



# The Promise of Regenerative Leadership: Embracing Regeneration for Sustainable Success

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## ABSTRACT

The planet faces unprecedented environmental and social challenges due to decades of unsustainable practices. Regenerative leadership, which promotes holistic and sustainable approaches, emerges as a vital response to these crises. This review explores the principles of regenerative leadership and its potential to foster sustainable development within organisations. It examines the necessity for a shift from traditional leadership models focused on profit maximisation to those that emphasise people, planet, and profit. Through this shift, organisations can achieve long-term resilience, improved stakeholder relationships, and sustainable growth.

*Keywords: Regenerative Leadership, Sustainable Development, Corporate Governance*

## 1. Introduction

The planet faces unprecedented environmental and social challenges due to decades of unsustainable practices. Regenerative leadership, which promotes holistic and sustainable approaches, is a vital response to these crises. This review explores the principles of regenerative leadership and its potential to foster sustainable development within organisations. It emphasises the shift from traditional leadership models focused on profit maximisation to those prioritising people, planet, and profit. This shift can lead to long-term resilience, improved stakeholder relationships, and sustainable growth.

### 1.1 The Need for Change

The consequences of exploiting natural resources since the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution are evident today (Lester R. Brown, 2006). Fuelled by fossil fuels, the pursuit of wealth has led to environmental degradation (Fritjof Capra, 2002). However, we have not yet reached the point of no return. This moment of crisis presents an opportunity for a shift towards a life-sustaining society (Macy J. & Brown M. Y., 1998). Leadership is crucial in guiding this transition from destructive industrial practices to sustainable operations.

### 1.2 Sustainable Leadership

Sustainable leadership integrates long-term environmental, social, and economic considerations into decision-making processes. Traditional leadership models often prioritise short-term profit, neglecting broader impacts on people and the planet. Sustainable leadership, in contrast, aims to fulfil present needs without compromising future resources (Bright Amacha & Dastane, 2017). It is closely linked to the three Ps—Profit, People, and Planet (Palmer & Flanagan, 2016).

### 1.3 Regenerative Leadership

Regenerative leadership goes beyond sustainability by enriching life and fostering organisational, ecological, and human flourishing (Giles Hutchins & Laura Storm, 2019). This leadership style shifts from self-interest to holistic approaches of co-creativity, collaboration, and contribution. It emphasises five principles (Figure 1):



Figure 1: Five Principles of Regenerative Leadership

**a) Life-Affirming Principle**

Regenerative leaders adopt a mentality of "nothing is waste." They ensure that everything is reused and recycled, fostering an environment where employees can thrive and innovate (Giles Hutchins & Laura Storm, 2019). Leaders try to eliminate obsolete products and increase production of what is currently needed. They also create safe spaces for employees to grow and innovate.

**b) Constant Change**

Understanding that change is inevitable, regenerative leaders prepare their organisations to adapt and view disruptions as opportunities for growth (Acemoglu et al., 2015). They are always prepared for sudden changes and disruptions, seeing them as opportunities to adapt to the changing world and ensure employees are ready to handle such changes.

**c) Interconnectivity**

Recognising the interconnected nature of life, regenerative leaders make decisions considering their impact on the environment and the importance of collaborative efforts (Giles Hutchins & Laura Storm, 2019; Romain Bassoo, 2020). Regenerative leaders engage in activities that encourage collaborative initiatives with competitors, leading to the conservation of resources.

**d) Diversity**

Embracing diversity within the workforce, regenerative leaders leverage varied perspectives to drive innovation and enhance organisational performance (Ibidunni et al., 2018). Nature shows that life thrives in diversity, and regenerative leaders see this as an opportunity to encourage innovation and inspire employees to go beyond their potential.

**e) Cyclical Nature**

Acknowledging that growth occurs in cycles, regenerative leaders guide their organisations through different phases, inspiring continuous improvement (Giles Hutchins & Laura Storm, 2019). They understand this and actively lead their organisations through various phases, motivating employees to achieve new heights.

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## 2. Discussion

The principles of regenerative leadership address modern challenges such as workplace stress, disruptive innovations, and socio-political issues. By creating a safe, motivated, and collaborative work environment, regenerative leaders can drive their organisations to new heights. Despite the clear benefits, many organisations still cling to traditional leadership models. The "great turning" presents an urgent opportunity to adopt regenerative leadership and ensure sustainable development (Madjidi, 2014).

In today's world, workplace stress is very high (Wang et al., 2020). Disruptive innovations are another major challenge, further intensified by rapid globalisation and digitalisation (Christensen et al., 2018). Traditional leaders struggle to handle these challenges, leading to a constant hunt for top talents. However, finding them is difficult due to the current demographic and political landscape. Social inequalities, political extremism, and terrorism have led to mass migration, posing great challenges for leadership. To survive in this volatile environment and ensure sustainable growth, leadership must adopt new styles of sustainable leadership. Regenerative leadership, with its emphasis on sustainability, can help organisations navigate these challenges and achieve long-term success.

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### 3. Conclusion

Regenerative leadership offers a comprehensive solution to many challenges faced by contemporary leaders. Its focus on sustainability, interconnectivity, and holistic growth can rejuvenate stressed workforces and foster long-term organisational success. Embracing regenerative leadership is crucial for overcoming current crises and achieving a sustainable future. By shifting from traditional leadership models to those that emphasise the three Ps—Profit, People, and Planet—organisations can achieve long-term resilience, improved stakeholder relationships, and sustainable growth.

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