



## **THRIVE Collective: Building a Relational Leadership Foundation for Character Formation and Practical Wisdom to Address Global Challenges**

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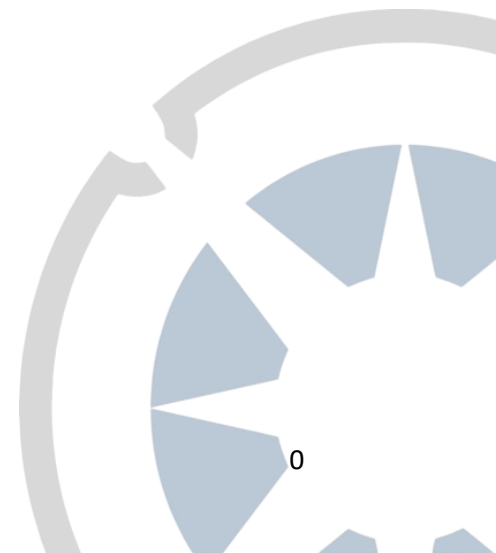
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# **THRIVE Collective: Building a Relational Leadership Foundation for Character Formation and Practical Wisdom to Address Global Challenges**

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## **Abstract**

In a world marked by rapid generational and technological shifts, the need for principled and transformational leadership that places character, virtue, and human flourishing at the center of decision-making is more pressing than ever. This presentation will provide an overview of the THRIVE Collective, an initial six-month immersive experience designed to cultivate personal and relational practices that foster principled leaders, flourishing teams, and human centered organizational cultures. By introducing practices aimed at developing key character and relational dispositions, THRIVE creates a community of leaders who are committed to fostering conditions conducive to personal, organizational, and systemic growth. This paper will explore the experience design, implementation, and preliminary outcomes, highlighting its potential to meet the rising generation's evolving expectations of leadership and organizations.

## **Introduction**

The modern world is defined by rapid generational, political, social, and technological shifts, presenting complex global challenges that require human-centered approaches to ethical and moral decision-making. Today's institutional leaders face the dual responsibility of navigating these uncertainties while cultivating organizational cultures that prioritize innovation, foster collaboration, and align with the values and expectations of emerging generations. Meeting these demands calls for wisdom, strength of character, and a commitment to transformation - both personal and organizational - anchored in the pursuit of the greater good. Leaders across sectors and disciplines must embrace reflective practices, nurture authentic relationships, and build trust-centered environments and supportive ecosystems to drive meaningful individual and systemic change.

Building an organization that prioritizes well-being and leverages character as a catalyst for change requires patience, practice, commitment, and a deep understanding of the needs and motivations of its members. At Arizona State University, we have discovered that centering authentic relationships and reflective practices is essential for bridging differences, fostering engagement, and cultivating purpose-driven communities. By intentionally embedding character and values into decisions and actions, the institution has fostered an evolving ecosystem of communities of practice (CoPs) that support individual, relational, and organizational transformation.

This paper focuses on the design, implementation, and early outcomes of one such CoP: the THRIVE Collective. THRIVE begins with a six-month immersive experience, designed to cultivate principled leaders and teams who prioritize personal character development in service

of relational leadership, human-centered organizations, and principled innovation. By integrating social and experiential learning, THRIVE enables participants to deeply observe what is happening within themselves, between team members, and across organizational systems. Through reflective and relational practices, the program fosters a foundation for practical wisdom, shared leadership, and transformative actions that align individuals and organizations with their higher purpose and creates environments where both humans and innovation can flourish.

### **Theoretical Foundations and Rationale**

The challenges of today's world - ranging from global crises to rapid technological advancements and generational shifts - require leaders who prioritize human flourishing, moral clarity, and collaborative innovation. Traditional leadership paradigms, which often emphasize individual achievement and hierarchical authority, are proving inadequate for navigating the complexities of modern systems and the interconnected realities of humanity. In response, there is a growing need for leadership approaches that are relational and reflective, emphasizing the cultivation of character, virtue, and a shared commitment to creating thriving ecosystems within organizations and communities. THRIVE Collective meets this need by equipping leaders with the tools and practices to foster environments where individuals and teams can grow, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to a flourishing society.

The design of THRIVE Collective is grounded in the principles of *Principled Innovation* and relational leadership theory. At its core, *Principled Innovation* emphasizes the cultivation of character and ethical decision-making in service of the common good (MLFTC, 2019). This framework encourages leaders to act with humility, empathy, and courage when navigating complex dilemmas. By centering on *Principled Innovation*, THRIVE empowers participants to develop the moral and emotional courage needed to make decisions that align with their individual and collective values, while fostering trust and collaboration within their communities.

Relational leadership theory, which shifts the focus from individual authority to the dynamics of relationships and shared purpose within a group (Uhl-Bien, 2006), complements this framework. Together they emphasize character development as an emergent process shaped by the interactions between individuals and the systems in which they operate. THRIVE builds on these principles by cultivating relational leadership practices through activities that encourage deep listening, authentic connection, and the co-creation of meaning and process. These practices create environments where individuals feel safe to take risks, share their perspectives, and engage in meaningful and innovative collaboration.

Critical reflection, whether individually or in group contexts, plays a central role in learning (Mezirow, 1990,1998). It facilitates meaning-making by exploring lessons learned in past experiences, a process which triggers our moral imagination (Johnson, 1993; Cook-Sather & Baker-Doyle, 2017) - our vision for how the future *could* and *should* be- and guides future action (Mezirow, 1990). THRIVE provides opportunities for experiential learning activities and critical and compassionate reflection that invite participants to pause, notice, and reflect on their past experiences, inner thoughts and feelings, relational dynamics, and external contexts. This

process supports participants in developing new perspectives, fostering self-awareness and awareness of others, while engaging in collective decision-making which aligns their actions with their values and purpose.

The rationale for THRIVE Collective is rooted in the perspective that leadership is no longer confined to hierarchical positions but can instead be distributed across diverse teams and systems. Members of the rising generation increasingly expect leaders and organizations to demonstrate transparency, embrace shared decision-making, and prioritize well-being, authenticity, and purpose (Gallup, 2012; Deloitte, 2024). Recent studies by Gallup have highlighted generational challenges in the workplace, particularly concerning employee engagement and expectations. Younger generations, including Millennials and Generation Z, have reported significant declines in engagement levels. For example, the percentage of engaged older Millennials decreased from 39% to 32%, while actively disengaged individuals in this group rose from 12% to 17%. Moreover, younger workers report higher levels of stress and burnout compared to older generations, with 68% of Gen Z and younger Millennials frequently experiencing stress (Gallup, 2023).

These findings underscore the urgent need for organizations to adapt their leadership approaches to meet the evolving expectations and challenges of the emerging workforce. At the same time, there is a critical opportunity to help younger generations cultivate the character dispositions and relational capacities necessary to navigate the complexities and pace of change driven by globalization and innovation. THRIVE responds to this need by creating spaces where leaders and their teams can develop the dispositions and skills required to navigate complexity and inspire transformation. Through meaningful dialogue, shared learning, and collaboration, THRIVE empowers teams and individuals to reimagine systems and practices in ways that align with shared values and promote holistic well-being.

By fostering reflective and relational practices, THRIVE equips participants to creatively address global and social challenges collaboratively with empathy, perspective taking, humility, and practical wisdom. The experience encourages leaders to move beyond transactional approaches to leadership and embrace a holistic view that centers on relationships, self-awareness, shared learning, and systemic impact. This shift is essential for building communities and organizations that not only adapt to change but also create conditions for human flourishing and collective growth.

THRIVE Collective provides the tools and opportunities for practice that cultivate leaders and teams who can engage with complexity, foster meaningful connections, nurture trusting environments, and sustain momentum through complexity and the process of innovation.

## **Design of the THRIVE Collective Experience**

### **The Need for Reflection and Connection**

In an increasingly fast-paced and complex world, leaders and teams need places and spaces to slow down, acknowledge their shared humanity, and connect meaningfully. The THRIVE

Collective is a response to this need, offering a community where participants cultivate supportive relationships, practice reflection, and develop the capacities required to persist in transformative individual and collective work.

THRIVE is born from a multi-year collaboration between Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Principled Innovation Team, and a team of colleagues from ASHOKA, a nonprofit organization committed to fostering changemakers across the globe. After several iterations and multiple focus groups, the seed of an idea grew into a comprehensive and holistic experience designed to nurture foundational practices and habits that serve leaders and teams as they engage in transformative work. Navigating the complexity of change requires character and practical wisdom, which can be fostered by creating the conditions, and engaging certain practices and strategies that are conducive to its development (Lamb, Brant, Brooks, 2021).

With this in mind, THRIVE has been carefully designed to foster:

- Increased self-awareness in the context of one's professional and personal work,
- Authentic relationships that support personal and professional growth, and
- Environments conducive to connection, trust, collaboration, well-being, and innovation

By fostering practices such as pausing, reflecting, communicating transparently, and engaging in collective decision-making, THRIVE prepares leaders to create transformative environments where character, creativity, relationships and principled action flourish.

### **Overview of the THRIVE Collective Experience**

The THRIVE Collective in its current form begins with a six-month immersive experience designed for leaders, educators, consultants, and others responsible for fostering transformative environments and innovative work. Participants engage in individual and collaborative practices aimed at cultivating self-awareness, authentic relationships, and shared leadership.

The experience begins with a two-day in-person retreat followed by monthly virtual gatherings in the form of a Community of Practice (CoP). Throughout the program, participants are supported by encouragement partners, reflective journaling prompts, one-on-one coaching, and curated readings, ensuring an integrated and dynamic approach to personal and relational development.

### **Key components of the experience include:**

1. **In-Person Retreat:** a two-day immersive retreat introduces participants to reflective practices, relational exercises, and a shared vision for transformation. The retreat is key to fostering relationships at all levels - intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental.
2. **Community of Practice Sessions:** Monthly virtual gatherings provide a space for reflection, dialogue, and the application of learned practices in real-world contexts.
3. **Encouragement Partnerships:** Structured pairings foster mutual support, accountability, and deeper relationships.
4. **Individual and Collaborative Practices:** A blend of self-reflection, relational exercises, and systemic exploration supports participants in evolving as individuals and teams.

## **Foundational Elements of THRIVE**

### **Creating Conditions for Transformation**

THRIVE begins with intentional retreat design, emphasizing the sensory environment to create a space where participants feel safe, connected, and open to new ways of engaging. From the outset, participants are invited to leave technology outside the retreat space, allowing for deeper presence and more meaningful connections. The physical space is treated as an integral component of the retreat experience, carefully chosen to align with the goals of reflection and relational growth. Research suggests that thoughtfully designed environments, including access to natural light, outdoor spaces, and biophilic elements such as plants and flowers, can enhance creativity, reduce stress, and improve well-being (Kellert, 2018; Ulrich, 1984). Creative interiors and nurturing color palettes contribute to a sense of calm and inspiration, while tactile elements such as soft textures add warmth and comfort to the setting.

Additionally, providing nourishing food throughout the day ensures that participants' physical needs are met, allowing them to fully engage in the experience. This holistic approach aligns with evidence highlighting the connection between physical well-being and cognitive function in fostering productive and meaningful interactions (Hulshenger et al., 2013). By curating a retreat space that attends to both sensory and physical needs, THRIVE cultivates an environment where participants can fully immerse themselves in reflection, connection, and growth. It also serves as a model for how they might capture these elements in their own professional and personal environments.

Each day starts with multiple choices for “slowing down” activities such as sound immersions, mindful walks, or reflective journaling. These practices help participants center themselves and prepare for the day's engagement. The retreat structure alternates between reflective and relational exercises, ensuring balance, depth, and the conditions conducive for a slower pace of engagement.

Metaphor-based and storytelling activities are integrated throughout the retreat. Participants use meaningful objects to recall core relationships in their lives, and map a timeline of their personal experiences with change and complexity, identifying the conditions and the relationships that have supported their mental and emotional growth and development. These exercises set the foundation for self-awareness and collaborative dialogue, where participants share insights and co-create a vision for their collective evolution.

### **Collectively Evolving as Individuals**

The first phase of THRIVE emphasizes self-awareness and authentic relationships. Through practices like reflective journaling, mindful observation, and partner dialogues, participants explore:



- Their personal values and behaviors,
- The impact of their leadership and communication styles on trust and team dynamics, and
- The interplay between individual, team, and systemic transformation.

By examining their authentic selves in relationship with others, participants receive valuable perspectives that illuminate how their actions contribute to -or hinder- their personal development and the growth of their teams. Self-observation is a critical practice that is made possible by intentional pausing. Slowing down to observe what is happening within the self and in relationship with others creates a space for participants to examine old ideas and reactions that may unconsciously reinforce toxic leadership, unhealthy relational practices, and rigid organizational cultures. This reflective process supports participants in identifying opportunities for growth that could lead to shifts in their own relationships and organizational culture.

### **Building Trust and Connection**

Trust and connection are central to the THRIVE experience. Activities are intentionally designed to foster relationships across multiple levels:

- **Intrapersonal Trust:** Participants deepen their self-understanding and self-compassion.
- **Team Relationships:** Teams reflect on their dynamics and identify ways to create environments that foster trust and strengthen creativity and collaboration.
- **Cohort Community:** The larger group develops shared norms and values that support individual, collective and ecological growth.

Participants practice relational exercises that emphasize and demonstrate humility, honesty, truthfulness, and compassion, laying the groundwork for deeper connections and understanding that lead to more effective collaboration. Fostering authentic relationships plays a critical role in cultivating psychological safety within teams. Providing opportunities and an environment to nurture genuine connections- both with oneself and others - strengthens the interpersonal and collective foundation necessary for transformative work. Through explicit and implicit modeling, THRIVE participants are exposed to practices that create conditions and environments conducive to trust and connection.

### **Cultivating Responsibility and Purpose**

Through guided reflection and dialogue, participants clarify their sense of purpose and responsibility. Activities are designed to help participants:

- Align their actions with their values,
- Identify opportunities for principled leadership, and
- Foster environments where character and creativity thrive.

The retreat introduces personal practice as a foundational element, encouraging participants to pause and notice themselves, others, and the systems in which they operate. This practice is fostered and sustained throughout the six months with structured reflections, partner check-ins, and ongoing coaching and dialogue. Through these intentional practices THRIVE participants are prepared to engage in collective practical wisdom to make ethical and moral decisions tied

to responsibility and purpose. Continued focus on these practices emphasizes the importance of character as a guiding principle for navigating complex challenges within their organizations.

### **Application of THRIVE Principles**

In the THRIVE experience, participants engage in practices that cultivate self-observation and reflection, which are essential for fostering self-awareness and introspection. Additionally, the emphasis on authentic relationships encourages participants to build genuine connections with themselves and others, creating a foundation of trust and supportive ecosystems within their teams. These relationships are pivotal in establishing environments where vulnerability, honesty, and collaboration thrive.

Furthermore, participants are guided in intentional decision-making by developing the capacity to make ethical and moral choices through reflective practices and collective practical wisdom. This process empowers leaders to approach decision-making with clarity, empathy, and care, ensuring that their actions align with both personal values and the needs of their teams and organizations.

Participants are encouraged to apply the THRIVE frameworks to current challenges and initiatives in their professional and personal lives. The program emphasizes the practical application of reflective and relational practices, helping participants:

- Navigate complexity with intention and wisdom,
- Foster inclusive and innovative team cultures, and
- Drive systemic change guided by character and purpose.

By the end of the structured experience, participants develop personalized roadmaps for sustained growth, a toolkit of resources for fostering relational and transformative leadership within their organizations, and a willing community of multiple and diverse voices who are poised to support continued practice and growth. Many participants express a desire to give back to the THRIVE community through continued participation in communities of practice, or as a coach or encouragement partner to those engaging in future cohorts.

The THRIVE Collective is more than a program; it is an evolving ecosystem for cultivating principled leaders and human-centered organizational cultures conducive to character building, innovation, and human flourishing. By fostering reflective and relational practices, THRIVE equips participants to navigate complexity in relationship with others, centering character and wisdom in decisions and actions, while also creating conditions for connection, wellbeing, and sustainable change.

## **Implementation of THRIVE**

### **Participant Recruitment and Cohort Composition**

The first THRIVE cohort began in November 2023 after 2 years of planning and iteration of the experience. The cohort was composed of program managers who were already engaging in work aligned with Principled Innovation or Ashoka's Changemaker Framework. The first group



had loosely established relationships due to crossover in the focus of their work, but had not yet fostered deep or connected relationships. Each program manager was asked to bring one team member from their respective units to participate in the experience with them. The addition of others who were not already connected with the program managers created a fresh dynamic for the group, as well as brought new and diverse perspectives into the cohort.

Diversity, openness to new ideas, and a willingness to self-reflect and engage in new ways are core elements looked for in participants. There is importance placed on building a community of diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and ideas, yet an understanding of the need to identify shared values, purpose, and commitments.

Facilitators act as experience guides and exemplars of the practices, yet are held to the same principles as the participants, modeling openness and willingness, seeking authentic feedback on both the experience and the manner in which it is facilitated. Observation of the participant experience is key in the facilitator role, as the need to pivot or adjust an approach might be overlooked if facilitators are distracted and miss an opportunity for learning, demonstration, or a new line of inquiry.

Peer guidance and encouragement are key to the success of the THRIVE experience. Recognizing the most intentional growth will happen in relationship with others, the role of participants in championing their fellow cohort members is essential and must be met with a spirit of equality, care, and altruism. This also holds true for the facilitators who are encouraged to reflect at various points throughout the experience to ensure they are also growing in their practice and humility, continuing to learn from each other and their shared experiences guiding the cohort.

Challenges naturally occur when engaging with deeply personal experiences and the foundations of individual and collective identity. Navigating resistance to vulnerability and personal reflection must be done with care and compassion. Meeting participants where they are and remaining curious as to their past and present experiences will foster an environment conducive to the type of reflection and relationship encouraged in the THRIVE experience.

The second cohort, beginning in November 2024, is composed of various teams from across the university that may or may not have experience or connection to the Principled Innovation or Changemaker frameworks in their everyday work. Leaders applied to participate in the experience with two to three members of their teams. Each team operates in different areas of the university, so understanding the varying organizational contexts and cultures was prioritized prior to the teams engaging in the front-end retreat. Challenges around logistics, including scheduling, location, and various policies and procedures in the different environments were addressed prior to the retreat to ensure participants were fully able to commit and engage agency in their participation with the content and the experience as a whole.

### **Preliminary Outcomes and Impact**

Preliminary outcomes have been strong. The first THRIVE cohort has highlighted significant shifts in leadership practices and organizational culture with participants reporting enhanced empathy and perspective-taking in team interactions. They have emphasized the power of relationship development and reflective dialogue in the context of innovation and systems change. Dialogue around current leadership dilemmas they are facing provides space to practice identifying ethical considerations and transparency in decision-making.

### **Individual Growth and Development**

Increased self-awareness and clarity of personal values and practices are ideal outcomes of this work. THRIVE is designed as a space for shared learning and collaborative practice to foster individual growth. However, the focus is not individual growth for the benefit of the individual, it is about individual transformation for the greater good of the collective and the innovative work that happens in collaboration with others. Development of character dispositions such as humility, empathy, and resilience are core to the experience, as these assets contribute to the way we innovate and care for others.

The nature of this work is interconnected and reciprocal, emphasizing a dynamic relationship between individuals and the environments in which they operate. These environments shape individual character development, while the individuals simultaneously influence and transform the cultures and systems around them. Participants in THRIVE Collective report experiencing direct personal and professional growth, but the ripple effects of this transformation extend far beyond the immediate participants.

As an example, an instructional designer participating in THRIVE undergoes personal transformation. This transformation shifts how they engage with their team, collaborate with faculty to design curricula, and integrate principled innovation practices into academic experiences. Beyond the workplace, they also bring enhanced relational skills - such as awareness, humility and truthfulness - into their personal relationships, modeling these practices for others who may not be directly involved in THRIVE initiatives. Through consistent practice and ongoing learning opportunities, participants extend these benefits to their broader environments, creating the possibility of an expansive, multi-layered impact across personal, professional, and community contexts.

### **Relational and Team Dynamics**

While we are still in the early stages of implementing THRIVE, participants have already reported significant benefits, including improved communication and trust within their teams, as well as changes in how they interact with one another and engage in their work. One notable example from the THRIVE Collective experience is the introduction of the “CrossConnect” initiative within the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Unit (E&I) at ASU. Two members of the E&I team who participated in the first THRIVE cohort were inspired by their personal experiences with relational practices to introduce these tools and resources to their team leadership.

This initiative led to the creation of a program designed to foster connection across the larger E&I unit. Employees were paired together for six months and committed to six connection points during that period, two of which were formal meetings. Teams determined their own additional connection points, with suggested practices from THRIVE provided as guidance for fostering meaningful interactions.

Data collected through pre-and post-surveys, along with participant feedback at the conclusion of the six-month period, revealed several positive outcomes. Participants reported increased connection and informal interactions with colleagues, which in turn enhanced their comfort in expressing opinions and ideas during team meetings and discussions. These findings suggest that fostering relational practices can have significant implications for teams engaged in innovative work, as they help create an environment where individuals feel empowered to take risks, think creatively, and exercise agency in exploring new ideas.

### **Participant Reflections**

Participants in the first cohort of the THRIVE Collective described their experiences as transformative, highlighting themes of intentional relationship-building, enhanced self-awareness, and a shift toward reflective, authentic leadership practices. Many participants noted that engaging in deliberate practices to prioritize relationships over productivity fostered deeper connections and enriched their work environments. By carving out time for reflection and introspection during their workday, participants reported becoming more attuned to their surroundings, their colleagues' needs, and their own emotional and mental states. This shift allowed them to engage with others more authentically, navigate conflicts constructively, and approach leadership with flexibility and empathy.

Another recurring theme was the profound impact of slowing down and embracing self-care as an integral part of professional life. Participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to pause, recalibrate, and align their actions with their values and their team's well-being. This reflective practice not only improved individual productivity but also created a culture of collaboration and mutual support. Participants observed that as they became more intentional and present, their teams naturally began working more cohesively, with less need for directive oversight.

Finally, the THRIVE experience was seen as a catalyst for systemic change, encouraging vulnerability, inclusivity, and thoughtful decision-making. By fostering a holistic view of employees as whole individuals - beyond their measurable outcomes - THRIVE helped participants build environments where well-being and effectiveness were mutually reinforcing. These reflections illustrate the power of THRIVE to create leaders who are not only more effective in their roles but also deeply connected to their teams and committed to meaningful, principled change.

## **The Future of THRIVE and Human-Centered Leadership**

### **Scaling and Expansion**

Opportunities to adapt THRIVE to diverse industries, sectors, and geographies are promising. A key strength of a cohorted experience like THRIVE is the inclusion of multiple and diverse perspectives, which creates a rich opportunity for an ecological approach to change. Participants benefit from a community of support where they can draw on one another's experiences, fostering shared learning and collective growth.

While the initial two cohorts, along with a third scheduled to begin in Spring 2025, have been focused within the institution, plans for the fourth cohort are expanding to include teams of educators operating in various contexts. THRIVE offers a valuable experience for those engaged in systems change work within education, providing an ecosystem of support for educators navigating complex challenges.

Looking ahead, there is potential to adopt a systems approach to THRIVE that brings together participants from different sectors. This cross-sector collaboration would allow individuals to learn from one another's unique experiences and apply insights to their personal and professional practices. By showcasing how relationships and reflection can drive transformative change across systems, THRIVE can demonstrate the interconnected nature of these efforts.

Such a collaborative approach could also foster partnerships and collaborations across sectors, contributing to broader societal resilience and strengthening the collective capacity for meaningful change.

### **Implications for Leadership Development**

Integrating cross-generational teams into the THRIVE Collective addresses the leadership needs of the rising generation while fostering meaningful connections across age groups. This approach provides experienced leaders with an opportunity to learn what younger generations need in mentorship, leadership, and work environments. At the same time, it demonstrates to younger team members that leadership is actively invested in their well-being and growth. By participating in THRIVE, experienced leaders can better understand how younger generations think, learn, communicate, and collaborate. This mutual engagement fosters trust, creates common ground in shared purpose and responsibility, and opens relational pathways for deeper collaboration.

This process is essential for building the trust needed for younger generations to thrive. When trust is established, it allows these individuals to contribute creatively and meaningfully, finding both purpose and connection in their work and alignment with the organization's mission. By creating an environment where employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to grow, organizations not only foster innovation but also enhance their ability to retain top talent. Employees who experience relational trust, mentorship, and opportunities for meaningful contribution are more likely to remain engaged and loyal to their organizations, reducing turnover and strengthening institutional knowledge.

Additionally, fostering relational spaces and emphasizing individual reflective practices for the collective good can bridge generational divides, cultivating a workplace culture where mutual respect and valuing diverse perspectives become the norm. Younger generations stand to benefit significantly from such experiences. The fast-paced, technology-driven environment they have grown up in often emphasizes instant gratification, leaving less room for the development of relational and reflective skills. THRIVE provides an opportunity for dispositional transformation, equipping young leaders with the relational capacities and practical wisdom necessary to navigate complexity and change in principled and effective ways.

This aligns with a new direction for leadership education - one that shifts the focus from individual gain to self-awareness for the greater good. By embracing relational leadership and passing the torch to a new generation, organizations can move beyond hierarchical challenges and adopt shared leadership approaches. These approaches prioritize collaboration, innovation, shared decision making, and well-being, with care and character at their core. By investing in these practices, organizations create environments where employees feel a sense of belonging and purpose, further enhancing retention and attracting new talent who are drawn to meaningful and growth-oriented cultures.

Such environments not only support the organization's growth but also contribute to systemic change, fostering innovation and well-being that ripple out into society as a whole. This vision highlights the importance of equipping leaders across generations to work together effectively in creating a more equitable, innovative, and compassionate world.

### **Call to Action**

Encouraging organizations to prioritize character and relational practices is a powerful way to drive positive change within global communities. At its core, leadership is a human experience. While our lived experiences shape our values, beliefs, and character, we all share the need for connection, trust, and well-being. By adopting a holistic approach that supports both individual and collective well-being, organizations can foster transformative practices that benefit everyone involved.

Effective leadership requires us to pause and reflect - on the decisions we make, the innovations we pursue, and the impact our actions have on others. It calls for observing how ideas ripple through systems and relationships and creating the safety and trust necessary for vulnerability, honesty, and growth. Truthfulness, humility, and discernment are vital as we navigate how we communicate, share, and receive information. Deep listening - listening to learn, understand, and empathize - requires humility, courage, and a willingness to examine and expand our own perspectives.

Authentic relationships are at the heart of innovation and care. They enable us to take risks, support one another, and create environments where well-being is both personal and collective. When individuals care not only for their own well-being but also for their colleagues, organizations, and communities, they contribute to a culture of authentic harmony and shared

purpose. This relational focus fosters stronger teams, healthier organizations, innovative spaces, and a flourishing society.

Achieving this vision requires relational leadership and eco-communities of support that prioritize individual, relational, and organizational growth. When we recognize that work and life are interconnected, we move beyond compartmentalization to embrace harmony in our humanity. By nurturing individual practices that build stronger relationships, we lay the foundation for principled leadership and meaningful innovation that serves the greater good.

Communities of practice like THRIVE are vital in sustaining this vision. They cultivate human-centered leadership rooted in character, reflection, and relational practices. By empowering individuals to thoughtfully lead with care and authentic relationships at the core of what they value, THRIVE helps build systems and societies where humanity and well-being can flourish.

### **Conclusion**

As societal expectations evolve, THRIVE offers a model for nurturing the current and next generation of leaders by creating an evolving community of professionals that support their transformation. By emphasizing reflective and relational practices as a foundation for the intentional development of character and practical wisdom, THRIVE prepares leaders to meet contemporary challenges with humanity, understanding, care, and innovation. This holistic approach fosters the character and wisdom necessary for leading human-centered cultures and systems change in both organizational and societal contexts. By focusing on the development of relational leaders and human-centered teams, the cohorted experience fosters environments where ethical decision-making, authentic relationships, and innovative solutions can flourish, inspiring and preparing leaders and organizations for the challenges of today and tomorrow.

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