

The Future of Leadership Is About Building an Organization for Continuous Reinvention

With **Girish Ganesan**, Chief People Officer of S&P Global

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Girish Ganesan, Chief People Officer of S&P Global, shared candid insights with Adam Bryant and David Reimer on leading through constant change. Key themes include building organizations for continuous reinvention rather than episodic change, creating clarity instead of certainty amid uncertainty, and hiring for potential over pedigree to build adaptive, resilient teams.

Bryant: What challenges are top of mind for you these days?

Ganesan: Everything ties back to the fact that we're living through one of the most significant reinventions of work in modern history. In addition to artificial intelligence reshaping work and the geopolitical and economic uncertainty now, the overall pace of change is accelerating, and we are navigating big demographic shifts and evolving employee expectations.

Against the backdrop of all of this, the role of the CHRO is increasingly about organizational adaptive capability and capacity, and how we help our leaders enable our culture and leverage technology to evolve fast enough to meet the future. The future of leadership is not simply about managing change; it is truly about building an organization for continuous reinvention.

Bryant: What have you learned about the art of getting an organization open to the idea of changing faster?

Ganesan: Part of it is constantly reminding people that we have to move away from episodic change to continuous reinvention. It's not just about change for the sake of change, because all these external factors are disrupting businesses. It's about how you extract the right value and turn change into opportunity. That's going to come from reinvention.

For years, organizations treated transformation as a sequence of initiatives, and today transformation has to become that operating environment. The challenge is no longer simply helping people through one change. It is helping people build that confidence and capability to live in change that is continuous.

The differentiator will not be access to tech, because most organizations will have access to roughly the same tools. The differentiator will be adoption, judgment, culture, ethics, learning, and the ability to redesign work responsibly. How you intentionally approach all that through the lens of people is what's going to help things stick.

Bryant: What are the leadership implications of that?

Ganesan: The traditional image of a leader was someone who always had the answers. Today, we have to accept that leaders create value differently, they create clarity when certainty doesn't exist. They ask better questions. They foster learning. They help remove friction and create an environment where people feel empowered to innovate and adapt.

Bryant: What were early influences that make you comfortable in a role like this, where you're never done, and there are always new challenges every day?

Ganesan: I was born in a family that was very international. I lived in different countries, and I later had the opportunity in my career to do a couple of expat assignments, too. So both my upbringing and my professional life took me to a variety of different countries, which definitely made me very resilient and adaptable.

I've worked in almost every continent, which helps me think through what's going to resonate in our company at both a global and local level. It's not always about one size fits all, or the reverse.

Bryant: What were important leadership lessons you learned over the years?

Ganesan: One of the most important lessons I learned from a leader I worked with was that clarity matters more than certainty. Leaders don't need to have all the answers. People expect honesty, consistency, and context, they don't always expect a solution. I am comfortable telling people that I don't know the answer, but that I know people who probably do, and I will go consult with them.

I also learned that trust is not built during difficult moments. It's revealed during them, and I learned that very early in my career, because crisis management and driving change were part of my mandate in almost every job I had. Trust accumulated for me based on the thousands of small interactions I've had over my career, and most of it comes down to treating people consistently.

The last one I'll mention is that the best leaders I've worked with combine extraordinary standards with extraordinary humanity. They challenge people because they believe in them, and they hold people accountable without diminishing them. That combination has stayed with me throughout my career, and when it's applied well, it has extraordinary impact.

Bryant: How do you hire? What questions do you ask in job interviews?

Ganesan: I increasingly hire for potential over pedigree. Experience explains where someone has been, but potential suggests where they can go. Capability matters, of course, but in an environment where the half-life of skills continues to shrink and learning velocity matters so much, I look for curiosity, learning agility, ownership, resilience, and a growth mindset.

Can this person connect their work to customer outcomes? Can they simplify complexity? Can they think beyond their own function? Can they help others become better? Those are the areas where I focus my questions.

One of my favorite questions is to ask people, tell me about a belief you held strongly that you later changed your mind about, and what caused you to rethink your perspective? Their answer almost always reveals humility, intellectual curiosity, and the capacity to evolve.

Bryant: When you coach and mentor people, what themes come up most often?

Ganesan: One of the biggest transitions leaders need to make as they become more senior is realizing that success becomes progressively less about personal execution and more about multiplying the performance of others. The transition is about becoming intentional in how you put that into practice.

I also talk to leaders about the importance of creating clarity before creating solutions. Teams move faster when they're aligned on a problem they're solving. It can be easy to quickly find a solution, but then you're not benefiting from diverse perspectives. That's why you have a team.

Bryant: What do you consider to be the hardest part of leadership?

Ganesan: The hardest part is bringing people along. Humans are creatures of habit. The longer the history you have as an organization, the harder it is to drive change. You can't underestimate what it's going to take to bring people along. And it's not because some people don't want to change, it's because they have a lot of pride in what they have built.

In this conversation



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Adam Bryant is a respected and noted expert on executive leadership who has interviewed more than 1,000 leaders for the “Corner Office” series he created at The New York Times and for his four current leadership series on LinkedIn. He is the author of four books on leadership, including “[The Leap to Leader](#)” and “[The CEO Test](#),” both published by Harvard Business Review Press.



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David Reimer is a recognized expert in the leadership development of the C-suite. A former operator himself, David brings hands-on knowledge of leadership, strategy, operations, and mentoring to the subject of accelerating top executives' impact. He is consulted by boards, operators, and senior HR leaders on developing leaders for an era of disruption.

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