

# **An Open Letter to the CEOs of America**

*On the Responsibility You Chose and the Future Only You Can Steer*

To the Chief Executive Officers of America's leading companies,

You chose to sit where you sit. Whatever path brought you to that chair — ambition, talent, timing, or all three — you accepted a role that carries weight far beyond quarterly earnings and shareholder returns. You may not have fully appreciated the gravity of that choice at the time. Few do. But the seat you occupy makes you a de facto steward of societal stability, whether that was your intention or not. Your decisions ripple outward into millions of lives every day. That is not flattery. It is a structural reality of the position you hold.

This letter is not about politics. It is not a request for you to lobby a senator or pick a side. Government, at its essence, is infrastructure — systems meant to provide for commerce, public services, safety, and security. People operate those systems, but government does not govern people. People govern themselves. You know this better than most because you build the things people actually depend on every day. You don't need permission from Washington to change how you invest in your workforce, structure your operations, or prepare for what is coming. You already make those decisions. This letter is about making them with your eyes open.

## **What Is Coming**

Artificial intelligence is changing the world. You already know this. You are using it. But the way most of you are using it — as a cost-cutting instrument to replace headcount and increase margin — is a strategy with an expiration date, and that date is closer than your projections suggest.

AI is built on pattern recognition. It excels at automating routine tasks. And routine tasks comprise the bulk of the jobs that generate income for the largest cross-section of humanity. Current estimates suggest that by 2030, the majority of these jobs will be displaced. That is not a generation away. That is the length of a strategic plan that most of you have already written.

Follow the logic to its conclusion. If AI replaces the jobs, the income disappears. If the income disappears, the consumers disappear. If the consumers disappear, your revenue disappears. Your shareholders lose everything. Not because of a market correction or a competitor — but because the economy itself contracts beneath your feet. Simply using AI to make more money will not save you or anyone else from the inevitability of this outcome.

This is not speculation from the margins. Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, has publicly acknowledged that AI may be the downfall of society if its consequences are not addressed. Geoffrey Hinton, widely regarded as one of the founders of the technology itself, left his position at Google specifically to warn the world about these risks. Others across the industry are saying the same things. The people who built this are telling you it could end badly. The question is whether anyone with the power to act is listening.

## **The Narrow Definition That Will Cost You Everything**

For decades, the prevailing doctrine has been that your obligation is to your shareholders. That is the lens through which most of you evaluate every decision. But you have defined “stakeholder” too narrowly — and you have done so to your own detriment.

Your customers are stakeholders. Your workforce pipeline is a stakeholder. The communities in which you operate are stakeholders. The stability of the society that allows commerce to function at all is a stakeholder. Shareholder value does not exist in a vacuum. It depends entirely on the health of the broader system. If that system breaks, there is no value left to return to anyone.

The popular advice circulating in the technology world right now — that everyone should “make a million with AI,” that people who “know AI” will prevail, that workers should simply adapt — is not a strategy. It is a platitude. Not everyone can build something great with AI that other people want to buy. That is not cynicism; it is arithmetic. And the notion that understanding AI is a durable advantage ignores the fact that AI will soon be better at AI than any person directing it. The tool is outpacing the operator. The advice is already obsolete.

## **What You Chose When You Chose That Chair**

No one forced you into a leadership role. You pursued it. And in doing so, you became responsible for more than a balance sheet. The people who work for you, the families those people support, and the economies those families sustain — all of it flows through decisions that you make. That has always been true. What has changed is the scale and speed of the consequences.

Right now, you can still claim ambiguity. You can tell yourself that nobody knows how AI will play out, that the disruption might be slower than predicted, that the market will self-correct. But once this is in front of you — and it is now in front of you — that defense is gone. Choosing not to act is itself a choice, and it carries consequences from which you cannot walk away.

Consider the position clearly. If you act and something better comes of it, you led. If you act and the outcome is the same, you can say you tried. If you do nothing and the worst comes to pass, you will be held responsible. And if you do nothing and everything turns out fine, then none of this mattered anyway. Three of those four outcomes favor action. You evaluate risk for a living. This should not be a difficult calculation.

## **What This Letter Is Not**

This is not a prescription. It does not come with a twelve-step plan or a policy proposal. It is not asking you to stop using AI, slow down innovation, or abandon efficiency. It is not asking you to become philanthropists or to subordinate your business interests to a social cause.

This is a nudge. It is asking you to recognize that the current trajectory — the win-fast-at-all-costs mentality that dominates American business — leads to short-term gains and long-term extinction. Not just for the people you employ, but for the businesses you run. If no one has jobs and no one has money, what good did the AI do for anyone? Everyone will be unemployed, including you.

The essence of what needs to happen is simple, even if its execution is not: impart value first, and reap benefits later. This is the underlying principle of every economic model that has ever sustained itself. It is also the principle that most of you have abandoned in favor of extracting value now and assuming the consequences will be someone else's problem. They won't be. They will be yours.

## **Who Will Lead**

There is a void of leadership in this country right now. The mechanisms that were designed to represent the interests of citizens have been captured by organizations more interested in winning elections than operating a country's infrastructure. The culture being set at the highest levels of government is one of cowardice and self-preservation, and when those in positions of influence — in business, in media, in public life — respond by keeping their heads down, they ratify that culture and extend it.

Change has mostly come from the outside. You are the outside. You control the resources, the infrastructure, and the daily reality of American life in ways that no elected official does. You do not need legislation to reimagine how your organizations prepare people for a world that is arriving whether anyone is ready or not. You do not need a government program to invest in the long-term viability of the communities and workforces that sustain your businesses.

Someone just needs to go first. One company. One leader willing to acknowledge publicly that the current path is unsustainable and to demonstrate, visibly, a different approach. Not because it feels good, but because it is the only math that works in the long run. Others will follow. They always do. But the window for leading is not open indefinitely.

## **The Cost of Indifference**

History has shown us, repeatedly, what happens when those with the capacity to act choose not to. When resources become scarce and systems break down, the result is suffering on a scale that defies comprehension. Every time it happens, the world looks back and asks how it was allowed. The answer is always the same: the people who could have done something did nothing.

*Fear not the evil of bad men, but the indifference of good ones. If that does not describe the present moment, nothing does.*

You have the *opportunity and resources* to demonstrate uncommon courage. Not the kind that requires you to be reckless, but the kind that requires you to think beyond the next quarter, the next cycle, the next election. The kind that acknowledges you are stewards of something larger than your organization, and that the future of that larger thing is not guaranteed unless someone decides to protect it.

No one is going to have or make any money if everyone is unemployed or dead. That is not hyperbole. That is the end of the line you are currently on.

This letter does not ask you for a specific action. It asks you for recognition — of where we are, where we are heading, and what your position uniquely enables you to do about it. What follows from that recognition is yours to decide. But decide soon. The timeline is not generous, and waiting it out will not fix it.

Be the person who speaks the truth that others may not want to hear. You have nothing to lose that you are not already on track to lose anyway.