

# Executive Champions' Workshop

*“Responsible Leadership and the Emerging Global Agenda of Change”*

August 13–16, 2002

Stowe, Vermont

*Sponsored by The Society for Organizational Learning and  
The Global Institute for Responsible Leadership*

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We live in challenging times—times of uncertainty, conflict, and change. Corporations, governmental agencies, NGOs, and local communities everywhere struggle with deep-seated dilemmas and divisions in an increasingly volatile and fragile global system. At the same time, it is clear that no one sector has the answers to the social, political, economic, and environmental concerns of our time. Making progress on any key issue requires multiple voices and perspectives at the table.

The urgency of the challenges we face calls for responsible leadership and the capacity to mobilize collaborative action across traditional boundaries. It also calls for multi-generational leadership—the active engagement of younger leaders as well as senior executives who are asking, “What’s possible here and who cares?”

This Executive Champions’ Workshop (ECW) is a special session sponsored in collaboration with the Global Institute for Responsible Leadership. The newly founded Institute grew out of multi-stakeholder dialogues at last summer’s ECW about the role of leaders in addressing today’s most pressing global challenges. Its focus is developing a critical leadership competence for addressing the key issues of the 21st century—how to sense, inspire, and bring about creative collaboration across the traditional boundaries of institutions, sectors, cultures, and generational groups in order to prototype innovative paths forward on critical societal issues.

During the ECW, a diverse group of cross-generational leaders from the corporate, government, and civic sectors around the world will:

- **Experience a powerful approach** to cross-sector collaboration that focuses on sensing and actualizing emerging futures. This methodology is the result of a seven-year collaborative research

project on knowledge and leadership involving interviews with 130 thought leaders worldwide as well as action-research projects engaging multiple stakeholders around crucial national and international issues.

- **Discover inspiring stories** in which people are succeeding in sensing and shaping new futures across traditional boundaries.
- **Engage in cross-generational and cross-sector dialogue** with senior executives and pioneering younger leaders to explore the emerging global agenda for change and its relationship to leaders’ personal legacy and strategic decision making.
- **Provide insight and input** for the development of the Global Institute for Responsible Leadership as it takes the next steps in its evolution, including planning for an initial multi-stakeholder action-learning laboratory in 2003.
- **Explore creative opportunities** for evolving a powerful global community of responsible leaders who are committed to an economically viable, ecologically sustainable, socially just, and culturally diverse world.

The unique experiences and perspectives of the diverse group of participants will serve as a starting point for sensing what is happening in the world and exploring high-leverage opportunities for cross-sector collaboration. In this way, we hope that the group can contribute to addressing the most pressing issues of our time.

*For additional information about the program or the Institute, contact Joseph Jaworski of Generon and the Global Institute for Responsible Leadership at [jaworski@generonconsulting.com](mailto:jaworski@generonconsulting.com) or Otto Scharmer of MIT, SoL, and the Global Institute for Responsible Leadership at [scharmer@mit.edu](mailto:scharmer@mit.edu).*

# The Global Institute for Responsible Leadership

*“Change is in the air. Something is coming to an end; something is beginning. It is a shaping time in our nation and in the world. We have an opportunity for a new cast at history.”* —John Gardner, 2001

## The Challenge

At the opening of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we face increasing tensions and clashing forces throughout the world. This rising tide of critical issues includes:

- *A social and economic divide between the rich and the poor.* Currently, 15 percent of the world’s population consumes 85 percent of all products and resources, while disease and poverty—especially among youth—are growing at alarming rates.
- *An ecological divide between the impact that human beings currently have on the earth and a more fundamental interdependence and balance with nature.* In the process of trying to control rather than co-evolve with nature, human beings have been destroying Earth’s atmosphere and biosphere.
- *A cultural divide between a materialistic worldview and an emerging worldview that focuses on the development of consciousness and that embraces the more subtle dimensions of human perception and experience.* The focus of many businesses and governments on exponential growth has led to isolation, a decline in civic engagement, a false sense of security, and disconnect with our own higher purpose.

As a result of these troubling developments, the world is facing the possibility of catastrophic failures on a massive scale—perhaps in our lifetime. Meanwhile, there is a growing awareness that we are at the threshold of an immense opportunity to consciously shape the emerging future. But political, legal, and economic approaches have proven inadequate to bring about the penetrating changes in human culture needed for people to live in true harmony with one another and the earth. To bring about the deeper changes required for the global system to rise to its next level of development, we need to foster a new capacity for individual and collective leadership that allows people across institutions to sense and actualize their highest future potential.

## Project Purpose

For thousands of years, humans have recognized the ability to lead deep change and jointly create new realities as one of the cornerstones of leadership. Yet today we have little sense of our capacity to effect profound change in the world. To help shift this dynamic, a group of individuals and organizations has come together to create the Global Institute for Responsible Leadership. We seek to

build capacity for collective leadership across institutional sectors while at the same time tackling critical social needs and producing concrete results. By working together on real-life issues and applying a powerful framework for sensing and actualizing the future, senior leaders from business, government, and civil society contribute to social change; they also gain facility with a new set of tools to take back to their organizations.

The methodology deployed throughout this process has been developed over the past seven years in an action-research project affiliated with the Society for Organizational Learning (SoL) and will be delivered in “leadership laboratories,” enabling collective leadership to occur across institutions and systems. Through this approach, leaders become active participants in an emerging future, achieve a higher sense of awareness by reconnecting with nature, and work together in extraordinary ways.

## Objectives and Outcomes

The *immediate objective* of the Institute is to conduct a pilot leadership laboratory to create a “living example”—a microcosm of people collaborating successfully to address one area of critical concern, for example, young people at risk due to inadequate access to healthcare or educational opportunities. This will bring together a broad range of individuals, as well as institutions represented by small teams of senior and emerging leaders, who are passionate about producing results around issues such as those described above. The laboratory will be designed as a cross-institutional “action-learning” project in order to make the evolving body of leadership methods, tools, and practices widely accessible to participants across levels, sectors, and countries.

The *long-range objective* is to develop and deliver a number of such leadership laboratories, each one addressing a separate compelling societal issue, and develop capacity among diverse people and groups to make this process more widely available. Again, by taking part in the laboratory, participants will build individual and collective leadership capacity while creating tangible results.

The *ultimate objective* is to scale up the leadership laboratory process, creating a critical mass of thought, awareness, and action so that the living examples contribute to a “tipping point” or “field shift” that inspires the creation of similar approaches across all of society.

# Immediate Next Steps

## Local Dialogue Meetings

The Institute will conduct dialogue meetings to generate ideas for focus areas of future laboratories, and to scan the field to identify and establish connections with allies, helpers, and other players.

These meetings will be held in the San Francisco Bay Area, New York City, and Boston. To get input from colleagues in Africa, Europe, Latin America, and Asia, our associates will conduct one-on-one interviews with them.

## The Executive Champions Workshop (ECW)

For the past eight years, SoL has hosted the ECW as its premier offering to senior leaders to help them build peer networks through deep conversations, broaden their thinking, and inspire breakthroughs for dealing with professional and personal challenges. Organized by participants from one of last year's ECWs, the next ECW, in Stowe, Vermont, August 13–16, will bring together a group of leaders from business, government, and NGOs to explore how the Global Institute for Responsible Leadership might best develop and, in particular, the launch of the Global Leadership Laboratory (see below).

## Global Leadership Laboratory (to be piloted in 2003)

A Global Leadership Laboratory is a six-month, full-time project, involving about 25 participants from institutions in business, government, and civil society. Each Laboratory will address a particular issue to be determined by a process similar to that taking place in the local dialogue meetings in April and will focus on

developing collective leadership capacities. The process for doing so includes five core elements:

1. *A network of cross-institutional learning and collaboration:* We will convene key institutions and individuals who need each other in order to create a microcosm of this new way of working together.
2. *Learning journeys:* Participants of the lab will undertake global cross-institutional visits and shadowing experiences. They will travel to each other's institutions and speak with people key to addressing the challenge and topic at issue.
3. *Retreat/nature as gateway to collective intelligence:* Participants will attend a seven-day wilderness retreat to synthesize their observations from the learning journeys, create possible scenarios of the future, and build their individual and collective capacity to tap into the highest potential scenario.
4. *Prototypes of living examples:* Collaborators and key stakeholders will develop microcosms of the new realities they want to create, providing practical examples of transformational change. By doing so, they will create opportunities to collect feedback about the process from across institutional and sectoral boundaries and engage others in the act of co-creation.
5. *Presentation of the outcomes:* Participants will present results to sponsors and stakeholders from all sectors.

After these first labs are completed, we will review the results and feedback from all stakeholders and work to improve the methodology and structure as needed.

*“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?’ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the Glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”*

—Marianne Williamson, as cited by Nelson Mandela in his 1994 Inaugural Speech