

MIT

Leadership Center

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In This Issue

The Good Fight: 20 top organizations team up for a better world.

Small World: Executives brainstorm the implications of globalization.

Tough Choices: Leadership is all about change, says former HP CEO Carly Fiorina.

Goodwill Hunting: An MIT leadership course puts trust to the test.

The Good Fight



ELIAS takes on the world's toughest problems.

MIT Leadership Center faculty members [Otto Scharmer](#), [Peter Senge](#), and [Eleanor Westney](#) have created a pioneering collaboration dedicated to finding solutions to the most confounding dilemmas of our time, including such afflictions as poverty, climate change, and AIDS.

[Emerging Leaders for Innovation Across Sectors \(ELIAS\)](#) combines leadership development with hands-on initiatives that address significant global challenges. The program connects a network of 20 global business, government, and civic organizations. Each is a powerhouse in its realm — BASF, BP, Oxfam, Nissan, the Society for Organizational Learning, Unilever, the UN Global Compact, UNICEF, the World Bank Institute, the MIT Sloan School, and the World Wildlife Fund, among others.

Through ELIAS, up-and-coming leaders from these organizations work together in international teams, learning from and about each other as they prototype solutions to a variety of sustainability challenges, according to ELIAS founding member Dayna Cunningham, who is the executive director of MIT's [Center for Reflective Community Practice](#). ELIAS's purpose is to build a global network of high-potential leaders and to develop the capacity, in both the participants and their organizations, for leading profound systems innovation across organizational and national boundaries.

In the fall of 2006, ELIAS members journeyed to China to investigate a range of challenges, from the HIV/AIDS epidemic to the problem of how to provide energy to China's growing automotive industry. They talked to some of China's leading thinkers, traveled to rural areas to gain a firsthand understanding of the issues, and capped the trip with a week of contemplative retreat.

The group investigated a mobile, community-based education plan to thwart the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and they examined alternative energy resources. They also formed small prototyping teams to test innovations. One team is exploring ways to bring solar- and wind- generated power to marginalized communities. Its decentralized model would foster economic growth and significantly reduce carbon dioxide emissions in rural communities.

"The whole awareness of sustainability has been growing because systems thinking is enabling us to see many more interdependencies," said Andre van Heemstra of Unilever. "Those interdependencies make you conclude that it is more than stupid — it is reckless — to think of commercial sustainability in isolation of either social or environmental sustainability."

ELIAS already has seven projects under way around the world, and Scharmer said he believes this experiment "can begin

to change the DNA" of global business. "What we have seen so far is extremely encouraging," he said.

[MIT Leadership Center](#) Faculty Director [Deborah Ancona](#) shares Scharmer's optimism: "ELIAS is a revolutionary program, and we believe it will work." Some of her confidence is rooted in the fact that ELIAS exemplifies the Leadership Center's successful [distributed leadership model](#). "We're excited that the program is already having an impact and proud that three of our faculty members are at the helm."

[Read more about the ELIAS project...](#)

Small World



Globalization is changing business, and business education is going to have to adapt to remain relevant. That was the message from more than 30 top executives who participated in the [Leadership Development Forum](#) sponsored by the [MIT Leadership Center](#) on April 30, 2007.

As organizations increasingly do business in countries with different ideas about right and wrong, they need leaders who understand other cultures and how to work within them, forum participants said.

"Organizations are going to need to be a lot more careful when considering their impact on the various people and societies that they touch," said [Rakesh Khurana](#) of Harvard Business School, one of the forum presenters. "Because if a society feels there's a misalignment between its goals and that of business, it's business that will suffer."

[Read more about the forum...](#)

Tough Choices



Carly Fiorina's first job after college was as a receptionist. Her most recent was as president and CEO of Hewlett-Packard, a multibillion-dollar company with more than 140,000 employees. What did she learn along the way? "If you want to advance in business, you have to understand people," she said.

The 1989 Sloan graduate shares leadership lessons in her new book, [Tough Choices](#), which also details how Fiorina bounced back from being very publicly fired from HP in 2005. [Watch the video](#) of her speech at the [Dean's Innovative Leader Series](#) to hear how Fiorina

describes her transformation of HP, an organization she calls "a company so in love with its past that it could not envision its future."

Leadership is all about change, even though "the natural momentum of any institution is to preserve the status quo," Fiorina said. "If you want to change products and profits, you have to change what people do every day."

[Watch the video...](#)

Goodwill Hunting



Students at MIT Sloan gained some first-hand experience in team-building, problem-solving and negotiating under pressure this March during "[The Hunt](#)," a new course that was part of [Sloan Innovation Period](#), an intense week of workshops and leadership training held each semester.

"The Hunt" split 70 students into 10 teams, which competed against each other in an elaborate game involving bartering for scarce resources. As the

allotted time ticked by, negotiations grew tense and suspicions emerged.

[Jonathan Lehrich](#), associate director of the MIT Leadership Center, led the discussion that followed the game. One clear lesson? "Time and competition reduce trust quickly," Lehrich said. "The best teams succeeded by sharing information, not hoarding it."

[Read more...](#)

MIT Leadership Center

The MIT Leadership Center is dedicated to advancing the knowledge, perspectives and experiences that enable leaders to transform their passion into action and improve the world. The Center's world-class researchers and practitioners create cutting-edge theory and applied research, pragmatic tools for action, innovative education, and dialogues and networks to connect diverse individuals, organizations and communities around the globe. [Read past issues of our newsletter.](#)

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