

## **AI Summary of World Café Conversations: Singapore (April 8, 2025)**

### **Context and What do we mean by Global Leadership?**

Definitions of global leadership are varied. One view highlights leadership across diverse contexts, emphasizing adaptability to different cultural, socio-economic, and political landscapes. Another sees leadership as an inherently global process that integrates diverse cultural perspectives to enhance impact and effectiveness. Simply put, it is the difference between thinking about worldly things and thinking worldly.

In early 2020, a diverse group of young global influencers, political leaders, scholars, and practitioners began examining global leadership. This study has evolved through four phases. In 2020, the Yale Maurice R. Greenberg World Fellows and leadership scholars held a second series of round tables. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 World Fellows met online in collaboration with the Yale International Leadership Center. Later in 2021, multilateral non-governmental organizations convened at the ILA Annual meeting in Geneva.

We are now in the fourth stage of exploration. The work so far reveals that global leadership continues to evolve and remains an area of leadership study and practice that will be critically important for positive people and planetary outcomes. Coming out of the fourth stage of this study will be a new content series, including research insights papers, a podcast and case studies.

The Future of Global Leadership event served as a dynamic platform where leaders from diverse backgrounds came together to discuss the future of global leadership amidst various challenges. They shared personal experiences, insights, and questions, emphasizing the need for unity within their teams by prioritizing shared values.

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)<sup>®</sup> has extensively explored the concept of polycrisis, emphasizing the interconnectedness of multiple simultaneous crises that create uniquely challenging environments for organizational leadership. CCL's research underscores the necessity for leaders to cultivate new competencies and mindsets that transcend traditional crisis management approaches, advocating for holistic and adaptive frameworks. Drawing from CCL's insights, leaders are encouraged to adopt integrative leadership practices that address complexity, ambiguity, and rapid change inherent in

polycrisis. CCL highlights the importance of agility, collective leadership, and cross-cultural sensitivity as foundational elements required to navigate effectively through compound crises.

The International Leadership Association® (ILA) has also contributed significantly to understanding future leadership demands through various comprehensive reports and roundtables on the future of global leadership. ILA's research emphasizes that effective leadership in the future requires a shift toward global interconnectedness, innovative leadership practices, and the cultivation of inclusive environments that foster diverse perspectives and collaboration. ILA consistently highlights that future-ready leadership necessitates agility and adaptability across leadership contexts. Through its ongoing publications and reports, the ILA advocates for preparing leaders to address unprecedented complexities and drive meaningful transformations on a global scale.

### **Challenging Traditional Leadership Assumptions**

Leaders are increasingly aware that the conventional view of the leader as the all-knowing figure is obsolete. Today's effective leadership demands collective responsibility rather than isolated accountability. A strong theme emerging from these discussions is the necessity to shift from hierarchical structures toward cultures of collective leadership. There is recognition that leadership can no longer rest solely on seniority or positional authority, but must be deeply tied to talent, accountability, and collaboration.

Participants underscored the importance of a culture that encourages collective leadership—where all members, regardless of seniority, can voice concerns without fear of reprisal. Such environments ensure integrity, clarity, and trust, where feedback is continuous and constructive. However, challenges remain in balancing the need for clear leadership with fostering empowered collaboration. Leaders must confront entrenched perceptions of leadership tied to hierarchical position or tenure, emphasizing behaviors such as vulnerability, openness to feedback, and a willingness to admit not having all the answers when appropriate.

### **Valuing Trust and Collaboration**

Trust surfaced as an essential yet complex component of leadership, particularly amid volatile environments. Transparency was consistently highlighted as a crucial factor in trust-building. Leaders discussed the tension between transparency and its potential impacts, such as anxiety and demotivation during organizational downsizing. Yet, a consensus indicated that transparency, when thoughtfully timed and communicated, ultimately strengthens organizational resilience and credibility. Participants further

stressed the significance of consistent and authentic communication, especially in crises. Two-way communication channels, coupled with active listening, are imperative to maintain credibility and build confidence within teams. A nuanced insight emerged around vulnerability: leaders showing genuine vulnerability can inspire deeper trust and psychological safety among employees, reinforcing the human dimension of leadership.

Cultural differences significantly shape trust dynamics. Leaders noted varying speeds and depths of trust development across cultures. Western contexts may rely more on explicit contracts and transactional trust, while Eastern contexts often emphasize slower yet deeper relational trust. Navigating these cultural nuances effectively is crucial for multinational organizations and cross-cultural teams.

### **Developing Transformative Leadership Agility**

Given the continuous disruption's characteristic of modern contexts, leaders must embrace agility and adaptability as core competencies. A critical realization shared by participants is the importance of "unlearning" outdated methods to make space for innovation and adaptability. Leaders should foster organizational environments conducive to calculated risk-taking, empathy, and emotional intelligence, recognizing these as vital for adaptive capacity.

Creating collaborative intelligence, involving diverse perspectives, and encouraging open dialogues were highlighted as essential for agile organizations. However, leaders face challenges in setting clear boundaries and effectively navigating differing opinions to maintain agility without compromising on core organizational values and vision. Strategic foresight and scenario planning emerged as essential tools, allowing leaders to anticipate disruptions proactively, although leaders acknowledged that complete preparedness for every crisis remains impossible.

### **Managing Complexity through Enhanced Capabilities**

Complex problem-solving capabilities are paramount for balancing global and local leadership needs effectively. Leaders identified systems thinking, strong communication skills, inclusive leadership, and continuous learning as foundational. Effective leaders must simplify complexity, clearly articulate problems, and inclusively engage diverse teams in finding solutions.

## Actionable Recommendations

Based on these thematic insights, the following recommendations emerge as practical steps for leaders to navigate polycrisis effectively:

1. **Promote Collective Leadership Cultures:** Shift from hierarchical, position-based leadership models toward shared accountability, leveraging collective insights and capabilities across all organizational levels.
2. **Practice Deliberate Transparency:** Communicate transparently yet strategically, particularly during crises. Provide clear, consistent, and authentic messaging while maintaining sensitivity to the emotional and psychological impacts on employees.
3. **Embrace Vulnerability and Psychological Safety:** Cultivate an organizational culture where vulnerability is recognized as strength, enabling teams to openly discuss challenges, admit mistakes, and foster deeper trust.
4. **Enhance Cross-Cultural Competencies:** Invest in developing leaders' understanding of cultural nuances around trust and collaboration, equipping them to lead effectively across diverse cultural contexts.
5. **Institutionalize Agility through Structured Adaptability:** Embed strategic foresight and scenario planning into organizational processes to better anticipate and respond to disruptions proactively.
6. **Encourage Continuous Unlearning and Relearning:** Regularly assess and discard outdated practices, embracing an organizational mindset oriented toward continuous adaptation and growth.
7. **Develop Inclusive Problem-Solving Capabilities:** Build robust, inclusive systems that leverage diverse perspectives and minimize biases, enhancing the organization's capacity to navigate complexity effectively.
8. **Invest in Enhanced Communication and Empathy Skills:** Prioritize developing strong, empathetic communication skills across all leadership levels to effectively engage teams and stakeholders during complex and volatile scenarios.

9. **Leverage Technology for Connectivity:** Use technology strategically to bridge global and local contexts, ensuring leaders and teams remain informed, connected, and responsive to dynamic conditions.
10. **Balance Global Vision with Local Insights:** Cultivate capabilities for global oversight while emphasizing the importance of local market intelligence and ground-level insights to maintain agility and relevance.
11. **Foster Resilience and Emotional Strength:** Provide leaders and teams with tools and frameworks for resilience-building, including mindfulness practices, emotional intelligence training, and stress management resources, to sustain performance under prolonged stress and uncertainty.
12. **Prioritize Employee Wellbeing:** Maintain a strong focus on employee health, wellbeing, and morale during crises. Implement programs designed to support mental health, work-life balance, and resilience, enhancing both individual and organizational sustainability.
13. **Strengthen External Networks and Partnerships:** Build and nurture external partnerships with stakeholders, industry peers, and communities. These relationships can provide valuable external perspectives and collaborative opportunities during crises, helping to mitigate risks and seize opportunities.
14. **Measure and Iterate Crisis Response:** Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of crisis response strategies through real-time feedback loops, post-event reviews, and adaptive learning cycles. Use these insights to refine approaches, enhance future responsiveness, and build greater organizational resilience.

By addressing these actionable areas, APAC leaders identified specific ways that they and other leaders significantly enhance their organizations' resilience and effectiveness in navigating the complexities and uncertainties inherent in today's polycrisis environments.