Prime Minister





Adaptability trumps planning.

"The idea that you can have a strategic plan and carry it out for the next five to 10 years is nonsense—because you have no idea what's coming. You have to be able to adapt along the way, while holding fast to your original objective."

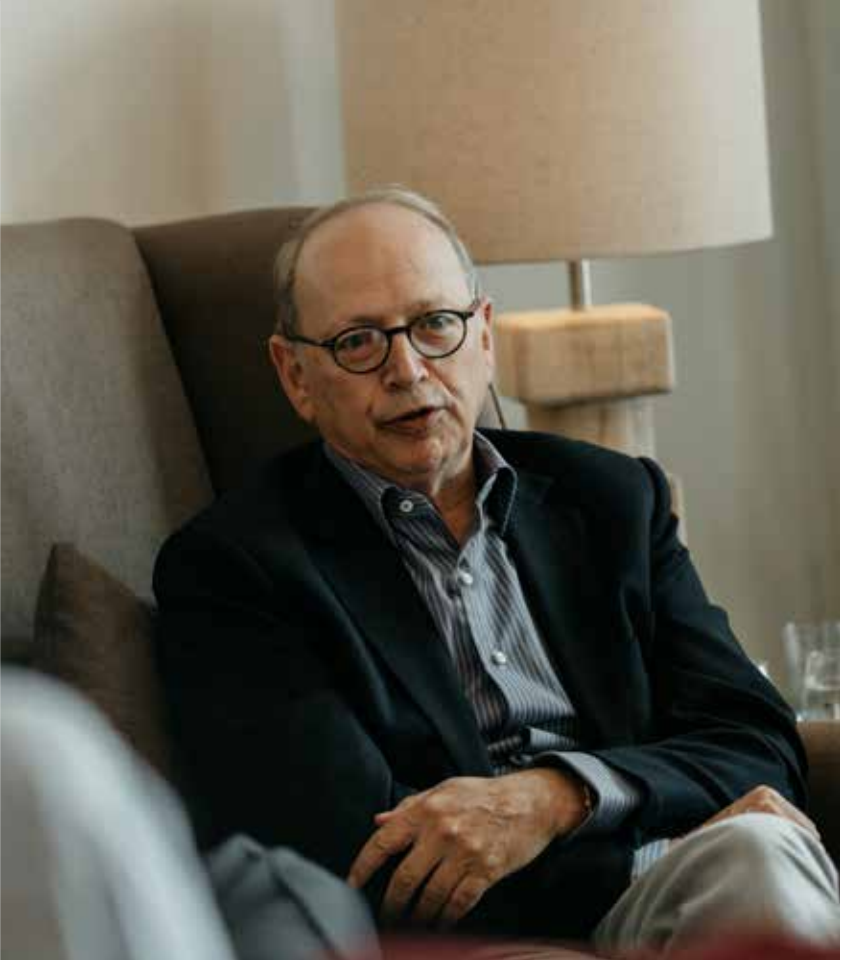
– Bill George, Former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Medtronic

Turn off to find inspiration.

"I had the best idea of my life while on vacation. You have to have moments where you're moving, and you have to have moments of drift. I don't think you can have great ideas when you're going so fast that you're just trying to stay afloat."

– Lin-Manuel Miranda, Composer, Lyricist and Actor, *Hamilton*





Don’t let legacy impede change.

“You need to have a culture in which the ‘why’ question is celebrated. In order to do that, you need to give permission: permission for change, permission for asking questions and permission for maybe not doing everything according to the book.”

– Ben Verwaayen, Former Chief Executive Officer, Alcatel-Lucent; Former Chief Executive Officer, BT Group

Go back to your roots.

"Most people think of me as an actress, but whenever I really want to make a breakthrough, I always go back to writing. It is what I do best."

– Tina Fey, Writer, Producer and Actress





Ask questions like: “Are you a Beatles fan?”

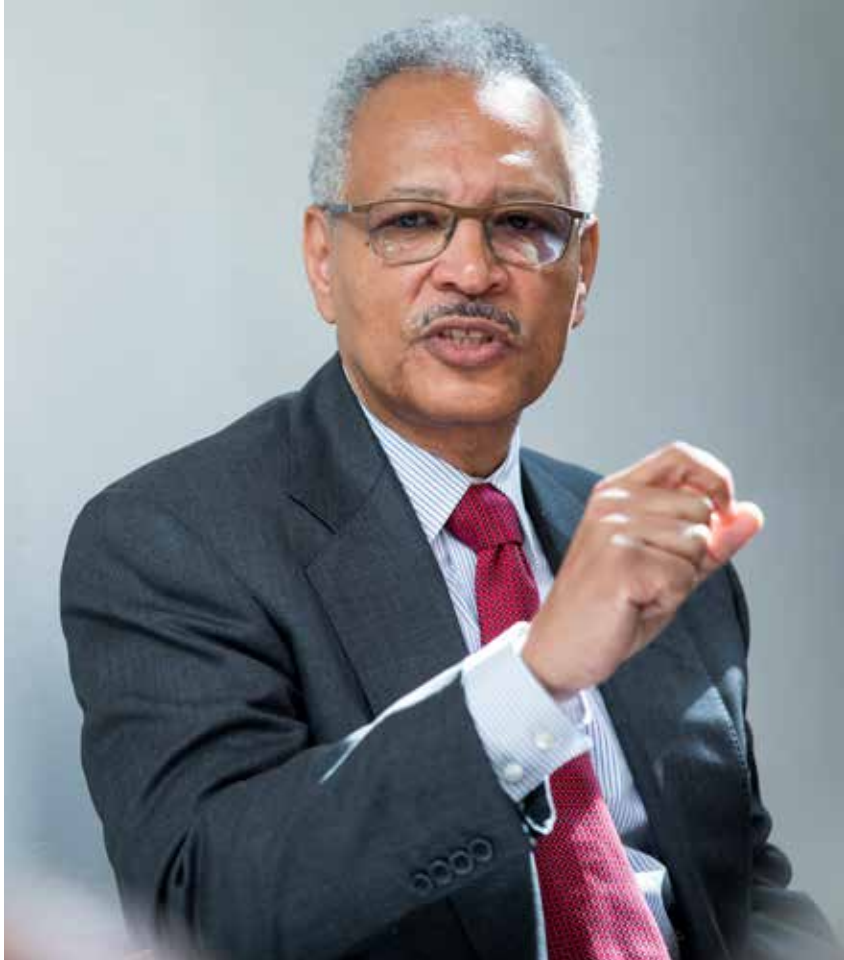
“When I photographed Vladimir Putin, I went to the most sinister building I have ever seen in my life. I nervously said, ‘Mr. President, I’m a Beatles fan. Are you?’ There was some confusion, and in Russian, he ordered the translators and the armed guards out of the room immediately. Then he turned to me, and in perfect English, he said, ‘I love the Beatles!’ That connection allowed me in, and that’s how I got my truth.”

– Platon, Photographer

Defining a clear path spurs excitement about change.

"People come to work because they want to be a part of a clear and elevating mission and believe that they're having a positive impact. Clearly articulating your strategic direction is important to excite people about change."

– Ron Williams, Former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Aetna





Search for your own mistakes.

"It's not about being perfect; it's about getting better. I relentlessly searched for my own mistakes, because I knew my competitors would be analyzing my victories for signs of weakness. I needed to make the same discoveries."

– Garry Kasparov, Grandmaster and Former World Chess Champion

Show vulnerability.

"I got up in front of my new team and said, 'Here are the courageous conversations I'm not having with you: Sometimes I'm scared. Sometimes I feel like you want me to answer questions that I don't have the answers to. But what I know is: I can't and I shouldn't lead this company without you, and I need your help.' From that day forward, everything started to change. Suddenly they started to see each other as human beings, and they could share things they couldn't share before, which established trust. By coming to the table as human beings, we were able to really do things that catalyzed our growth."

– Maureen Chiquet, Former Chief Executive Officer, Chanel





Disincentivize luck.

"When you reward bad processes with good results, you're essentially incentivizing luck. Dig into what really works."

– Adam Grant, The Saul P. Steinberg Professor of Management and Professor of Psychology, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

Know when to gamble.

"I've learned that it's actually helpful to reach a point where the only way out is through. You don't know in the moment that something is right or courageous. It just feels like you're taking a gamble, but there's no other alternative, and you try your best. Looking back, I've found those moments to be the most rewarding."

– Ronan Farrow, Investigative Reporter and Contributing Writer, *The New Yorker*





Advocate for representation over diversity.

"There's something about the verb 'to diversify.' It's implicit in that verb that there's a starting point which is not that diverse. That starting point is the staple, and once you've got that, you can sprinkle a bit of diversity over it. Diversity starts to feel in that language to me a little bit like the fries and not the burger; whereas, I think representation is very much the meat of the conversation. Representation is fundamental in terms of what we expect from our politics, from our culture, from our employers—we expect to be represented. Diversity feels like a favor; representation feels like a fundamental."

– Riz Ahmed, Actor, Rapper and Activist

Meet disruption on your own terms.

"Will you leave it to others to decide the best practices regarding new technologies—or will you decide for yourself? Delaying too much means you may be faced with meeting the disruption on someone else's terms. Have the courage to jump into something unknown when you can afford to; the payoff can be immense."

– Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg, Chairman and Co-Founder, Spitzberg Partners; Former Minister of Economics and Technology, and Former Minister of Defense, Germany





Write for your brother—not the board.

"When attempting to communicate a complex idea to an audience, be it the board or your team, be aware that they don't know what you know. What you know is such an impediment to getting your point across. Pretend as though you are explaining the concept to someone you care about—someone with no prior knowledge of the subject."

–Michael Lewis, Author, *The Big Short*, *The Blind Side* and *The Undoing Project*

Say, “I want.”

“If you want to be CEO, you must learn how to say loudly, ‘I want,’ and when people ask why, say, ‘Because I really can’t deal with anything else right now.’ The role is all-encompassing, even beyond what I ever expected. It took me a long time in my career to be able to say, ‘I want,’ or, ‘The reason we're doing that is because I want to do it.’”

– Ursula Burns, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, VEON; Former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Xerox





Your cast will make or break the film.

"It's not exaggerating to say that the casting is 80% of the film. Success is in your choice of the cast. If you fail there, I think there is no way to save a film. If you fail there, no matter how good the script is or good you are as a director, there's something wrong. It's like you have written music, and it is in this tone—but somebody isn't playing in that tone."

– Alejandro González Iñárritu, Director and Screenwriter

Be skeptical about technology.

"It is phenomenally difficult to train AI to make human capital decisions. AI doesn't understand the concept of people; AI simply takes complex patterns and turns them into decisions. Machines are amazing at crunching massive data sets, but they don't understand the data. The AI tools in the HR space are often built by developers who don't understand people, and it's difficult to build a deep learning system that doesn't replicate existing biases."

– Vivienne Ming, Co-Founder and Executive Chair, Socos Labs





Control the fire first.

"My father would cook paella, and he always would put me in charge of gathering the wood and making the fire. One day, I got very upset with my father because I wanted really to cook. And he said, 'More important than doing the cooking is controlling the fire. If you control the fire, you can do any cooking you want. Control the fire, and the world will be yours.' Many of us, privately and in our companies, we concentrate too much on the cooking, and we forget to ask ourselves: 'Where's the actual fire, and do we control that fire well enough?' Every company should be asking those two questions."

– José Andrés, Chef; President and Executive Chairman, ThinkFoodGroup

Write a speech to refine your idea.

"The process of articulating a position to a room full of people forces you to clarify your thinking. You'll quickly find any gaping holes in your argument."

– David Miliband, President and Chief Executive Officer, International Rescue Committee





Speak up about what bothers you.

"On the set of Apocalypse Now*, I had a lot of conflicts with the way we were treating people who had no power. I was always trying to get us to stand up. I'd say, 'We've got to be better than this.' I always bitched about things. We should bitch more often. We'd get in far less trouble."*

– Martin Sheen, Actor, Activist and Humanitarian

Do your research, and speak the language.

"I studied the referees, and people thought that was odd, but referees were people who had day jobs. They've got personalities. If one worked as a marketer, I spoke to him like I speak to marketers. If the referee were a lawyer, I asked him, 'Is that rule 17C, sir?' He has to know that you know the rules. I spoke their language."

– Francois Pienaar, Former Captain, 1995 World Cup Champion South African Springboks





Ask authentic questions.

"A CEO told me once she does not ask for feedback. She says: 'Tell me if I am smoking crack.' Ask the question that seems authentic to you. Embrace the discomfort that comes afterward. Don't let them off the hook. Just listen with the intent to understand—not to respond."

– Kim Scott, Author, *Radical Candor*

Narrate your life to unleash productivity and focus.

"Develop a habit of telling yourself a story about what you expect to see as something is happening. When you narrate your life, you're effectively creating mental models on the fly. This simple act of telling yourself a story about how you expect things to unfold primes your brain to help you pay attention to what matters and decide what's a distraction much faster."

– Charles Duhigg, Pulitzer Prize-Winning Journalist; Author, *Smarter Faster Better*





Hire optimists if you want your team to be innovative.

"The No. 1 thing we are looking for is eternal optimists. You're not going to be an innovator or a disruptor if you're not an optimist. The problems we were asking individuals to solve were problems that we had tried to solve before, and we couldn't. We kept hitting a wall, but now we wanted to give them to a new group and say, 'Now you try to solve it.' This sense of optimism is essential if you want them to dream about a solution."

– Nadav Zafrir, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Team8

Sacrifice your own benefit for the customer.

"A lot of our relationships with consumers are very functional. If we want to create trust and loyalty, we have to show people we will sacrifice our own benefit for them. There are many cases in which we do things that cost us money, but it is in the best interest of our customers."

– Dan Ariely, James B. Duke Professor of Psychology and Behavioral Economics, Duke University





Start with constraints to drive creativity.

"Reason and analysis often end up chopping down the imagination. I don't want to restrict my team's creative thinking, but when you only focus on crazy, out-of-the-box ideas, you often end up with something that's unfit to solve the problem. Instead, start with built-in constraints and then, with ambitious creativity, create designs that are beautiful and functional."

– Bjarke Ingels, Founding Partner and Creative Director, Bjarke Ingels Group

Stand for something.

"A decade ago, most companies didn't want to get involved in key issues such as sustainability, immigration and equality. But now, these are the causes that young people around the world care passionately about. Since they're your future customers and employees, you have to listen to them. Know what your brand stands for, and speak out about it."

– Anna Wintour, Editor in Chief, *Vogue*; Artistic Director, Condé Nast





Ruthlessly scrap what isn't working.

"If you're not willing to scrap something, then you're going to be dragging things out, and those are going to end up holding you back. Criminal organizations are incredibly effective because they say things like, 'If this is not working, we're going to get rid of it,' and your organization should do the same."

– Rodrigo Canales, Associate Professor of Organizational Behavior, Yale School of Management

Understand the difference between telling and educating.

"When I tell people things, their eyes glaze over. But, when I educate people and bring things into their perspective with data, things change."

– David Agus, Professor of Medicine and Engineering, University of Southern California





Strive for dedication, not perfection.

"There is no such thing as total, infinite perfection. There is always a higher ceiling. It's the dedication that matters. One day we win; one day we fail. It's like the stock market: You get lucky with great collaborators, a great situation, and you win. But sometimes with the same ingredients, you lose. There is no recipe for perfection. As long as you have fire under your butt, clear vision, stubbornness and determination, then you have a chance. But there is never a guarantee."

– Mikhail Baryshnikov, Dancer; Artistic Director, Baryshnikov Arts Center

Celebrate when talent leaves your organization.

"Rent the Runway has instilled a spirit of entrepreneurship at every level of the organization so that we can still move with the speed of a younger, smaller startup. It's part of our culture to celebrate our departing colleagues who leave to follow their dreams."

– Jennifer Hyman, Chief Executive Officer, Rent the Runway





Forget hierarchy.

"I've been pushing my team to go directly to whoever's going to answer your question. Don't go to their manager to get permission to talk to them. We'll be way behind if that's how we operate. It's been really forcing people to talk to others."

– David Lafitte, Chief Operating Officer, Deckers

Ask your kids: *How* do you want to be when you grow up?

"There are millions of new jobs. The only thing we can say for sure is the best jobs always require education and being adaptive. Don't ask your kids what they want to be when they grow up, because, whatever it is, it's not going to be here unless it's a policeman or fireman. Ask your kids, 'How do you want to be when you grow up? Will you have an agile learning mindset? Will you be predisposed to be a lifelong learner?'"

– Thomas Friedman, Author, *Thank You for Being Late* and *The World Is Flat*





Avoid the isolation bubble.

"When was the last time you were dead wrong about something? If it's been more than a week, you're in an isolation bubble. The most serious mistakes are not being made as a result of wrong answers; the truly dangerous thing is asking the wrong questions."

– Hal Gregersen, Executive Director, MIT Leadership Center

Create free space.

"Plan a personal quarterly off-site to try and connect the dots about what's going on professionally and personally in your world. Anticipate the unexpected in your day by creating a buffer, so when the unexpected thing happens you don't have to sacrifice."

– Greg McKeown, Author, *Essentialism*





Get every person's opinion.

"If I'm debating something, or I'm having an important strategic discussion, I specifically ask everybody to tell me what they think. After each board meeting, I went around the table and asked every single director: 'Where are you? What do you think? What more do you need to know?' In addition to creating clarity, it was a very effective mechanism for creating alignment over time."

– Pat Russo, Chairman, Hewlett Packard Enterprise;
Former Chief Executive Officer, Alcatel-Lucent

You can only walk out once.

- *Five keys to a successful negotiation:*
- *"Don't ever show that you're losing patience."*
- *"You can walk out only once."*
- *"Avoid body language in any negotiation."*
- *"Find the right moment and the right timing to compromise—because if you wait too long, your moment is over and gone."*
- *"One thing I always practice is stop the clock. It's 3:30. We can't agree. So, we go for a walk or a cup of tea or a beer, do something completely different, and when we get back, it's 3:30 again."*

– Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 11th Secretary General, NATO





Allow internal startups to break all the rules.

"When you're a large initiative in the organization, you're subject to all the rules. But, when you're a startup, we'll give you some amount of funding, you run with that, and basically, you can break any rule you want. These small, internal startups are protected from the organizational processes that naturally stanch innovation, so they can experiment freely, take risks and accept failure."

– John Collison, President and Co-Founder, Stripe

Start each meeting by saying, "This will be a good meeting, if …"

"In order to make the most use of time in meetings, start each one with the idea, 'This will be a good meeting, if …' Then, at the end of each meeting, circle back and ask, 'Did we achieve the outcomes we set out to address?' If not, revisit."

– Brad Smith, Executive Chairman and Former Chief Executive Officer, Intuit; Chairman, Nordstrom





Kill the idea of global initiatives.

"When it comes to transforming culture, I firmly reject the traditional notion of across-the-board change. Find what works at a local level, innovate, and then iterate. Base success upon real business metrics—not employee engagement. Starting now, try to throw one thing away, and try one new thing."

– Patty McCord, Former Chief Talent Officer, Netflix

Burn the boat.

“Every product or service that can become software will. Will the software companies become great at everything else before the incumbents become great software companies? My advice to you: Burn the boats. You have to commit. Otherwise, someone else will.”

– Marc Andreessen, General Partner, Andreessen Horowitz





Keep your sense of smell.

"I have this theory about the persistence of wrong-mindedness in company culture that I call the monkey house at the zoo. When you first walk into the monkey house, you shriek, 'This place stinks!' After 20 minutes, you think, 'It doesn't smell so bad.' After 40 minutes, you think, 'What smell?' Anyone new walking in shrieks, 'This place stinks!' But, people get used to it, and they think it's fine. The lesson is: Keep your sense of smell."

– Tim Gunn, Fashion Consultant and Author

Fire yourself on Friday, and rehire yourself on Monday.

"Someone once told me, 'Look, in these times, you've got to fire yourself on Friday and rehire yourself on Monday.' If you were fired on Friday, and they hired somebody in your exact job to come in on Monday—maybe from the outside—they'd want to change the point of view. Right now, what is that person going to do? If you can be honest enough to answer that question and then you do those things, you can have an over-the-weekend reinvention."

– Andrea Jung, Former Chief Executive Officer, Avon; Director, Apple, Unilever and Wayfair





Use the airplane test.

"I need somebody who can sit on a plane with me for 14 hours and not bore me to death. They've got to be able to have a conversation about family, friends, politics and business and get off that plane and say, 'OK, let's follow up on this and this.' This is not easy to do. For me, it's the face time, the energy, the connectivity that you have with that individual that is important."

– Greg Norman, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Greg Norman Company; World Golf Hall of Fame Inductee

About World 50

Founded in 2004, World 50 consists of private peer communities that enable CEOs and C-level executives at globally respected organizations to discover better ideas, share valuable experiences and build relationships that make a lasting impact. The busiest officer-level executives and their most promising future leaders trust World 50 to facilitate collaboration, conversation and counsel on the topics most crucial to leading, transforming and growing modern enterprises. Membership is by invitation only.

World 50 communities serve every significant enterprise leadership role. World 50 members reside in more than 27 countries on six continents and are leaders at companies that average more than $30 billion in revenue.

World 50 is a private company that serves no other purpose than to accelerate the success of its members and their organizations. It is composed of highly curious associates who consider it a privilege to help leaders stay ahead.

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