



Gerd Leonhard

**Futurist & Humanist, Keynote Speaker,
Strategic Advisor, Author, CEO The Futures
Agency**

Over the past two decades, Gerd Leonhard has risen to one of the top 10 futurist keynote speakers worldwide.

Gerd's biography

Gerd Leonhard's Background

With over 2,000 engagements in 60+ countries since 2004, and a combined audience of over 2.5 million people, Gerd has been listed by Wired magazine as one of the Top 100 Most-Influential People in Europe, and as 'one of the leading media futurists in the World' by The Wall Street Journal.

Gerd focuses on the future of humanity and technology, digital ethics, artificial intelligence, future-[leadership](#) and foresights. His keynotes, are renowned for their hard-hitting and provocative style – inspiring, humorous, [motivational](#), and always personal. Using cutting-edge creative motion design, Gerd's performances have become a uniquely immersive experience on the big screen, reinventing the visual side of the conference industry.

Gerd is highly regarded as a global influencer and has advised many [business](#) leaders and government officials around the globe. His diverse list of clients include governments, NGOs and Fortune 500 companies such as SAP, Microsoft, Google, Accenture, Deloitte, KPMG, Sony, UBS, Tetrapak, Mastercard, BBC, Unilever, Lloyds Bank, WWF, Sony, The Guardian, Telkom Indonesia, Siemens, RTL, France Telecom, The Financial Times, Ogilvy, Omnicom, The EU Commission, VISA, Audi, NetAPP and many others.

A true thought leader in the futurist space, Gerd is above all a dedicated humanist who believes that all technological progress should further collective human flourishing. His credo is simple: People, Planet, Purpose and Prosperity.

Gerd uses his keynotes, presentations, workshops and advisory sessions to deep-dive on complex

topics. Recurring themes include the coming redefinition of human-machine relationships, exploring what it means to be human in a world of machines and algorithms, the future of work and jobs, and the ethics of technology. As Gerd likes to say, humanity will change more in the next 20 years than in the previous 300 years – so let's maintain and protect what makes us human!

Gerd Leonhard has spent his lifetime engaging with [change](#), as a professional artist, internet entrepreneur, and author; now exploring the role of a visionary thinker and [speaker](#). Gerd's background is in the music business; in 1985 he won Berklee College 'Quincy Jones Award' and subsequently spent 12 years working as a professional guitarist, composer and producer. He then caught the internet-bug and became a digital music & media entrepreneur.

From 1995 to 2002 he served as Founder/CEO of several internet startups, based in San Francisco. In 2002, following the .com meltdown and the 9/11 crisis, Gerd returned to Europe and discovered his new calling as a futurist and as the CEO of The Futures Agency, a global network of over 40 leading futurists, speakers and personalities. The future is already here, we just haven't paid enough attention.

As we rush headlong into a machine-led world where the very essence of human being is being increasingly challenged, Gerd is reminding us to consider what moral values are we prepared to stand up for before "being human" alters its meaning forever.

Gerd travels around the globe to speak at leading conferences, events and seminars, helping individuals, enterprises and government organizations to deal with 'future shock', and to embrace change. Gerd is also an influential author. He is the co-author of the visionary book 'The Future of Music' and the author of five other books including his last best-seller, 'Technology vs. Humanity', which is now available in ten languages.

Gerd's films on the future of technology and humanity, [digital transformation](#) and artificial intelligence have reached millions of viewers. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA, London) and an advisory board member of the Indian and Canadian Research Institutes. He resides in Zurich, Switzerland and presents both in English and German.

Gerd's talks

- **The great transformation**

A with/post-corona future: what to expect in the next 3-5 years

Our world has been dramatically rebooted by the Covid19 crisis – and we are not just 'going back to normal'.

Too many of us, this crisis may feel quite devastating but I think it also creates a very unique opportunity for what I call 'The Great Transformation'. This keynote (remotely or in-person) addresses topics such as:

- The economic and business impact: the future of jobs, work, commerce and trade
- The geopolitical impact: Europe, the U.S. and China – new power structures? De-Globalisation?
- The future of capitalism: stakeholder value over shareholder value: finally, a sustainable capitalism?
- The environmental impact: how will this crisis impact climate-change action? How real is the 'end of oil'?
- The impact on medical & healthcare: entering warp-drive
- The societal impact: is technological domination and permanent surveillance next?
- The personal impact: fears and hopes, solidarity vs. opportunism, resilience vs desperation
- The impact on investing: where will the money go?

- The impact on education, learning and universities (and leadership)

- **Technology and humanity**

In this groundbreaking new talk based on his new book, Gerd addresses the “future shocks” that lie in wait for humanity as it tumbles into a world of Big Data / Tech / AI dominance. This impactful presentation at the intersection of technology and ethics will engage your audience way beyond their daily concerns, and challenge the very core of being human – our shared values, beliefs and desire for happiness.

This talk is an always-evolving continuation of Gerd’s best-selling new book, and explores the coming clash of machine and mankind in detail – one that will make all other ‘industrial revolutions’ seem like kindergarten. This is a classic keynote engagement for public events, large audiences spanning all corporate divisions and borders, as well as for executive client conferences.

- **Offline is the new luxury - staying human in hyper-connected world**

Recent research suggests that the power-users of social networks count among the loneliest people in the world, and that interacting too much with screens and devices as opposed to actual people may have severe toxic side-effects on human relationships.

Increasingly, technological advances such as the smartphone and augmented / virtual reality and intelligent digital assistants first feel like ‘magic’, but after the initial excitement some of us experience a rather ‘manic’ obsession with them, and subsequently, the toxic effects of overuse such as attention deficit disorder or social isolation are not far off. A new wave of addiction to hyper-connectivity ‘likes’ and overall FOMO (fear of missing out) is already on the horizon – we can only speculate where an exponential growth of these issues may leave us within a decade (Black Mirror, anyone?).

Do we need to remind ourselves and relearn how to be ‘merely human’, to be unaltered and un-augmented, to sense with our own eyes and ears, to be in the moment and to listen to ourselves and others instead of ‘forgetting ourselves’ among those magical devices and intelligent algorithms? This talk will point the way towards finding a good balance.

- **From disruption to construction: futurizing your business**

In this dynamic talk, Gerd delivers the immersion and the excitement that is often necessary to truly futurize your business or organisation, and to challenge and change established mindsets, toxic assumptions or satisfied attitudes.

Understanding that the ‘digital default’ is becoming the new normal is often crucial to the process of constructing a new future. Angling for quick disruptions is no longer sufficient: everything and everyone is getting connected, everywhere and at all times; mobile devices have already become our external brains while bots and intelligent assistants are next – connected devices are now truly becoming the ‘the extension of man’.

This coming hyper-networked society will not just change the very definition of ownership, property and control, but business models in general will become increasingly transient rather than permanent and predictable. How can you get ready for this kind of VUCA future, personally and professionally? How will you move beyond disruption towards constructing a truly sustainable future?

- **Leading into the future**

Enterprise leadership has until now been largely based on military examples – hence the chief “officers” of various kinds. But because of exponential technological developments, leadership is changing in radical ways, as well.

How can you grasp the changing nature of your role above and beyond shareholder value? What human skills will you need to evolve alongside the strategic, financial or technological and engineering ones you may have already mastered? And how can you leave backward-looking, or ‘toxic-assumption’ – decision making behind and start deploying a future mindset?

In this new talk, Gerd Leonhard addresses a world of leadership where most of the old models are suddenly obsolete, and delivers inspirational precepts from the parallel worlds of imagination and invention.

- **Understanding the megashifts - transforming your organisation**

On the one hand, the top 20 global technology platforms and disruptors are growing exponentially. On the other hand, many former incumbents are being forced to 'pivot' and dramatically reinvent themselves to avoid sudden irrelevance. In this eye-opening session, I look at how to evolve into a future-ready organisation based on exploiting what I call the 10 'Megashifts' such as digitisation, cognification, virtualisation, automation and robotisation.

- **Digital ethics - the ethics of exponential technological progress**

Science fiction is becoming science fact, and I believe that in 10 years the power of technology will be limitless. It is for these reasons that the ethical and human use of technology can no longer be an afterthought. If we define ethics as "knowing the difference between having the right or the power to do something and doing the right thing", who will decide what is right, and who will be "mission control for humanity"? We need a 'Global Digital Ethics Council'.

- **Why and how sustainable will be the new profitable**

We must now face the fact that wide-ranging and disruptive carbon taxes are inevitable. Yet after the initial shock waves – and if done right – carbon taxes might not only inject Trillions of \$/€ into climate change adaptation and mitigation measures (a huge opportunity in itself), but may also fund up to 100 Million new jobs in all sectors related to sustainability.

In addition, the much debated shift to shareholder- (not just shareholder-) value is likely to reboot stock-markets around the world in the next 5-7 years, as we transition from the quickly outmoding, single bottom-line of PROFIT to what I call the quadruple bottom-line: People, Planet, Purpose and Prosperity (sustainable capitalism).

Lastly, I think 2020 marks the beginning of a New Renaissance as responsible investing – and rapid divestment from fossil fuels, in particular – is quickly becoming a #1 topic with every fund and every family office, around the globe. In this talk, I often venture beyond climate and energy issues to also address related topics such as the humanly sustainable use of technology (if desired).

- **The new renaissance**

The first Renaissance was a European movement away from feudal dogma to human artistry and independent thought, led by polymaths such as Leonardo da Vinci. Today, the new dogmas – Technology, Data and Connectivity – are endangering human agency, threatening to literally reprogram us. Something must and can be done.

Based on almost two decades of global experiences and insights as a Futurist, Gerd now outlines his vision of a new human renaissance – essentially an embrace of human sovereignty over medieval dogma – and how we can reassert the human being over its artificial substitution and replacement. For this bold new talk, Gerd rediscovers the spirit of the Renaissance to offer you a new vision based on human genius and human values. Instead of a tech-dominated dystopia full of bots and 'thinking machines', Gerd suggests that the future can be one of liberated expression and human mastery.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Futures**

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a global buzzword, and investments in AI, machine/deep learning and many related fields are exploding. The excitement is clearly infectious yet many leading scientists and technologists have voiced grave concerns about controlling AI, or rather, AGI (artificial general intelligence), and an AI-arms-race between the U.S. and China seems almost inevitable.

At the same time, the benefit of intelligent assistance (IA) and so-called narrow AI holds huge promise for all sectors of business and industry, such as in financial services and banking, healthcare and medical, logistics, smart cities and the Internet of Things, in general.

In this talk, Gerd outlines his 7-year view of the opportunities and challenges of AI, with a particular focus on what the implications for our society and culture as well as for humanity overall might be. Technology is morally neutral until we apply it – and we apply it everywhere, now!

- **The digital transformation of business and society**

Successful businesses always maintain a constant conversation about the future: what lessons need to be operationalized today in order to avoid future irrelevance or worse, extinction? It is essential to understand that everything that can be digitized, automated or virtualised, will be. Cognification, automation, disintermediation and robotization are now taking place across all industries, not just in media, content and marketing.

Digital transformation – going from an analog or semi-digital world to a digitally-native world – is certain to be the #1 challenge-opportunity in the next 5-7 years. How can people and companies become better at understanding, and move faster to implement the transformations that are required? How will a company or an organization prosper in a world that is quickly becoming interconnected and interdependent? What skills and mindsets will we need, and what should remain human even if it is inefficient?

- **How to do the future**

The future is already here but often we just haven't paid enough attention to it – and given that today, the future is no longer just an extension of the present, not listening to the near future (5-7 years) could well be detrimental.

The challenge is that future is now simultaneously exponential, combinatorial and interdependent, and 'tomorrow' is happening increasingly faster – what used to take 10 years is now often happening in 3 years, and big companies used to last 75 years in average, while now it's 16 years. It is therefore vitally important to boost your future-readiness, to 'futurize' yourself as well as your company and organisation. The future is a mindset not a timeframe.

In this talk, Gerd shares his approach to observing, understanding and imagining the future, both on a personal as well as on an organisational level. The future belongs to those that can hear it coming!

- **The top 10 things you must know about the future of the future - belongs to those who can hear it coming**

In this fast-paced talk, only the most important future-observations make the cut. Culled from my personal mix of recent reads, news, reports, research, videos and films, and brilliant people I meet and speak to, this talk is constantly updated to feature the top ten things I find most relevant for our immediate future. This talk is highly customisable and can cover almost any desired segment within business, society, technology and humanity.

- **How to get future-ready - observe, understand, imagine, create!**

The future is already here, but that we're just not paying enough attention! 'Tomorrow' is happening increasingly faster than we think, and it is therefore vitally important to boost our future-readiness, to nurture a future-mindset, and to 'futurize' ourselves and our organisations. In this talk, I share my approach to observing, understanding and imagining the future, both on a personal as well as on an organisational level. The future is not something that just happens to us, it is something we create!

- **Happiness in the digital age**

I have spoken a lot about happiness in my talks since 2015, and it's an important chapter in my book *Technology vs Humanity*. Trust isn't digital. Machines don't do relationships. Happiness is

not a download, and it can't be automated or digitized. Yes, technology is great at giving us more or less hedonic pleasures such as free phone calls, access to unlimited music, TV Shows & films, networking opportunities for business or shopping online.

Yet at the same time, unhappiness appears to be rising around the world (as are mental health issues and opioid addiction), and the power-users of social networks are said to the highest suicide rate of any population segment. Is technology, done wrong, 'bicycles for the mind but bullets for the soul'?

Does 'too much technology' (#toomuchmagictech) lead to unhappiness? Does too-much-tech prevent us from being open to true happiness? If so, how will we balance technology and our need for real happiness? As big tech offers its hedonistic pleasure traps, how can we protect and pursue those deeper forms of happiness (eudaemonia) that involve what I all the ANDRORITHMS such as empathy, compassion, and consciousness? And what about digital well-being?

Technology is very good at giving us what we want but very bad at giving us what we need.

Technology is not what we seek but how we seek. We will not find real happiness on a screen or in VR, or in the cloud.

- **Man and machine convergence: Heaven or is it hell?**

In an era when machines are not only taking our jobs but are starting to run our lives, as well, how will we respond to the unprecedented economic, societal and ethical questions that this human-machine symbiosis will raise? Exponential technological change is impacting our lives at every turn, and intelligent digital agents (IDAs) and bots are about to become as normal as smartphones.

What will it mean to be human in the near future? What will happen to work and jobs, to our social contracts and ethics, and to the way we do business? HellVen (Hell+Heaven) challenges and opportunities will abound: this could be heaven based on total abundance that may create a kind of 'Star Trek-Economy', or it could just as easily be a dystopian hell – depending on how we prepare and lead with foresight, today. What do we need to do to make sure our future is mostly heaven, collectively? What are the political consequences, and what about regulation, treaties and agreements?

- **The megashifts - the next 7 years in technology, business and society**

The leading global technology brands and digital platforms are growing faster than ever before, while many incumbent enterprises and brands are forced to 'pivot' and dramatically reinvent themselves, or face sudden disintermediation and irrelevance – the car industry makes for the best possible example for this challenge, right now:) In this session, Gerd looks at how to go beyond this Darwinian phase of 'Cybermorphosis' and evolve into a future-ready organization (using a process that Gerd likes to call 'futurizing').

Exponential technological progress is fuelling a multitude of combinatorial developments such as The Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence, deep learning and robotics, the re-definition of privacy and security, new human-machine interfaces (such as voice-control and intelligent bots), the total reboot of marketing and advertising and the rise of smart-cloud-everything-everywhere (i.e. content, money, education, health, transportation etc). Plus, in in this coming decade we may also need to examine the future meaning of 'capitalism' based on interdependence and eco-systematic thinking rather than on traditional profit & growth paradigms.

In this riveting talk, Gerd depicts the key trends and reveals the likely minefields and identifies the key opportunities, dishing up a mixture of future-shock and awesomeness to stimulate some serious thinking. Watch this keynote excerpt on The Megashifts.

- **Human-machine relationships - Are you on team human?**

Perhaps the most burning issue facing humanity is our ever-deepening relationship with the computers, bots, devices, robots and machines that increasingly surround our lives, everywhere and at all times. Humans and 'intelligent machines' are increasingly interconnecting and

overlapping; and some Silicon Valley pundits may even argue that a full symbiosis of man and machines is near.

The Internet of Things (IoT) is already here, and artificial intelligence has become a global buzzword. But how will we – as linear and utterly inefficient beings – cope with this increasing empowerment of software and machines, and this global tsunami of real-time information? What will happen to our values and ethics in a world of ultra-smart intelligent agents, artificial intelligence and the coming ‘singularity’? Most importantly, how will we define a good man-machine balance, going forward, and how will we keep humans-in-the-loop?

- **Artificial Intelligence - the next 10 years**

AI has become a global buzz-phrase, yet the very definition of AI is frequently misinterpreted, misunderstood and misrepresented. This presentation aims to clear up the confusion. From a non-academic perspective, I explain the differences between what I call IA (intelligent assistance), AI and AGI (artificial general intelligence), and what each of them could mean for our near-future. Examples are usually drawn specifically from a client’s domain or industry, also addressing the impact of AI on work, education and jobs.

- **Humanity and technology defining our future, today**

As the world is going rapidly digital, I believe it is our humanity that needs the most attention, because it is our humanity that will make all the difference in a world dominated by algorithms and smart machines. The biggest danger today is not that machines will eliminate us, but that we become too much like them! What will happen to humans when machines become truly intelligent? What about privacy, mystery, emotions, intuition, imagination, consciousness, and most importantly, free will?