



Jeffrey Pfeffer

AUTHOR

Most leadership development spending produces no measurable improvement in how organisations are actually led. Executives leave programmes energised but return to systems that reward the same behaviours, protect the same power structures, and ignore the same evidence. The cost is not just wasted budget – it shows up in attrition, disengagement, and, increasingly, in the physical health of workforces.

Jeffrey Pfeffer is a Stanford Graduate School of Business professor whose evidence-based research on power, leadership, and workplace conditions challenges the assumptions most organisations use to develop leaders and manage people.

Jeffrey Pfeffer's 2026 Biography

AVAILABLE FOR

- Speaking

Why organisations work with Jeffrey Pfeffer

- His research quantifies what most HR functions treat as intangible: the measurable physical health cost of management decisions on job insecurity, autonomy, and workload – giving boards and CHROs a data-backed case for structural change rather than wellness programmes.
- “Leadership BS” provides executives with a named, argued critique of why leadership development investment typically fails – and a framework for what evidence-based practice looks like instead, which is directly usable in programme redesign conversations.
- His Stanford elective “Paths to Power” distils decades of research on how organisational power actually operates – not how it should – giving senior leaders an accurate map of the dynamics shaping their own institutions.
- He is one of the few management academics whose work has been covered seriously in both peer-reviewed journals and mainstream business media, making his arguments accessible to boards and executive committees without losing analytical credibility.
- His willingness to argue positions that contradict the consulting and coaching industry – on leadership myths, on power, on workplace harm – makes him a genuinely disruptive voice in executive conversations where polished consensus is the norm.

JEFFREY'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Change Management
- Employee Wellbeing
- Executive Development
- Leadership
- Organizational Agility
- Scenario Planning & Strategic Foresight
- Values-Based Leadership

Biography highlights

- Thomas D. Dee II Professor of Organizational Behavior, Stanford Graduate School of Business – one of the institution’s longest-serving faculty members in that department
- Author of approximately 15 books including “Dying for a Paycheck” (HarperBusiness, 2018), “Leadership BS” (HarperBusiness, 2015), and

“Power: Why Some People Have It – and Others Don’t” (HarperBusiness, 2010)

- Co-author with Robert Sutton of “Hard Facts, Dangerous Half-Truths, and Total Nonsense” (Harvard Business School Press, 2006) – a foundational text in evidence-based management
- Creator and long-running instructor of the Stanford MBA elective “Paths to Power”
- Published in and extensively covered by Harvard Business Review across multiple decades
- Recognised on the Thinkers50 ranking of global management thinkers

Biography

Jeffrey Pfeffer has spent five decades at Stanford asking an uncomfortable question: if organisations invest heavily in leadership development, why do workplaces keep producing the same failures? His answer, built across roughly 15 books and more than 150 academic articles, is that most management practice is not grounded in evidence – it is grounded in optimism, ideology, and the preferences of an industry that profits from selling aspiration.

His 2015 book “Leadership BS” made this argument directly and with data. The leadership development industry, Pfeffer argued, systematically teaches qualities – humility, authenticity, servant leadership – that do not predict outcomes in real organisations, while ignoring what the evidence actually shows about how power and authority work. “Power: Why Some People Have It – and Others Don’t” offered the corrective: a clear-eyed, research-based account of how influence is built and exercised, drawn from his long-running Stanford MBA elective “Paths to Power.”

“Dying for a Paycheck,” published in 2018, extended the argument into territory most organisations find harder to discuss. Pfeffer documented, with epidemiological and workplace data, that management decisions on job insecurity, autonomy, long hours, and benefits have direct, measurable effects on employee health – making the workplace, he argued, the fifth leading cause of death in the United States. The implication for senior leaders is significant: workforce wellbeing is not a culture initiative, it is a consequence of operational and strategic choices made at the top.

As Thomas D. Dee II Professor of Organizational Behavior at Stanford GSB, Pfeffer brings this body of work directly into executive conversations. His value is not a programme or a model – it is a sustained, evidence-based argument that organisations routinely make avoidable, costly mistakes about people, and a clear account of what taking the evidence seriously would require.

Key speaking topics

- Evidence-based management and leadership practice
- Organisational power and influence
- The economics of workplace health and employee wellbeing
- Leadership development – what works and what does not
- Workplace conditions and workforce performance
- Decision-making under organisational pressure
- Strategy execution and the role of power dynamics

Ideal for

- CHROs and CPOs reviewing the design and ROI of leadership development programmes
- CEOs and boards seeking an evidence-based challenge to prevailing management assumptions
- Transformation leads and organisational development functions designing large-scale change
- Executive education programme directors at business schools and corporate universities

Audience outcomes

- A grounded, data-backed critique of standard leadership development assumptions - with specific alternative approaches
- A clearer understanding of how power and influence actually operate in organisations, distinct from how formal authority is structured
- Practical framing for the business case linking management decisions to workforce health and productivity outcomes
- Sharper questions to apply to existing people strategy, programme design, and organisational structure
- A working vocabulary for distinguishing evidence-based management practice from received wisdom

Jeffrey Pfeffer's 2026 talks & topics

Dying for a Paycheck: What Modern Management Costs Us and What to Do About It

Draws on Pfeffer's 2018 book to show how specific management practices - job insecurity, long hours, lack of autonomy - create measurable physical harm and what organisations can change.

Key takeaways:

- The epidemiological evidence linking management decisions to employee health outcomes
- Which workplace conditions drive the greatest harm and which changes produce the greatest return
- How to reframe workforce wellbeing as an operational leadership issue rather than an HR programme

Leadership BS: Why Leadership Development Fails and What to Do Instead

A direct, evidence-based critique of the leadership development industry and a practical framework for what works instead.

Key takeaways:

- The specific myths the leadership industry sells and why they do not predict leadership effectiveness

- What the research actually shows about the qualities and behaviours that determine leadership outcomes
- How organisations can redesign development investment around evidence rather than aspiration

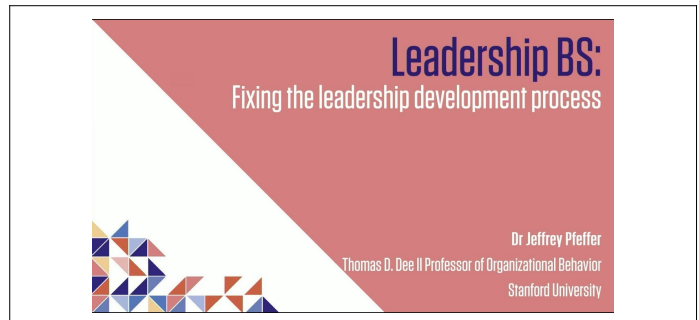
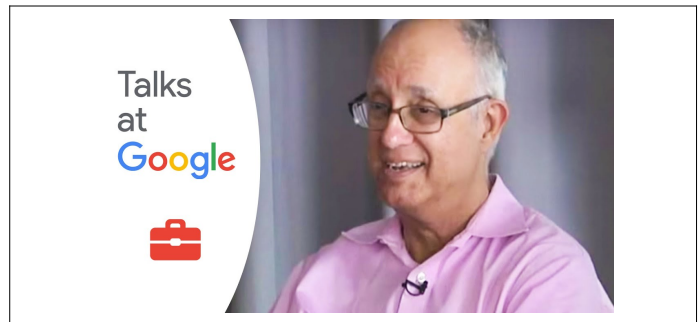
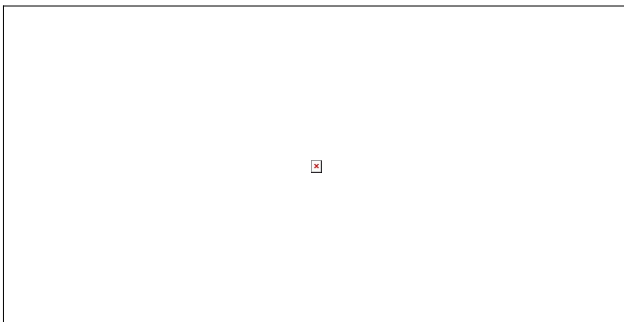
Paths to Power: How Organisational Power Really Works

Based on Pfeffer's long-running Stanford MBA elective, this talk gives executives an accurate account of how power is acquired, maintained, and used in real organisations.

Key takeaways:

- The gap between how authority is formally structured and how influence actually flows
- Practical principles for building and exercising power that the research supports
- How senior leaders can navigate organisational politics without abandoning their values

Jeffrey Pfeffer's Videos



What Jeffrey Pfeffer's clients say

Dr. Jeffrey Pfeffer is simply one of the best Management thinkers and speakers in the world. And our company, HSM, works with only the very best. His ability to put the People context with business results is unmatched. I recommend him to any company.

José Salibi Neto

Co-Founder & Chief Knowledge Officer, HSM Brasil

Jeff has a natural, conversational style which combined with his command of the subject and marketing sense result in entertaining and informative presentations.

Shanda Bahles

former Managing Partner, El Dorado Ventures

Jeff Pfeffer is the rarest of creatures in the world of business thought leaders: he is substantial and entertaining. There are countless professional business edutainers completely lacking in substance. And there are thousands of business academics who do rigorous research but put audiences to sleep. Jeff is one of a handful that combines deep and rigorous research with a delivery that inspires and holds an audience.

Roger Martin

Dean, Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto

Pfeffer's insightful stories and innovative strategies surrounding organizational behavior are among the best that are available today. Whether you are trying to improve performance, realize the untapped potential of your employees, or drive customer-centricity throughout your company, Jeff's fresh and irreverent perspectives are sure to help you move the needle

Andrew Salzman

Chief Marketing Officer, Saba Software

Jeffrey Pfeffer's 2026 speaking fees

Specific fees fall within the ranges shown. These are presented as a guide only and are subject to change without notice.

	EUR	GBP	USD
Home Country	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
Asia Pacific	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000

Europe	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
Middle East & Africa	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
South America	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
United Kingdom	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
US East Coast	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
US West Coast	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
Virtual	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000