



THINKERS50 RADAR 2021

Thinkers50 identifies, ranks,
and shares the very best in
management ideas.

Every year we publish our list
of 30 thinkers to watch out
for in the coming year.

THINKERS50 RADAR 2021

Every January, Thinkers50 announces 30 thinkers to watch in the coming year. It is an eclectic mix of people who have crossed our personal radars and who have been nominated on the Thinkers50 website.

The result for 2021 is an amazing group of people who, we believe, will make an impact with their campaigning, their ideas, their research and their passion in the year ahead.

Our enduring belief is that great ideas are not bound by race, gender, sexuality, location, age or wealth. Indeed, often they defy limiting perspectives and prejudices.

And so, the Thinkers50 Radar for 2021 features the Moroccan-born dean of a South Korean business school, Danish campaigners for diversity, a Russian expert on digital trends in China, two Trinidadian thinkers championing “cooperative advantage”, an inspiring Ghanaian entrepreneur and much more.

They don't have all the answers but their work and ideas present us with many of the key questions which we need to resolve as individuals and organizations in the years ahead.

We hope you enjoy exploring their ideas as much as we have.



Stuart Crainer & Des Dearlove
Founders Thinkers50

MATT BEANE

**About:**

Former founding tech startup executive and now faculty member in UCSB's Technology Management Program; Digital Fellow at Stanford and MIT. Studies work involving intelligent machines, with specific focus on robotics.

Ideas:

Researches how machines and human beings can work together productively. Left his career in consulting in 2010 to study at MIT because he believed he "would live to see changes in technology and the world of work that would make a mockery of what had come before".

Content:

His TED talk "[How do we learn to work with intelligent machines](#)" has 1.8 million views. "[To Adapt to Tech, We're Heading into the Shadows](#)", "[Robots Might Not Take Your Job — But They Will Probably Make it Boring](#)" and "[Students are Getting Terrible Training In Robotic Surgery](#)," on Wired.com. "[Working with robots in a post-pandemic world](#)" in MIT Sloan Management Review.

T50**Verdict:**

"Leading researcher on better working relationships with robots."

HAMID BOUCHIKHI

**About:**

Moroccan-born dean of SolBridge International School of Business, South Korea. Previously founder and director of the Entrepreneurship Centre at ESSEC Business School, France.

Ideas:

Researches organizational theory, entrepreneurship, and managerial innovation. Shows how to understand a company's identity, how to take control of it, and how to leverage it for long-term adaptation and success.

Content:

The Soul of the Corporation: How to Manage the Identity of Your Company (with John Kimberly).

T50**Verdict:**

"Valuable insights into the importance of corporate identity – especially in times of crisis."

JENIFER CLAUSELL-TORMOS



About: Spanish bio-medic scientist, expert in diversity and inclusion research; founder and CEO of Develop Diverse, a start-up helping other companies attract and retain diverse talent using tech.

Ideas: Harnessing technology to increase diversity in the workplace. Champions the use of science and AI to spell check for social bias and help build inclusive cultures through inclusive language – “Diversity is the key for every organization becoming sustainable and successful, but bias is the bottleneck that still needs to be addressed.”

Content: TEDxOdenseWomen Talk: [“Posting a job ad? Spell-check for gender bias!”](#); [developdiverse.com](#)

T50 “Provides the practical technological tools
Verdict: to increase diversity.”

DAVID DE CREMER



About: Provost chair and professor in management and organizations at the National University of Singapore Business School and founder and director of its Centre on AI Technology for Humankind. A world top 2% scientist in 2020.

Ideas: Brings a human-centred approach to the study and organizational application of AI, focusing on how leaders can be effective and transforming in the new technology era, how building trust is a business asset, and why compliance requires less rule-based and more behavioural integrity approaches.

Content: *Leadership by Algorithm: Who Leads and Who Follows in the AI Era*; Website: daviddecremer.com; *"What does building a fair AI really entail?"* (Harvard Business Review); *"Toward a better understanding of behavioural ethics in the work place"* (Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior)

T50

Verdict:

"Exciting work at the crucial intersection of science and management."

COLLEEN CUNNINGHAM



About: Assistant professor of strategy and entrepreneurship, London Business School; former health policy researcher and a consulting researcher for the Economic Development department of the Government of British Columbia, in the oil and gas industry, and in natural resource management.

Ideas: Examines the challenges and advantages of commercialising new-to-world inventions, the origins of markets and their role in the selection of novel ideas. Also focuses on anti-competitive motivations for technology acquisitions.

Content: "Killer Acquisitions" (Journal of Political Economy); "The Limits of Relational Governance" (Strategic Management Journal).

T50 "Sheds new light on big companies buying
Verdict: upstarts to kill them."

ASHLEY GALINA DUDARENOK



About: Russian-born China marketing expert and entrepreneur; founder of two start-ups: Chozan (chozan.co) and Alarice (alarice.com.hk); LinkedIn Top Voice in Marketing 2019; Holmes Report Asia-Pacific Top 25 Innovator; member of Alibaba's Global Influencer Entourage and the JD's China Expert Group.

Ideas: Prolific vlogger and podcaster on modern Chinese consumers, Chinese social media marketing, and China's new retail and technology.

Content: *New Retail: Born in China Going Global; Unlocking the World's Largest E-Market; Working with Bloggers, Influencers and KOLs; ashleydudarenok.com*

T50 "Guru on digital marketing and fast-evolving
Verdict: trends in China."

TRACI FENTON



About: Founder and CEO, WorldBlu (worldblu.com) – a global membership organization helping top leaders and organizations live, lead, and work in freedom rather than fear.

Ideas: Created “Freedom at Work,” a proven leadership model that promotes freedom-centred rather than fear-based leaders and organizational cultures, through the three dimensions of mindset, leadership, and organizational design.

Content: *Freedom at Work: The Leadership Strategy for Transforming Your Life, Your Organization, and Our World* (forthcoming 2021).

T50 Verdict: “A game changer in transforming the culture of organizations.”

KIRSTIN FERGUSON

**About:**

An Australian company director, leadership expert and sought after executive coach, she began her career as an Air Force Officer who went on to become qualified as a lawyer and also the CEO of a successful global business. She has Honours degrees in History and also Law as well as a PhD in Leadership and Culture. She is an Adjunct Professor at the QUT Business School, a Sir Winston Churchill Fellow and was named as one of 'Australia's 100 Women of Influence'.

Ideas:

Every single one of us is a leader regardless of what it says on our business card and each of us is a role model to others, whether we realise it or not. An advocate for emotionally intelligent leadership by all, as well as using social media for good, she created the #CelebratingWomen campaign after becoming fed up with the denigration of women online. The campaign saw her commit to celebrating two women from all walks of life and from anywhere in the world every day for a year and led to a movement of women supporting women.

Content:

Co-author, with Catherine Fox, of *Women Kind: Unlocking the Power of Women Supporting Women*; contributor to Forbes; kirstinferguson.com

T50**Verdict:**

"Fearless champion of women supporting each other in the workplace."

TIMNIT GEBRU



About: Born and brought up in Ethiopia, she came to the US aged 15. Studied at Stanford from where she has a doctorate. Co-founder of Black in AI. Worked at Apple (contributing to the first iPad), at Microsoft in its Fairness, Accountability, Transparency and Ethics in AI (FATE) lab and at Google on ethics in AI before leaving controversially at the end of 2020 after a dispute over an academic paper.

Ideas: Groundbreaking research on American demographics, car ownership and voting patterns; followed up with research into racial biases in facial recognition software. Tech brings bias which needs to be tackled at source.

Content: Extensive media coverage.
Check out @black_in_ai and @timnitgebru.

T50
Verdict: "Inspirational at every level. To create a fair and life-enhancing tech future the world needs Timnit Gebru."

MATTHEW GITSHAM



About: Professor of Business and Sustainability at Hult Ashridge Executive Education, part of Hult International Business School. Director of the Ashridge Centre for Business and Sustainability. Has led numerous research projects on business and sustainable development.

Ideas: Recent projects include exploring CEO perspectives on the implications of sustainability for business leadership; CEO lobbying for more ambitious public policy on sustainable development; and the role of business in shaping the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Content: How companies are embedding the SDGs (in partnership with Business Fights Poverty), and corporate leadership on modern slavery (in partnership with the Ethical Trading Initiative).

T50

Verdict:

"Global expert on CEOs and sustainability."

RUTH GOTIAN



About: Chief learning officer and assistant professor of education in anaesthesiology, Weill Cornell Medicine; former assistant dean for mentoring and executive director of the Mentoring Academy.

Ideas: How and why do some people thrive while others don't? According to Gotian, the secret sauce is mentoring. Her work takes a deep dive into the impact of mentors, the key behaviours of high achievers, and how to optimize productivity and success for yourself and those around you.

Content: Numerous articles in Forbes, Nature, HBR, Chief Learning Officer, BMC Medical Education, Academic Medicine; ruthgotian.com. *The Success Factor Developing the Mindset and Skillset for Peak Performance* (forthcoming).

T50 Verdict: "Prolific mentor and educator, leading important research into the secrets of success."

CATHY HACKL



About: Futurist, CEO of the Futures Intelligence Group and globally recognized business leader specializing in augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and spatial computing. One of the Top 10 Tech Voices on LinkedIn, Hackl is an alum of Amazon Web Services (AWS), Magic Leap, and HTC VIVE. She leads a futures research and consulting firm that works with clients in tech, fashion, media, government, and defense implementing innovation strategies, strategic foresight, and emerging technologies. Previously worked in business communications with Fortune 1000 brands and in the media with CNN, Discovery Communications, & ABC News. Nominated for an Emmy Award in 2007.

Ideas: Recognized as one of the top women in VR and AR, she's a champion of diversity in tech. Provides the tools and insight you need to understand the business value of AR/VR, the coming of the Metaverse, and the impact of the direct to avatar and gaming economies.

Content: "The Metaverse Is Coming & It's a Very Big Deal", ([Forbes CMO Network, July 2020](#)); *The Augmented Workforce: How AI, AR and 5G Will Impact Every Dollar You Make* (forthcoming); *Marketing New Realities: An Introduction to Virtual Reality & Augmented Reality Marketing, Branding & Communications* (2017); *Futuresville* ([Podcast and Newsletter](#)); cathyhackl.com

T50

Verdict:

"The CEOs' personal tour guide to the metaverse."

ANNA-SOPHIE HARTVIGSEN



About: Danish entrepreneur, co-founder of Female Invest, a company working on closing the financial gender gap by providing women with education on investing and personal finances. Included in Forbes 30 Under 30 2020; laureate of Cartier Women's Initiative.

Ideas: Closing the financial gender gap by providing women with education on investing and personal finance. Co-created a forum that delivers the tools, training, and strategic partnerships to inspire women across the world to start investing.

Content: *Ready, Set, Invest*; TEDxOdenseWomen Talk: "[Let's talk about stocks](#)"; femaleinvest.com

T50
Verdict: "Leading a revolution to close the financial gender gap."

LAURA HUANG



About: Harvard professor; former investment banker and consultant. Named a “40 Under 40” Best Business School Professor by *Poets & Quants*. Founder of non-profit Project Emplify (projectemplify.org).

Ideas: Studies interpersonal relationships and implicit bias in entrepreneurship and in the workplace; demonstrates practical steps to take control of others’ perceptions. Research into gut feel, changing others’ perceptions of you, and adversity culminates in 13 guiding principles, essentially the 10 commandments to turning adversity into advantage.

Content: *Edge: Turning Adversity into Advantage*; laurahuang.net

T50 “Timely work on how to create your
Verdict: own edge and impact.”

MITCH JOEL



About: Founder of Six Pixels Group, an advisory, investing and content producing company focused on commerce and innovation. Entrepreneur, professional speaker, investor, community leader, media personality, and host of the longest-running business podcast in existence. Built one of the largest independent digital marketing agencies that was sold to WPP in 2014.

Ideas: Innovative insights into the world of innovation, digitization, and progressive business models. Ideas focus on the intersection of brands, consumer behavior, technology, and disrupting disruption.

Content: Two bestsellers: *Six Pixels of Separation - Everyone Is Connected. Connect Your Business To Everyone* and *CTRL ALT Delete - Reboot Your Business. Reboot Your Life, Your Future Depends On It*. [Blog](#) (*Six Pixels of Separation*); [podcasts](#) (*Six Pixels of Separation* and *Groove - The No Treble Podcast*); and weekly radio segments.

T50 Verdict: “Expert on leveraging technology, consumer behavior and innovation in management thinking. His podcast guest list reads like a who’s who of thought leadership.”

JACKSON LU



About: Columbia Business School PhD and now Mitsui Career Development Assistant Professor at the MIT Sloan School of Management. Selected as a “40 Under 40” Best Business School Professor by *Poets & Quants*.

Ideas: Research focusing on culture and globalization. First to systematically research the “Bamboo Ceiling” phenomenon – why East Asians but not South Asians are disproportionately under-represented in leadership positions in the US.

Content: Published in premier scientific journals including PNAS, Nature Human Behaviour, and Journal of Applied Psychology; jacksonlu.net

T50 Verdict: “Telling research on the upsides and downsides of globalization for individuals, groups, and organizations.”

ALYSON MEISTER

**About:**

With an HBA from the Richard Ivey School of Business (at Western University) in Canada and PhD from Melbourne University, she is a global nomad who has lived and worked on five continents. Now a professor of leadership and organizational behaviour at IMD. Specializes in leading diversity and change, and supporting organizations to cultivate inclusive, adaptive, and resilient leaders.

Ideas:

Research on how individuals develop and manage their multiple identities, how they become leaders, and the identity dynamics between individuals and groups in organizations. Most recent research surrounds inclusion at work, and how feeling marginalized, stereotyped or mislabeled impacts stress, well-being and job performance.

Content: [Academic articles](#) published in leading journals, and HBR articles include "What's Your Leadership Origin Story" and "How Women Manage the Gendered Norms of Leadership". [imd.org/faculty/professors/alyson-meister](https://www.imd.org/faculty/professors/alyson-meister)

T50**Verdict:**

"Important research on how people can navigate, manage, and overcome bias throughout their careers."

NINA MONTGOMERY



About: Design Lead and Special Projects, IDEO;
PhD candidate, Oxford.

Ideas: Re-thinking how companies can create a more fair, inclusive, and sustainable capitalism. Adopts a systems thinking, cultural and historical lens to explore the evolving relationship between business and society in the twenty-first century. Believes “by elevating new, diverse voices we will discover productive reframes of the mainstream ‘Reimagining capitalism’ conversation, which today is largely by those who hold power for those who hold it”.

Content: *Perspectives on Impact; Perspectives on Purpose.* Weekly newsletter on LinkedIn: *Reimagining Capitalism.*

T50
Verdict: “Reimagining capitalism to help businesses do business differently and move towards more equitable social outcomes.”

DAVID NOUR



About: Iranian-born CEO of The Nour Group; adjunct professor at the Goizueta Business School, Emory University.

Ideas: Champion of Relationship Economics, which quantifies social capital as an organization's greatest asset, and advocate of Co-Creation for innovative solutions. Creator of the "Curve Benders" – how a firm's most strategic relationships power non-linear growth in the future of work.

Content: *Curve Benders; Co-Create; Relationship Economics; Return on Impact; ConnectAbility; The Entrepreneur's Guide to Raising Capital; nourgroupp.com*

T50 Verdict: "Energetic, inventive thinker with practical ideas about how strategic relationships fuel enterprise value creation."

LEON PRIETO AND SIMONE PHIPPS



About: Prieto is associate professor of management in the College of Business at Clayton State University; Phipps is associate professor of management in the School of Business at Middle Georgia State University. Associate research fellows at University of Cambridge, Judge Business School.

Ideas: Ground-breaking research into African American management history and the contributions of African Americans to the development of management as a discipline. Picking up on the work of Charles Clinton Spaulding, they champion the power of cooperative advantage to reimagine capitalism.

Content: *African American Management History: Insights on Gaining a Cooperative Advantage*; and *"Cooperative Advantage: Rethinking the Company's Purpose"* (MIT Sloan Management Review).

T50 Verdict: "Cooperation really could be the future. Prieto and Phipps are potentially setting the new course of business advantage."

MANDEEP RAI



About: Journalist; former private banker; worked for the UN, the EC, and grassroots NGOs; set up the UAE's first venture fund.

Ideas: Contends that understanding our own and others' values is a key component of decision making and risk taking; shows how values underpin the ways in which people live, lead, and interact.

Content: *The Values Compass: What 101 Countries Teach Us About Purpose, Life and Leadership* – "A fresh, engaging and eye-opening guide to understanding ourselves and others," says Deepak Chopra; mandeep-rai.com

T50
Verdict: "Being in touch with our values has never been more important in business and leadership."

LAURA MORGAN ROBERTS



About: Professor of Practice at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business. Educated in psychology at the University of Virginia and organizational psychology at the University of Michigan.

Ideas: Her research and consulting focuses on the science of maximizing human potential in diverse organizations and communities – “Women of color are a motivated, engaged group of high-potential future leaders. Companies and individual managers who want to create more diverse and ultimately more successful teams need to do more to ensure that diverse female talent isn't left behind.”

Content: Editor of three books: *Race, Work and Leadership*; *Positive Organizing in a Global Society*; and *Exploring Positive Identities and Organizations*. For starters, check out two of her many *Harvard Business Review* articles -- “[To Become Your Best Self, Study Your Successes](#)” and “[Women of Color Get Less Support at Work](#)”.

T50 Verdict: “Creating fairer career opportunities is an urgent necessity. Laura Morgan Roberts is leading the way in making this reality.”

LUZ RELLO SANCHEZ



About: Assistant professor at IE Business School. Founder of the social company Change Dyslexia, which aims to minimise the negative impact of dyslexia worldwide.

Ideas: Focuses on emergent technologies for dyslexia. Her tool, Dyetective combines machine learning and computer games to screen and treat dyslexia and is the most used online dyslexia test.

Content: Two books in Spanish, seven indexed journal papers, 36 refereed conference papers and the co-author of 46 other publications. She is also the author of two published children's books.

T50 Verdict: "Prolific researcher and tireless champion for dyslexics."

CHRISTIAN SARKAR



About: Founder of the marketing consultancy Double Loop Marketing LLC, and co-founder (with Philip Kotler) of The Marketing Journal, Sarkar scours the world of marketing for new insights and next practices. His work (with Vijay Govindarajan) on the \$300 House won the T50 Breakthrough Idea Award.

Ideas: A natural extension of his work on brand activism, Sarkar advocates a new approach to solving the world's seemingly intractable problems. Working with world renowned marketing guru Philip Kotler, he identifies an "ecosystem of wicked problems."

Content: The Wicked7 Project (wicked7.org); christiansarkar.com; druckerforum.org/blog/the-ecosystem-of-wicked-problems-by-christian-sarkar

T50

Verdict:

"Pioneering brand activist with an eye for breakthrough ideas."

FRED SWANIKER



About: Ghanaian entrepreneur who began his professional career as a consultant with McKinsey and Company and has an MBA from Stanford Business School. Founder of two organizations that aim to catalyse a new generation of ethical, entrepreneurial African leaders: African Leadership Academy and the African Leadership Network.

Ideas: With 60% of its population under 25, Africa is the world's youngest continent, something Swaniker sees as its greatest asset. To realize its potential, he believes that Africa needs to develop better leaders, through reimagining education.

Content: Developed an educational model that helps students learn new skills and master concepts. This 4-part Learning Cycle incorporates the need to discover gaps in your knowledge and skillset, self-paced learning, peer learning (students teaching and learning from each other) and facilitated group learning.

T50

Verdict:

"Pioneering entrepreneur on a mission to inspire young African leaders."

KEYVAN VAKILI



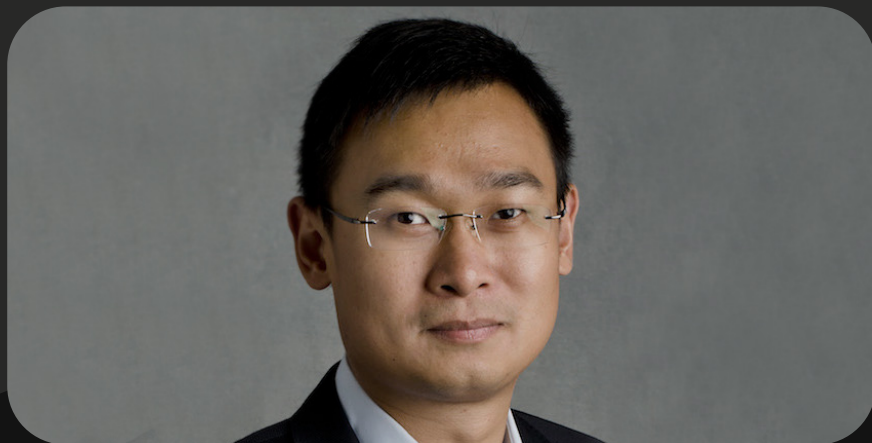
About: Assistant professor of strategy and entrepreneurship, London Business School. Former entrepreneur and consultant who founded a video game production company acquired by Samsung.

Ideas: Explores how technological contexts contribute to the relationship between knowledge diversity and innovation outputs, how the external environment influences collaboration choice, and how inventors choose the areas in which they invest their efforts.

Content: "When Generalists Are Better Than Specialists and Vice Versa", Harvard Business Review; keyvanvakili.com

T50 Verdict: "Valuable insights on the composition of innovative teams."

DASHUN WANG



About: Associate professor of management and organizations at the Kellogg School of Management. Founding director of the Kellogg Center for Science of Science and Innovation.

Ideas: A founder of the field of the science of science, using big data and AI to help improve our understanding of innovation. Led to a qualitative shift in the way knowledge is discovered, science is funded, innovators are trained and nurtured, and excellence is recognized and rewarded.

Content: *The Science of Science* (with Albert-László Barabási); dashunwang.com

T50 Verdict: “Refreshing ideas on how we think about – and do – science and innovation.”

THOMAS WEDELL- WEDELLSBORG



About: Innovation expert and executive advisor whose research has featured in multiple global publications. Prior to his business career, served for four years as an officer with the Danish Royal Guards.

Ideas: Champions the importance of solving the right problems and provides the tools to do so, with special emphasis on framing and reframing the problems we face.

Content: *What's Your Problem?*, on how to solve the right problems, and (with Paddy Miller) *Innovation as Usual*, on how to lead innovation in everyday settings, both published by Harvard Business Review Press; wedellsblog.com

T50

Verdict:

"Innovative insights into the fine art of problem solving."

MICHELLE WEISE



About: Senior advisor to [Imaginable Futures](#), a venture of The Omidyar Group, and [BrightHive](#), a data collaboration platform. Former chief innovation officer of Strada Education Network and Southern New Hampshire University. Led the higher education practice at Clay Christensen's Institute for Disruptive Innovation.

Ideas: A focus on the people falling through the cracks of our education and workforce infrastructure helps us design a new lifelong learning ecosystem for *all of us* to navigate more seamlessly the 20 to 30 job transitions we can expect in an uncertain world of work ahead.

Content: *Long Life Learning: Preparing for Jobs that Don't Even Exist Yet* (2020); *Hire Education: Mastery, Modularization, and the Workforce Revolution* (2014 with Clay Christensen); [RiseandDesign.io](#)

T50 Verdict: "Michelle Weise possesses a bright voice and vision, and a way forward to the future of work."

BEN WHITTER



About: Founder and Chief Experience Officer at HEX Organization and the World Employee Experience Institute (WEEI).

Ideas: Putting employee experience at the heart of an organization to maximize performance and competitive advantage. Shows how to build individual and organizational capabilities by approaching business in a holistic, human-centred, and experience-driven way.

Content: *Employee Experience: Develop a Happy, Productive and Supported Workforce for Exceptional Individual and Business Performance; and Human Experience at Work* (forthcoming). benwhitter.com; hexorganization.com; worlddeeinstitute.com

T50

Verdict:

"Pragmatic tips and tools and compelling EX (employee experience) research."