



## Alf Rehn

Highly engaging [Thinkers50](#) recognised thought leader and speaker focusing on [innovation](#) and new wave creative business [management](#)

Bestselling [author](#) Alf Rehn is a highly influential professor at the University of Southern Denmark who is passionate about innovation, creativity, design and management.

### Alf's biography

#### About Alf Rehn

Alf Rehn is a recognised global thought leader on innovation and creativity, Thinkers50 speaker and bestselling [author](#). Alf has also been included in international media publications including Italian fashion magazines and Brazilian [arts](#) journals.

He is also a highly influential professor at the University of Southern Denmark and is passionate about innovation, [creativity](#), design and management. Having worked with a variety of Fortune 500 corporations as well as founding his own highly successful international [advertising](#) agency, he understands and has experience of management and business innovation.

#### Career

At the exceptionally young age of 31, Alf was made tenured Chair of Management and Organization at Åbo Akademi University in Finland, and ever since has focused on exploring and overcoming the challenges that global corporations face when it comes to innovation. More than just an academic, Alf has been involved in a wide variety of projects over the years, including heading up his own international advertising agency and sitting on the board of billion-dollar companies. He has also written bestselling books which explore the issues of creativity and trends and are loved by business-people and academics alike.

Having worked with a wide variety of business, from fresh-faced startups to well-established Fortune 500 corporations, his innovative thinking has been recognised in a number of circles all over the world and even earned him several awards. In 2013 he was rated number three among the top 20 Nordic business thinkers and number one among Nordic academics. He was also named as 'Top Professor on Twitter' in the Innovation category by LDRLB. 2015 also saw him shortlisted for the Thinkers50 Distinguished Award in Innovation.

As a speaker, Alf has also been widely celebrated and in 2010 was named Speaker of the Year in Finland. He has been the warm-up to the likes of Al Gore and Arnold Schwarzenegger, and headlined conferences with tens of thousands of visitors. He is known as a speaker who can engage with all, no

matter how big or small his audience, and is regularly praised for his ability to connect with those whose day to day work doesn't even involve innovation in business. Having accomplished so much within such a short span of his career, Alf is seen as a true innovator and an inspiration.

If you'd like to hear one of Alf's inspiring presentations on innovation at your event, just drop us an email, give us a call, or request a call back.

Alf Rehn is a Professor of Management and Organization and one of the most influential and inspiring management thinkers in Europe. He currently shares his time between academia and business and is a thought leader in the arena of creativity and innovation. Well respected among his academic peers and the global business community, Alf represents the new wave of business minds and approaches key management topics in a way that provokes, challenges and offers effective, actionable methods of innovation and improvement for modern organisations.

### **Current / Past Roles & Positions**

- Included on the Thinkers50 Guru Radar management thinkers list in 2016
- Rated No3 among the Top 20 Nordic Business Thinkers in 2013 (No1 among academics)
- Shortlisted for the Thinkers50 Distinguished Award in Innovation 2015.
- Ranked as a "Top Professor on Twitter" (in the Innovation category) by LDRLB.
- Speaker of the Year in Finland 2010.

### **Languages**

Alf speaks both English and Danish.

### **Speaking Style**

Entertaining and humorous, Alf's speeches have been described as 'business standup' and never fail to amuse. Despite this, he always manages to portray his true passion for innovation and creativity using his own extensive experience to bring his subject matter alive.

## **Alf's talks**

- **The leadership Paradox**

Talking about leadership is easy, actually leading is hard. In fact, sometimes leadership can feel almost impossible, as leaders are asked to be all things to all people, and beset by contradictory demands. Professor Alf Rehn has studied this 'leadership paradox', and in his keynote discusses what happens when leaders are asked to be both hard and soft, quick-footed and considered, future-focused yet present in the here and now, all at the same time. He argues that great leaders can handle, if never solve, the leadership paradox by focusing on authenticity, acting on the ever-present moments where leadership can emerge, and reflection on one's own leadership path.

- **Creative Cultures - How They're Created, and How They're Destroyed**

For a company to be successful, it needs to be able to harness creativity, innovate, and re-invent itself. The most critical aspect of this, however, is not specific 'creatives', but instead the creation of the right [culture](#). Cultures where creativity is respected and supported, regardless from whom it comes, become better at adapting to changes in the environment, can benefit from a wider range of talents and competencies, and consistently out-innovate their competitors. In his keynote, professor Alf Rehn details what sets creative cultures apart, and how companies can manage to destroy their own creativity by looking to the wrong things.

- **Taboo Futures - The Strategic Genius of Expecting the Worst**

Despite its supposed avantgarde nature, much of trendspotting and futures thinking suffers from being bland and predictable. We tend to imagine futures that make sense to us, and that closely follow what we already have knowledge of. Further, we tend to prefer futures thinking in which we are still the key agent, something that can easily blind us to truly disruptive, disturbing events. In his keynote, professor Alf Rehn discusses the need to consider 'taboo futures', unthinkable events and shifts that challenge the very foundation of how we think about our business, and why these are an important strategic tool. Using hard-hitting cases, Alf highlights the need to think the unthinkable in strategy.

- **Contrarians - The Art and Science of Unconventional Thinking**

We all know them, the strange people who seem to transcend normal creativity and instead can think those truly weird thoughts. Most of us, however, often struggle with our own creativity, and lapse into conventional thinking. In this keynote, professor Alf Rehn discusses 'contrarians', people who go beyond both reason and creativity, and who through this third mode of thinking can create the truly extraordinary. Taking examples from numerous cultures and settings, Alf shows what we can learn from norm- and rule-breakers, and how their example can help us challenge our own thinking – and take us from 'creativity' to truly unconventional thinking.

- **Saving Innovation - Innovating in an Age of Bullshit and Copycats**

Innovation is a core corporate competency, but has also become an annoying buzzword, talk rather than action. In his provocative keynote, professor Alf Rehn challenges our taken for granted notions of innovation, and argues that we may be in the midst of an innovation crisis – in society and in our companies. By discussing innovation fatigue, innovation stress, and why our current innovation ambition is far too modest, Alf encourages his audiences to think in new ways about innovation and what we can do to strengthen the same. Rather than just saying 'innovation is important', Alf shows how it has been lost and what we can do to save it.

- **Designing Innovation Architectures**

The real innovation problem for most companies isn't a lack of ideas or not having the right competencies – it's harnessing the ones you have and aligning what you got. In this keynote, professor Alf Rehn introduces the notion of 'innovation architectures', a way of thinking organizational design and innovation that focuses on efficiently utilizing existing resources and structuring these for innovation purpose and ambition. This goes far beyond buzzwords about ideation and experimentation, and takes the corporate structure seriously as a potential innovation blocker but also a potential innovation engine.

- **Thinking Out of Bounds - The Power of Challenge, Critique, and Extreme Creativity**

You, yes you, are less creative than you think. So is each and every person working with and/or for you. Even though creativity has become the thing every person and every company professes to love, real creativity is as rare as ever. In his keynote, professor Alf Rehn clarifies why creativity doesn't come naturally to us, what is required in order for true creativity to emerge, and what can be achieved when we start to develop radical ideas. Instead of extolling cute ideas, Alf argues for extremes in thinking, why ideas should be dangerous, and why critique and difficult people are key to real creativity.

