

Heather E. McGowan

Future-of-Work Strategist

Please contact a GDA agent for information.

Topics

- Disruption
- Education
- Employee Engagement
- Futurists / Trends
- Journalism / Literary / Author
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- Thought Leader

About Heather E. McGowan

Future-of-work strategist Heather E. McGowan helps leaders prepare their people and organizations for the Post Pandemic world of work. The last few years have forever changed where we work, who works, how we work and measure work, what we do for work and, most importantly, why we work. McGowan is a sense maker, a dot connector, a deep thinker, and a pattern matcher who sees things that others miss. Heather gives people the courage and insight that illuminates their path forward. She's transforming mindsets and entire organizations around the globe with her message about how the next phase of work will focus on continuous learning, rather than simply learning once in order to work. Pulitzer Prize-winning *NYT* columnist Thomas Friedman frequently quotes Heather in his books and columns and describes her as "the oasis" when it comes to insights into the future of work. In 2020 Heather was recognized as one of the top 50 female futurists in the world by *Forbes*. Heather's sessions help employees and leaders alike prepare for and adapt to jobs that do not yet exist.

McGowan has provided keynote addresses for audiences from start-ups to government organizations to universities to publicly traded Fortune 100 companies, including AMP Financial, SAP, Abbvie, Biogen, Fidelity, FIS, Mastercard, AT&T, Financial Times, Siemens, Microsoft, Google, Facebook, Kaiser Permanente, JPMorgan Chase, Lockheed Martin, MassMutual, MetLife, Best Buy, Raytheon, The US Army, Accor Hotels, Paramount, Chevron, AARP, Zendesk, Tableau, Fidelity, de Beers, Professional Beauty Association, and The World Bank among hundreds of others. Heather addresses audiences in person from small summits for C suite executives to large events in the tens of thousands. Her virtual talks have reached hundreds of thousands. Often quoted in the media, notably in the *New York Times*, McGowan serves on the advisory board for Sparks & Honey, a New York-based culture-focused agency looking to the future for brands. McGowan's academic work has included roles at Rhode Island School of Design, and Jefferson University, where she was the strategic architect of the first undergraduate college focused exclusively on innovation. In 2019 Heather was appointed as a faculty member of the Swinburne University Centre for the New Workforce in Melbourne, Australia. In 2022, McGowan was awarded an honorary doctorate from Pennsylvania College of Art and Design in addition to earning her MBA from Babson College and her BFA in Industrial Design from Rhode Island School of Design. McGowan is the co-editor and author of the book *Disrupt Together: How Teams Consistently Innovate* and a *Forbes* contributor. McGowan's first book on the future of work, published in 2020: [*The Adaptation Advantage: Let Go, Learn Fast, and Thrive in the Future of Work*](#), reached number three in business management books on Amazon and was named one of the best business books of 2021 by Soundview. McGowan's most recent book [*The Empathy Advantage: Leading the Empowered Workforce*](#) published in March 2023 and is a finalist for the Next Big Idea Book Club and identified as a top ten business book to read in 2023 by Business Chief.

Select Keynotes

• The Empathy Advantage: Leading the Empowered Workforce

The global pandemic did not only change where work takes place, it is altering where work fits in our lives. The combination of a shift in leadership from Boomer and GenX to GenX and Millennial and the entrance of Generation Z into the workforce is altering the fundamental values around work. Labor shortages show no signs of abating and are shifting the power from employers to employees. In this RUPT (Rapid, Unpredictable, Paradoxical, and Tangled) world, leaders can no longer be unquestioned experts driving productivity with fear. The leadership profile shifts to a humble and curious learner who can inspire potential, help talent connect with their own internal drive and motivate with culture, love, and belonging. The factory default settings have all been removed from who works (diversity as a norm), where work takes place (home, office, anywhere, hybrid), what we do for work (exploration over routine tasks), how we lead (inspiration over fear), and why work in the first place. In this talk, buckle up for a fast paced and inspirational overview of the post pandemic world comprising an empowered and engaged



workforce.

- **ADAPTATION ADVANTAGE: LEADING IN A POST PANDEMIC WORLD**

When Heather E McGowan and Chris Shipley wrote *The Adaptation Advantage* (April 2020, Wiley) even they didn't realize just how quickly their predictions would come to pass. Then the coronavirus global pandemic required an immediate and dramatic shift in work, learning, and leading, and predictions they made for the next three to five years, occurred over the following three to five weeks.

Overnight, companies remapped supply chains, pivoted product lines, and transformed to distributed work-from-home organizations. Entire university and school systems adopted virtual delivery exclusively, something many said they would never do. This new normal requires a laser focus on culture, purpose, trust, and psychological safety as we embark on the largest social experiment in human history. The virus has accelerated our future of work, expedited our human transformation to digital creation, and placed an even greater burden on leaders to inspire and motivate human potential. Even as the pandemic subsides, our new ways of working will remain. With Heather's strategies in place, those transformations can be for the better.

- **LEARNING: THE REAL FUTURE OF WORK**

We live in times of accelerated change driven by exponentially growing technologies paired with a hyperconnected global market economy. As a result, work tasks as we knew them in the past have become fragmented, automated, and augmented by technology. This reshaping of tasks requires that we rethink our systems of education and workforce development, our organization of work and workers, our process of talent attraction and retention (including learning and development), and even ourselves.

In the past, we learned to work. Tomorrow, we'll work to learn. Discover how with Heather in this stunning and actionable keynote message.

- **THE HUMAN VALUE ERA**

For much of the history of work, talent was defined by the things you could make. In this new era, talent will be defined by what you can make out of your people.

Research shows that human capital comprises 90% of all enterprise value in the S&P 500. As we hand off more and more mentally routine and predictable tasks to technology, human talent and ingenuity will be the true competitive advantage.

We've entered the era of human value, an era in which humans are seen as assets to develop rather than costs to contain. In this talk, discover how to navigate and master this challenging yet thrilling new world.

- **CREATING HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS WITHOUT BURNOUT**

Organizational leaders have far more influence over those they lead and manage than previously understood, recent research shows. The results-oriented management approach that drives productivity at the expense of workers' mental health and safety reaches far beyond the workplace. In fact, leadership styles can affect the lives and futures of workers' children.

A series of recent studies show that leader behavior is impacting society not just in business performance outcomes, but through the daily lives of workers and their children. It is fair to conclude that how one leads today will fundamentally affect the workforce of future generations. Given the magnitude of this impact, we must think differently about leadership. A more empathetic leadership style best serves companies, communities, societies and the formation of the next generation workforce.

In this talk Heather will share highlights from various studies on the impact of leadership on both mental health, thriving, and performance to help organizations attract, nurture, and retain leaders that create high performing teams without burn out.

- **LEVERAGING THE POWER OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING**

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The only thing evolving more quickly than technology is societal and cultural change. Demographic change has long been in bloom, but social and cultural norms are now rapidly shifting with marked changes in gender and sexuality identity, not to mention a broadening of the landscape of diversity.

While diversity once included primarily binary gender, race, and culture, it now includes neurodiversity, cognitive diversity, age, as well as a long-overdue focus on class and social mobility. Social unrest has moved these long-overdue efforts on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging to the forefront, requiring more of our leaders.

Leaders today must empathize both with individuals in underrepresented categories as well as those navigating these shifts to create effective teams that can learn, adapt, and create new value. When the inside of your organization, at every level, looks like the markets you seek to serve you are leveraging the power of DEIB.

- **DO NOT FEAR CHATGPT: THE FUTURE OF WORK IS HUMAN**

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Today and in the future of work, the most in-demand skill will never be the one you have now— it's the one you can develop tomorrow. Humans

have an unmatched ability to learn and adapt from living in climates previously uninhabitable to creating tools that can, at first blush, seem to outperform our abilities.

Consider the Automated Teller Machine (ATM) released about fifty years ago. When ATMs became widespread it was assumed the position of bank tellers would be outsourced to history when, in fact, the position of bank teller has grown continuously and slightly faster than the labor force as a whole. While tellers required per branch location declined, the demand for branch locations increased and along with it the demand for bank tellers.

What does all this mean? That the future of work is human. Once we escape our outdated seeking of single-disciplinary skill sets in fear of being replaced by technology, we can focus on developing our uniquely human skills, notably our ability to learn and adapt to emerging technologies. In this talk, Heather will share how the forces of atomization (jobs broken into job fragments addressable by outsourcing), automation (robots, process automation, etc.) and augmentation (humans leveraging technology to extend their potential) will work in concert constantly changing but not replacing human cognitive and physical labor.

• THE FUTURE COMPANY: CULTURE AND CAPACITY

brands, products, & services. Time and productivity. These are the benchmarks of the past.

But in this hyperconnected and constantly evolving world, we can no longer focus on the outputs. It's time for us to focus on the inputs: culture and capacity. Culture is the internal operating systems of how the organization creates value. Brand is the external expression of the culture. Brand is how your customers experience your culture. Capacity is the organization's ability to respond to challenges.

Discover why the companies that endure and thrive will be those that can clearly articulate and nurture their culture, while continuously expanding their individual and organizational capacity and being mindful of the wellbeing of their people.

Select Book Titles

- **2023:** The Empathy Advantage: Leading the Empowered Workforce
- **2020:** The Adaptation Advantage: Let Go, Learn Fast, and Thrive in the Future of Work
- **2013:** Disrupt Together: How Teams Consistently Innovate

Select Articles

- [Forbes \(Interview\) Practical Advice on How to Lead an Empowered Workforce](#)

March 2023, Interview based upon her most recent book The Empathy Advantage

- [Fast Company: From the Great Resignation to the Great Refusal, Here are five G's mean to the Future of Work](#)

March 2023: The great resignation, retirement, refusal, reshuffle, and relocation are causing a tectonic shift in how we both live and work .

- [The Future of Work Is the Human Capital Era: How We Got Here](#)

Forbes May 2021

- [OECD Network: Empathy, trust, and compassion, the trifecta of superior leadership](#)

The profile of an effective leader has shifted almost 180 degrees from an unquestioned expert who can myopically drive productivity to a humble, curious learner who inspire potential in their team with love, caring, and belonging.

- [Human Capital Era Reality: The Skills Gap May Never Close](#)

Forbes February 2021

- [How The Coronavirus Pandemic Is Accelerating The Future Of Work](#)

Forbes March 2020

- [The Coronavirus Is Creating An Inflection Point In The Future Of Work](#)

Forbes April 2020

- [The Coronavirus Ushers In The Human Capital Era](#)

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/heathermcgowan/2020/11/05/the-coronavirus-ushers-in-the-human-capital-era/?sh=5a8788f022dd>

- [Learning Is The New Pension](#)

There has never been a more exciting time to be in human resources (HR)—that was evident at the Unleash World annual summit in Paris, where I was honored to give an opening keynote speech.

Select Testimonials

In a world where we are drowning in information, clarity is power. Many add to the noise and the fears about the future of work; but Heather has done the homework, the thinking and crafted the vision for adapting with supreme clarity. Her straight talk and clear insights will hit the top ratings at your event - guaranteed.

— *Annalie Killian, Vice President Strategic Partnerships sparks & honey*

In the war for talent, organizations must be able to offer employees a path that goes beyond typical career progression. Heather presents a compelling and thought-provoking vision that focuses on lifelong learning and adaptability for employees, which the pace of technological change essentially requires. Her analysis is comprehensive, yet easily understood. She distills it into actionable steps to help organizations move towards creating an environment in which employees and organizations mutually benefit and are well positioned for an uncertain future.

— *Charles Moore, Managing Director, Alvarez and Marsal*

I was fortunate to hear Heather speak at the Innovation in the "Age of Accelerations" Forum. She is an amazing communicator and a driving force, inspiring new relevant perspectives. Her presentation is a "must see" by leaders across government, academia, and industry who should be preparing our society for the future of work and the future of learning...the future of work is learning!

— *James Johnson Executive Director Air Force Human Resilience (Major General) United States Airforce*

"Engaging content. Articulate and personable. Well researched. Interactive and fun! Heather brought all of this and more. We needed a speaker who could address the future work, and Heather's message about adaptation touched on a number of topics relevant to our workforce, such as learning, distributed work, collaboration and leadership. In this "new normal" of work from home and virtual meetings, Heather adapted her content to our needs in an interactive and meaningful way."

— *Okta*

In a world where speakers claim to be experts, Heather is a genuine expert who can speak.

— *Peter Sheahan Group CEO, Karrikins Group*

As a university president, entrepreneur, and board member, I have never ever seen anyone better than Heather at demystifying complex information to provide a path to action.

— *Stephen Spinelli, Jr, PhD Babson College President Co-Founder of Jiffy Lube Board Chair, Planet Fitness*

Heather is my go-to person because there are a lot of mirages out there when it comes to the Future of Work and she is the oasis. She is the real deal. Her ability to convey information in both words and visuals together are really powerful.

— *Thomas L Friedman NYT Columnist Pulitzer Prize Winner Author*

Heather has a unique ability to communicate complex information that is accessible to the public AND credible to the expert. She gave a superb online talk at the record breaking 'Brainfood Marathon 2020', which was not only the most watched of the 80+ sessions across the 24 hours, but 'most requested' by those missed it. If you are looking for an expert analyst on the future of work who can speak to the widest possible audience, look no further than Heather McGowan

— *Workspace.io*