

# Help the World Run Better and Improve People's Lives

During a recent meeting of the European Roundtable of Industrialists, a special guest challenged the assembled CEOs with a simple reminder. "The shift from the old to the new," he said, "is the only tradition worth preserving."

The global economy itself is a fitting reminder of this tradition. We have seen the economy reinvent itself many times in the last century. Once from an industrial economy to a services economy. Once to an internet economy. Now, yet again, to a new digital economy.

## What have we learned that can help us harness the forces of change?

First, while every individual has the capacity to change the world, it is almost always the enterprise where progress is best achieved. The enterprise brings people together, either for profit, for purpose or for both. The enterprise is where a collection of individuals can combine their abilities to advance society by creating products and delivering services. Yes, individual innovators are responsible for big ideas. But only once those big ideas have been brought to full scale have we recognized the full magnitude of their impact.

Second, trust is the ultimate human currency. Since the earliest days of recorded history, the ability of one person to trust another has propelled society forward. When people trust, they can build. When people trust, they can accept mistakes and failures. When people trust, they can share in success and triumph.

Third, the world's biggest challenges are also its greatest opportunities. Feeding, housing and healing people are challenges that transcend any single phase of the economy or of society itself. It is precisely our collective will to do these things better that lifts up one generation from its predecessors.

## What do these three learnings mean for our new digital economy?

When it comes to the enterprise, today we understand that data is its most significant resource. Data enables us to connect people, things and businesses. Data enables machines to learn and to conduct routine transactions more efficiently. Like physicians who sequence the human genome to diagnose and cure illness, technology can now help us sequence the economy to fuel a new era of unparalleled growth.

Even with data as the new fuel of our economic engine, a lack of trust could undermine our forward progress. We must help all people to see a place for themselves in this promising future. We must train people to understand new technologies rather than abandon them for fear of the implications. It is no longer enough that we profess our concern for others. We have to prove this through action.



Bill McDermott

Bill McDermott is chief executive officer of business software market leader SAP SE. Since becoming CEO in 2010, SAP has experienced dramatic increases in total revenue, operating income and market value. Under his leadership, SAP is the first global IT company to receive EDGE Certification for its focus on gender diversity and is the most sustainable software company in the world according to the Dow Jones Sustainability Index.

Bill has more than three decades of experience in business technology. He joined SAP in 2002 to lead the business in North America and has steadily risen to his current role as chief executive officer. Before joining SAP, he served in senior executive roles with Siebel Systems and Gartner, Inc. He launched his business career at Xerox Corporation, where he rose to become the company's youngest corporate officer and division president. His life and learnings are chronicled in his internationally best-selling memoir, "Winners Dream: A Journey from Corner Store to Corner Office".

He also serves on the boards of directors of performance apparel maker Under Armour, engineering software maker Ansys, and cyber security firm SecureWorks. He represents SAP on the European Roundtable of Industrials and the U.S. Business Council.

Finally, our challenges can build bridges. With geographic boundaries largely irrelevant, we live in the most ethnically, racially and culturally diverse society in history. The questions before us must not be about what makes us different. We must focus on what brings us together. We must focus on environmental sustainability (SAP will be carbon neutral by 2025). We must cure cancer (The National Center for Tumor Disease in Heidelberg is making progress on the SAP HANA platform). We must give every child a path to a bright future, regardless of where they are born (SAP is teaching young people to code in Germany, Africa, Latin America and beyond).

SAP has been at the epicenter of the enterprise technology industry for nearly five decades. We have never been more optimistic about what's possible. We have never been more inspired by the leadership of our 350,000 customers in 190 countries around the world.

Today we are experiencing a shift from the old to the new. We embrace it, especially as it offers an unprecedented opportunity to help the world run better and improve people's lives. □