

A photograph of a crowd of people at sunset, many holding up lit sparklers. The scene is filled with warm, golden light from the setting sun. In the center, there is a graphic overlay consisting of several overlapping white circles and arrows, creating a circular path. The text "What inspires our leaders" is written in white, sans-serif font across the center of this graphic.

What  
inspires our  
leaders

The BDO story is an amazing one. In the mere 55 years since BDO was founded by just 5 firms, we have grown into an outstanding global organisation of 80,000 people working out of 162 countries and territories, who generated revenues of US\$ 9 billion in 2018. Today, we are leaders in exceptional client service; we have a world-beating audit process tool and client Portal and in 2018 we became the IAB's Network of the Year for the second time in three years.

But we recognise that the world is changing and that, while our past achievements are a strong foundation, we must focus on defining our future and becoming the BDO of tomorrow, today.

Leading this forward-looking strategy are Keith Farlinger, Global CEO; Anders Heede, Global COO; Trond-Morten Lindberg, CEO EMEA and Robert Aziz, Global Head of Tax.

We asked them to introduce this year's *Global Review* by answering a few questions about what drives them as leaders, why they believe that leadership starts with who we are and how BDO's leadership stance will guarantee the organisation's continuing success in the future.





**Q: KEITH, CAN YOU SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP ?**

A: Leadership is much more important in the rapidly changing world of today, as those who are 'followers' will be too late to be successful. I think it's important to realise that leadership is about influence – not authority: good leaders inspire others to bring about true change in an organisation. But I also believe that everyone has leadership capabilities and should think of leading in their role, wherever they are in an organisation. Developing our professionals' leadership skills is essential, as it works directly with our aim of empowering our people. Leaders know what to do - that's why my ambition for BDO is to be a global organisation of leaders.



**Q: ANDERS, GIVEN THE CURRENT UNRELENTING PACE OF CHANGE, WHY DO YOU THINK THAT LEADERSHIP IS IMPORTANT ?**

A: I'd say that leadership is critical right now, more than ever, because of the ever-present disruption that we're all facing. Leadership is the way to get where we need to go: it's about setting a clear direction and creating momentum and being willing to adapt to change. That helps people think bigger and more strategically – and, crucially, to think more about the future, not just the day-to-day tasks at hand. How we behave as leaders defines us and our results.



**Q: ROBERT, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS FOR A LEADER TO HAVE ?**

A: Adding to what Keith has said, it's crucial that, as leaders, we understand who we are, as people. This goes hand in hand with the need to be conscious of how we interact with others, so that we can ensure we're able to inspire them to follow our leadership and to develop the skills they need to become leaders themselves. I aim to be a collaborative leader who leads through empathy and guidance, so that the people I deal with feel empowered – and we can share their resulting success together.



**Q: TROND-MORTEN, WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP MEAN TO YOU ?**

A: For me, leadership is about making the right decisions, extracting the best from the right people – and doing the right things to get the job done. I aim to set an example and motivate people to be their best, so I try to help them achieve their ambitions firstly, by giving support and secondly, by enabling learning. It feels good to be involved in a person's development, and to see them rising and achieving.

**FROM OUR GLOBAL BOARD:**



**"Who we are as leaders has a significant impact on our business: both internally, in terms of people's development and fulfilment, but also externally, on our brand and reputation"**

Wayne Berson,  
Global Board Chair

**BDO**



**BDO**

**"The ability to lead change is a critical success factor in business today. In today's complex world, those who are willing to adapt to change and see the opportunities will survive: that's why we need leaders"**

Pat Kramer, CEO BDO in Canada



**"Our people want leaders who can coach, motivate, support and ultimately provide them with an inspiring vision of the future. They want leaders who can help them reach for the stars and realise their professional dreams"**

Dr Holger Otte, Managing Partner, BDO in Germany

**BDO**

**Q: ANDERS, HOW - AND WHERE - DO YOU SEE BDO LEADING FOR OUR CLIENTS ?**

A: The first thing I need to say is that at BDO we do what we do exceptionally well. We are already leading in our markets. We have been the fastest-growing global organisation in our profession for the last 10 years, and we serve more than 775,000 clients globally. Many of our firms are already in leading positions in their markets: BDO in China is the leading firm in the country's oil industry; BDO in the UK is the leading adviser to the UK's AIM market, BDO in Israel is the leading firm there advising on IPOs for technology companies – the list goes on.

But we're conscious that our markets are – just as we are – being driven by constantly evolving digital developments and regulatory demands. So we have to keep providing solutions to new service requirements, as well as to emerging industries. Converged industries – such as e-commerce and ag-tech - are fast-moving new areas and are a case in point. This requires a strategic approach and our firms are becoming adept at defining in which markets they aspire to own a leadership position, as well as assessing where BDO firms can lead together for the benefit of our clients.

I'm really encouraged to see that BDO's leaders are committing energy and resources to taking the right opportunities whenever they appear. We are competing against the best in our chosen markets and we can – and do – win.

**Q: TROND-MORTEN, CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT HOW WE'RE LEADING A NEW SERVICE APPROACH IN BDO, WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON INNOVATION ?**

A: There is really no choice in this matter: innovation is a challenging and exciting necessity. We want to drive value for our clients and improve business efficiency as we look ahead, we have to innovate - consistently and collectively. Innovation to me is about mindset and culture: our firms all over the world are constantly developing new products, services and tools and we're collaborating across borders in order to exploit these ideas and be commercially successful – for our clients, as well as our firms.

The basis of this is disruptive innovation and in certain instances we're reinventing ourselves, because that's the only way we can claim our stake as innovation leaders in the future. But we're combining this with an element of incremental innovation, which focuses on our existing services and solutions. This is how we're developing globally-managed solutions – from all over the BDO world. Along the way we're accepting that failures can happen, but these are opportunities to learn and will only make us stronger. Together, we're defining and preparing for what 'being BDO' will mean tomorrow, and the BDO of tomorrow is definitely within our grasp.



**Jiandi Zhu,  
Managing  
Partner, BDO  
in China**

**Dick den Braber,  
Managing  
Partner,  
BDO in the  
Netherlands**

**Q: ROBERT, CAN YOU DESCRIBE FOR US THE KIND OF PEOPLE WE ARE IN BDO, THE PEOPLE WHO WILL CONTINUE TO DELIVER SOLUTIONS FOR OUR CLIENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR PARTNERS AND STAFF GOING FORWARD ?**

A: We tend to envisage an automated working environment in tomorrow's world, where bots are crunching the numbers and where AI is taking over as the new IQ. I'd say that it's DQ (digital quotient) taking precedence now - but I know too that there is a role for people who listen and take time to learn, for human beings who approach their work with empathy and advocacy, as well as expertise.

At BDO we are good communicators and we have a flair for cutting through complexity – but we're not only auditors, or simply tax consultants – we're critical thinkers with a mindset that gets the job done. We lead through the insights we provide and the connections that we make, and we're always collaborating effectively – with our clients as well as our colleagues – to bring the right experts together and design the required bespoke solutions. There is no doubt that what we're doing for our clients, and how we're doing it, is changing. But this change represents more of an opportunity than a threat and we're ready for it now – because tomorrow will be too late.

**Q: THE LAST WORD BELONGS TO YOU, KEITH – BUT IT'S A BIG QUESTION: WHAT'S BDO'S REASON FOR BEING ? WHAT CORE PURPOSE IS OUR IDENTITY AND OUR DRIVER ?**

A: It's a big question, yes – but with a simple answer, which I call our WHY. We exist to help our clients, whatever their goals. We exist to help our colleagues, wherever they're going. And we exist to help our communities, whenever we can. In BDO, people come first – and people have voices that need to be heard and ambitions that we can help them achieve.

It's important that all of us dare to dream about the future, because dreams aren't about what's possible - they're about reaching the impossible. Dreams aren't about seeing opportunities, they're about seizing them – and they're not about today, they're about tomorrow. At BDO, we're proud of who we are, we're certain of where we operate, we're confident in how we're doing it – and we know where we want to go.

BDO is helping people achieve their dreams.

**Tony Schiffmann,  
Managing  
Partner, BDO  
in Australia**

**Wayne Berson,  
Global Board  
Chair**

**Paul England,  
Managing  
Partner, BDO in  
the UK**