

# openSAP Invites Thought Leaders, Episode 09

## HOW TO LEAD IN TUMULTUOUS TIMES

With V.R. Ferose

### Transcript

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Welcome to a special Thought Leaders episode with V.R. Ferose, in which we discuss leadership in tumultuous times and explore what it takes to navigate a crisis successfully. I'm thrilled to welcome Ferose back to openSAP to talk to us about the leadership challenges and opportunities of 2020. Ferose shares his views on a leader's responsibility in times of crisis, reflects on the importance of creating communities, and explains to us why it's important to personally check in when everything is uncertain and in flux. I'm your host, Elisabeth Riemann. Let me introduce you to V.R. Ferose.

Ferose is Senior Vice President, Head of SAP Academy for Engineering, which has the mission to create the next generation of engineers to help solve some of the most complex problems in the world. Ferose was formerly head of the SAP Globalization Services unit responsible for enabling the global adoption of SAP products worldwide. At 33, he became managing director of SAP Labs India, during which he transformed it into an innovation hub. Ferose is chairperson on the board of Specialisterne, USA, a not for profit foundation with the goal to create one million jobs for people with autism and similar challenges. He's founder of the nonprofit India Inclusion Foundation, which aims to bring the topic of inclusion to the forefront in India. Ferose has co-authored a best-selling book on people with disabilities entitled "Gifted". He's authored "Innovating the World: The Globalization Advantage", and "Grit: The Major Story". Ferose teaches Personal Leadership at Columbia University in New York and is a columnist for New Indian Express and Mint. Let's say hello.

Hello, Ferose, a very warm welcome back to openSAP Invites Thought Leaders.

**VR Ferose:** Thank you. What a delight to be back with you again.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** It's so great for us to have you with us again too. 2020, Ferose, what an unprecedented and challenging year. And I think the last months have certainly

tested us all more than ever before. And for me, Ferose, it's conversations like this one literally across the miles that have really helped me stay optimistic and also connected with family, friends, and colleagues. So, I'm really grateful that you're with us here again today.

**VR Ferose:** The pleasure is all mine. Thank you.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** What have been some of the highs and the lows indeed in 2020 that have shaped your experience when you look back?

**VR Ferose:** You know, I think 2020 will surely not be a footnote in history that I think everybody is going to have a 2020 story. When we speak to our children and our grandchildren, I'm sure they'll ask, how did you live through 2020? In many ways, this has been the invisible war of our generation. But the only thing is that this is a war where everybody is on the same side. And I think if I look back at my personal highs and lows, Lizzie, I used to sometimes get frustrated with my schedule and travel around the world. And I used to often think how I wish I had more time with my family, with my wife and son, and how I wish I traveled less and, you know, be grounded.

**VR Ferose:** So, for me personally, the high has been that I've got more time with family, much more time than I ever expected. And, you know, the lows has probably been that, you know, missing human connections. We took human connection for granted. And so, I'm missing that human connection. And I'm also obviously very saddened by the fact that 2020 has been, you know, devastating for a large part of the population. And I really feel for the people who have lost their loved ones and, you know, struggling in these times. So, yeah, I wish 2021 is a lot better, Lizzie.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Here's to the new year to come.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Today we're going to be focusing on your personal experiences of leadership, fittingly in tumultuous times. I was wondering if there's a figure from either the past or the present who comes to your mind when we talk about the epitome of good leadership in a crisis?

**VR Ferose:** Across the world there are various inspirational figures in history, from Gandhi to Mandela, to Lincoln to JFK, to so many incredible leaders. But I think what is very important from a leadership perspective is to have someone who is alive in flesh and blood, somebody you can see and feel and follow. And there are two people who I would say have left a great impression on me personally. One is the prime minister of New Zealand, you know, Jacinda Ardern, who I think obviously was one of the youngest leaders of a country in the world. She became a prime minister at the age of 37. And she's just so amazing. You know, it's such a breath of fresh air to see someone who is humble, who is doing great things. You know, the response that she had in 2019 when, you know, 51 people were fatally shot dead in Christchurch. And her response where she led with empathy, is so fundamental to good leadership. And one of the core beliefs that I have is that great leaders have empathy at the core and ambition at the edges.

**VR Ferose:** In the corporate world, you know, Satya Nadella has done such an outstanding job at Microsoft. It's not about the fact that he's turned around Microsoft and it's now a trillion-dollar company. I think that the metrics is one element of it. But what is incredible about Satya Nadella is he's also led with empathy. He really transformed a large, multinational, large bureaucratic organization into this incredible force by leading with empathy. You know, my core hope is that empathy becomes fashionable, empathy becomes sexy. It's not that empathy is seen as weakness. And I'm so delighted with the current election results in the US. You know, Joe Biden is a great example of somebody who leads with empathy. So, I think I have great admiration for people who lead with empathy, also have ambition at the edges, because, you know, you have to be ambitious. You have to be bold. So, yeah, so the two leaders that in the current times I think our generation can relate to.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Wonderful choices, and I think it's really fabulous that you say you really need empathy at the core really to lead from the heart and ambition belongs in that mix, too, but is striking the right balance. Now, I do have a very general question for you, how do you actually define good leadership?

**VR Ferose:** There are so many different definitions of leadership and, you know, every book on leadership will probably give you one aspect of what a good leader is about. I think leaders have this burning desire to make the world a better place. It's the live and breathe the idea that how is it that I can contribute to making the world a slightly better

place? One of my great role models and heroes was President Kalam, who was India's president, who passed away a few years back. And I was very fortunate to actually not just know him, but, you know, work with him closely. And I think he's like the Gandhi of my generation. So, in an interview, he was asked, what is your definition of leader? Exactly the way you are asking me, and I found his answer to be something that I have not seen in any leadership books, but also the one that touched me the most.

**VR Ferose:** He said, I've been very fortunate to have traveled around the world and met great leaders, Nobel laureates, presidents and so on. What I found unique was when you look at a kid, the default response of that child is, I want this, which is typically I want a toy or I want an ice cream. He said, Now, you look at the response of a teenager, and the teenagers are always like, I know how to do this. Don't tell me this. I know this is this has to be done my way. You look at an adult. You know, we all work in organizations and our response is, let's do this together. Let's work together. And he says that's the response of an adult. And he says the response of a leader is very simple. He will always ask, what can I give? Great leaders always ask the question, what can I give? I found that to be a very important characteristic of leaders, as I said, other than having a burning desire to make the world a better place. They are doing it by asking a very fundamental question, what can I give?

**Elisabeth Riemann:** And I think it's the whole mindset, as you say as well, asking yourself the question, what can I give? What can I contribute? Ferose, when you think about good leadership and what the characteristics of a good leader are, do you think it's something that can be learned from a workshop or from reading the books that allegedly every great manager should read? What's your view now on theory versus practical experience?

**VR Ferose:** Leadership is a journey and I think we've been in many ways doing a disservice to ourselves by assuming that, you know, you can go through a leadership program and you can become a leader or read a book and you can become a leader. I think leadership is a lifelong practice. And one of the great things about leaders is they really walk the talk and they are very morally grounded. And I would like to share one incredible example of what I mean. Here is an incredible story about breaking the habit. You know, Gandhi used to do a lot of these open meetings every day. So, people traveled across the country, walked sometimes for days and months just to see him and

get his advice for just a few minutes. And so one day a mother came with her son and looked at Gandhi and said, "My son eats a lot of sugar and I've been trying to get him off sugar. Can you please tell him that he should stop eating sugar?" Because people thought that when Gandhi said something, everybody followed it, OK? And so, Gandhi listened to her and he said, come back after a few days. And she was very unhappy about it, said, "I walked across the country to come and see you. All I wanted you to do was tell my son to break the sugar habit." But anyway, she was disappointed, but she came back again after a few days. And then Gandhi told her to tell her son, "I think you should not have sugar because it's not healthy." And the mother was very confused and said, "But you could have done this like three days back. Why did you ask me to wait here for three more days and come and meet you again?" He said, "I was having sugar myself, so I wanted to stop having sugar before I tell you to do that." He said, I will never ask anybody to do something, that I don't do myself." Now, that's great leadership. That's practice, that's been grounded in strong moral values. And for me, that is a great story about how leaders really walk the talk.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** That's such a powerful story, and it shows his empathy as well to really want to imagine how does it feel physically and mentally to give up sugar. And I also want to ask you Ferose, what are the responsibilities of a leader in times of crisis especially, how can a leader really develop the qualities it takes to lead and provide direction when literally everything and everybody is in such an awful state of flux?

**VR Ferose:** When you look at great leadership, especially during difficult times, during turbulent times, during tumultuous times, and you can do a lot of study and see what did leaders do during these times, you know, how did FDR (Franklin D. Roosevelt) respond to the Great Depression? How did Gandhi respond to the Independence Movement? How did MLK (Martin Luther King) respond to the Civil Rights Movement? There's a lot of lot of history, a lot of great books written about the response of these leaders. And, you know, there are a few things that are consistent. And one of them is that leaders make the truth absolutely visible to the people. And Lincoln said this, "Once you are able to tell the truth and break it apart, people will find a way to deal with it." And so the ability to tell the truth, however painful it is, is one of the core qualities of leaders. And so there's a beautiful saying that says that what leaders do is they show the light and then people are able to find a way on their own. And you don't have to always find a

way for the people. People are smart, people are responsible, but you have to be the light in the room. You have to show the light. You have to show that it is possible.

**VR Ferose:** So, I think that is something that is great across leadership. They are able to break difficult situations, tell them the truth in a manner that people can follow that. So that's the first quality of, I think, great leaders in difficult times. They tell the truth all the time. Right. The second thing is having an incredible amount of clarity, you know, because when things are difficult, you're surrounded by a lot of noise. But leaders have the ability to have incredible amount of clarity. They're able to very quickly filter through all the noise and focus on a few things that's going to dramatically improve the state of the world or the life of the people. So, having a clear sense of clarity is very important from leadership perspective. And last but not least, the most important is to get people together. And I think leaders have the ability to get people together for the common vision. I mean, imagine, you know, Gandhi's Independence Movement. There was no social media, there was no communication channels, but he mobilized 350 million people to the same vision.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Incredible.

**VR Ferose:** And so, the ability to get people together is one of the greatest qualities of leaders.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Truly, and I think it's as you said, it's leading by good example, it's having that analytical mindset and really bringing people together to reach a common goal. I don't know about you, but this global pandemic has really made me and everyone around me, I think as well, really question and criticize leadership. And so I wanted to ask you what your observations of good and bad political and corporate leadership have been in 2020.

**VR Ferose:** 2020, as I said, has challenged our existing systems in ways that nobody ever imagined. For example, if anybody has said that all of us are going to work remotely, most people would have said that it will never work. You know, our productivity would drop. And I don't think people will work from home. They will be doing other things and so on. But, the reality is that, you know, work from home has worked in ways that none of us ever imagined. And in fact, I think we're overworking in a virtual

world. You know, there are days when I take a vacation and end up working the whole day. Right. So, I think the virtual world has shown us that there are a lot of things that are possible that we didn't think it was. So, working from home, giving flexibility to people does work. A lot of us said I need to see people in office because I need to know whether they are actually working or not.

**VR Ferose:** And what has happened today is that you have no control. So, the whole idea of micromanaging people has just gone off the window. One of the big things that has happened because of the pandemic is that trust has become front and center. You have no choice but to trust your people because you can't control them anyway. What really works is empowerment and empathy. So, I think we've kind of seen a radical shift to a completely new style in a very unintended fashion. I think the pandemic has forced us to lean towards that style of leadership.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Yeah, and I think it's lovely that you say as well that trust is a really big theme that runs through 2020 as well when it comes to leadership, it's not about controlling doing micromanagement. It really is about trusting that people when they have the freedom, we are conscientious workers. We want to kind of produce something. We want to work together as a team.

**VR Ferose:** Absolutely, and I think there's one thing which I which I feel has become harder, especially in the workspace, and that is to really understand people's emotional state. And so it's very hard to know what is people going through. In the office, you could just call them or chat and really have a heart to heart conversation. But today, what has happened is all our conversations are very focused on business discussion. You know, you will go back to your work and I'll go back to mine. And we are not having informal conversations. So, I really am not able to break through to you at a very personal level. Right. And I think that's the biggest challenge of working in a virtual mode. And I believe good leaders keep time aside for checking in. I call it checking in. So, which means I just call you for 15 minutes and check in and say, how are you doing? Are you all OK? Is there something I can support you with? If you don't do that, you are only connected to people at the task level. You are not connected to them at an emotional level. And if you're not connected to people at an emotional level, you're never going to get the maximum out of them. And I think that has been the biggest challenge because we've lost the human connection. We've lost what I call the corridor

effect. Where you meet people informally at the corridor and sometimes more happens in the corridors than in actual meetings.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Yeah, I miss that, I do miss that.

**VR Ferose:** I think that is probably the biggest downside of working remotely, that we're not connected at a very human emotional level. And the only way you can do that is to really make a conscious effort. Every month I keep a 15-minute meeting informally, you know, just chat, you know, it doesn't matter. What was your favorite book? What did you binge watch yesterday? Just to connect at a human to human level. But if you don't make that a habit, you will not do it. And I think that's the biggest downside of the current situation.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** No, I think so, too, and I really like the fact that you check in with your team and I think that's a really great way of doing it. Ferose, in August 2020, you published an article in Medium entitled "Leadership in Tumultuous Times", and here you write, "...the leader steers the employees from recovery to discovery, treating everyone as adults capable of making their own decisions. The leader is at the center of a circle, not at the top of a pyramid." Now, I think this is such a great visualization with the circle and the pyramid. How do you think that the crisis is a catalyst for changing the way we view traditional hierarchies?

**VR Ferose:** You know, when we entered the pandemic, the common narrative that I heard was all about recovery. They were all talking about when will the economy go back to what it was before the pandemic? When will we go back to a life before the pandemic? And if I thought that mindset was fundamentally flawed. Life doesn't have a reset button. Unfortunately, you cannot go back to the life before the pandemic. Right. And until then every discussion was centered around recovery. And then I found that the good leaders were able to look at it fundamentally differently and saying I would focus on discovery, which means, this is an opportunity to do destructive and then constructive innovation. Maybe this is an opportunity where the pandemic has in many ways broken down the existing way of thinking. Can we look at this as an opportunity and look at this post- pandemic era to be better than the pre-pandemic era?



**VR Ferose:** And I thought if you had that mindset, you will deal with the pandemic in a much better and healthy fashion. The ones who were holding on to the past, they were actually going down the rabbit hole. I mean, there was you know, they were getting frustrated. But the ones who were focused on what can we do post pandemic better, we're able to come out of it in a much more positive manner. For that to happen, get people together with the simple idea that, you know what? I don't know the answer, but let's find it together. There is no book till date with the title, "How to Deal with a Pandemic", 20 lessons from the pandemic and how to deal with it.

**VR Ferose:** So how do you find a way out? You get people together and you make them feel that we are in this together and we will find solutions together. We the Academy, for example, when we started it, our biggest differentiator was a world class in-person experience. But what happens now? There is no in-person experience. You know, people are not going to come to the Academy in the Silicon Valley should we even exist? And we said, you know what, maybe we need to pivot to a world class virtual experience. Right. And let's look at this in a positive way. In an in-person experience, you can only touch maybe 200 people in a year. Now we can touch two thousand people in a virtual mode. You can do with half the budget. So, I think, you know, seeing and putting a positive aspect to it can help us pivot to a future in a much better manner. And that's what I was trying to tell. When I say you are seeing as somebody who's not at the top of the pyramid, but who's at the center and who's getting everybody together because nobody has the answer. We have to move away from this whole idea that, our leaders, these, you know, rock stars who have all the answers. The reality is, leaders are just like you and me, but they have the ability to get people together for a better outcome.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** And one thing now that just stuck with me is the fact that you said it's about an honest approach, saying as a leader you don't have all the answers. And I think that's so key to gaining our respect and our appreciation. And I just find the words you chose to move a team through this transition from recovery to discovery, it's just so much more appealing than forcing this new normal, that's anything but normal to us, and the way we lived before.

**VR Ferose:** Absolutely, and you know what? The whole idea of superheroes is fictional. You know, I think that you have a Superman and the Spider-Man who can fly and fix the

world on his own is fictional. And I think somewhere deep inside, we've got too addicted to that narrative that there will be this one person who will come and save the world, which is far from the truth. Collectively, we are so much more stronger. Kennedy beautifully said in his inauguration address, ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for the country. And the reality is each of us can do a very, very small bit. I mean, I am seeing what is happening in the US where wearing a mask is an act of a political message. It shouldn't be, right? What if all of us just wore a mask and followed the rules? The world will be so much better. It's as simple as that. Sometimes leadership is also very simple. When you ask me this question, can leaders be born or taught or is it something that can be learned? Actually, if you ask what do you teach your children? We teach our children very simple things that literally, to be honest, don't be a bully, be nice to people. The problem is, as we grow up in our lives, the same basic thoughts become so incredibly hard to follow. This seems like such a difficult thing to do in today's life.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** It's such a shame we lose sight of those core human values, right, that we've been taught from being really small.

**VR Ferose:** Yeah, because we are, constantly optimizing for something else, we are optimizing for power. If you're in a corporate world, you're optimizing for profit, then we you know, in the political world, we optimize for power and votes. As soon as you optimize for one thing only you lose sight of the other. Right. Which means if you are in the corporate world, for example, if you're optimizing for profit, then you'll say, you know what, I want to make profit at all cost. So, I don't care about whether I'm telling the truth or not. But as long as I get optimized for profit, that's the only thing that matters. What the politicians up to my words. So, they say, you know, how do I get more work? So maybe by not wearing a mask. So, I've started optimizing for something and you completely lose sight of the basics, which is telling the truth and being honest. And I think that is a risk that all of us live in today's world, that, you know, the things like telling the truth and honesty has become so out of fashion. We have to make it fashionable again.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Ferose, as Senior Vice President and Head of SAP Academy for Engineering, you spoke a little bit earlier about how you've been adapting some of the programs and initiatives so away from this in-person experience to more of a remote

setting. So, what are some of your highlights there and how have you adapted your approach there?

**VR Ferose:** One of the things we realized was we need a different kind of leadership to get through this difficult phase and really make them prepare for the next phase of not just SAP, but the world we live in. And we looked at how do we do that. Right. It's easier to say. It very difficult to do that. So, we learn something called the Multidimensional Managers Program. In fact, we're just running the pilot program right now. It is an eight-week program. And let me explain, what are the things that we're doing radically different from any program has ever done before, not just at SAP, but outside as well? So, the first thing we realized is that, you know, people do these managers' program for three days, one week. And the first thing we realized is, that doesn't change behavior. You attend a program, you feel good about it, and you go back and do exactly the same thing, you did before. Behavior change takes time. So, we said our program has to be long enough where people are able to practice things. if you want to become a good tennis player, you know, you have to practice. I said, you know, you can become Santana by picking up the guitar three times in your life. You have to practice.

**VR Ferose:** You become a good manager by practice itself. So, our core idea was let's keep practice at the core. So, we did an eight-week program, but every week we only do four hours of session of theory. We tell them, how do you practice? We tell them all the key insights, but then they have to go and practice what they have learned with the team, which means how do you practice vulnerability? How do you practice what we call a radical candor, which means assuming you have a difficult person in your team, how do you give honest feedback? And we said, doing it is more important than learning the theory. Most important is you have to measure it differently. I believe that all the measurement metrics that we use are fundamentally flawed and the reason is very simple. So, you go to for example, you go for a three-day program. What do you measure? You measure how good was the person who was teaching? How good was a session? How good was your experience? But none of them matter because you're giving feedback to the trainer. The objective of the manager's program or the leadership program was to improve you. Have you changed?

**VR Ferose:** You need to measure, have you become a better manager? We said we will measure, not you, but we will measure whether you have improved by looking at your team. So we asked the team, please tell me how your manager was before the program, how you have one month after the program, three months after the program, and six months after the program, because a manager for him to practice empathy, to practice vulnerability takes time and effort. But we are not going to measure the manager, we said, will measure your team and let the team tell us whether you have improved or not. We believe that's the way true change is driven by doing and by measuring the right things. Those are some of the core things we've been focusing on in what we call the Multidimensional Managers' program.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** That's so insightful and I think it's such a bold move and I think, it just makes complete and utter sense. Amazing.

**VR Ferose:** We've got like the two best professors one is Jamil Zaki, who's written this book called War for Empathy. And Professor Rose, again, a very accomplished professor at Columbia. And I teach as well. I'm like, why are you giving feedback for these professors? They're the world's most famous professors. Why are we collecting feedback? You know, they get like a 9.5 out of 10 every time. So, we're measuring the wrong things. I'm like, have you changed? I've been saying, why haven't people asking these difficult questions? And the reason is it's just hard.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** It's a very, very difficult question to ask and one that's uncomfortable and makes you vulnerable.

**VR Ferose:** It is hard and it's time consuming. If you're optimizing for the wrong KPIs, you're getting the wrong outcome.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Yeah, I think it's a real game changer.

**VR Ferose:** You have to remember that good things take time. Transformations take time. And we hope this program in many ways leads us to a completely new way of thinking.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Completely refreshing and a very bold move, but I think a very good one to take. And I think, you know, we talk about the demands that are placed on a leader and I think even during a normal year, it could be very, very demanding, very stressful job. How can a leader cope with the strain that's put on their finite energy reserves?

**VR Ferose:** I'll tell you what my coping mechanisms has been. So, you know, there's this thing called the four Ms, which is the first and this is very, very specific to these times. Right? The first is Movement, second is Mindfulness, third is Meaning, and the fourth is Mastery. Let me explain this in the context. And I don't claim to have done any of them too well. But at least the first is, you know, we live in a very sedentary world. You know, we are sitting in front of a laptop, no exercise. I think sitting has become like the smoking of the previous generation. It's just bad. You know, more people are getting back issues and so on. And especially during over times, people are all holed up. So, the big question is, how can you embed a little bit of movement in your day to day schedule? Very important, but I think I haven't done it too well. You know, I wish I could go for a walk and do that every day. So, I think the most important during these times is to remember, to move often. Second is really mindfulness is to practice a little bit of good breathing exercises because you get frustrated. You know, we are in the same house. You know, you're going to have conflicts with your partners, your children, your frustrations are all going to be let out to the same person. And you're doing things that you never did before. I was I jokingly say, I think I am pretty convinced that I can build a world championship in dishwashing now.

**VR Ferose:** And this is like a daily ritual now that I do 30 minutes of dishwashing and sometimes it becomes a good exercise to not thinking about anything else. So, I've kind of taken dishwashing with the kind of passion that I've not done for many things before. So, basically being mindful, being a little calmer and finding outlets in things that you never thought you would be able to. And the third is to find meaning. Meaning is, and this is also critical because especially when during difficult times, your constant question is if you are fortunate, which I think all of us are, what have you done for the less fortunate? And I'm not saying you have to write a check and do all of that, but you could just do small acts to improve somebody else's life. Right. So, finding meaning in these difficult times is so important to survival. And you will see that, you know, Viktor Frankl in his book and Man's Search for Meaning, wrote that the people who survived the

Holocaust, they would find meaning in the least expected places and the only ones who survived found meaning and purpose to hang on to. It was not the fittest person who survived, but the one who had a meaning and purpose. And last but not the least is really mastery. As I said, you can you know, I have achieved mastery in dishwashing, for example. Nobody talks. But, you know, I've written a lot and I've done a lot of things which I wouldn't have done before. But achieving mastery gives you a personal high. You feel good about yourself? Oh, I've done something better than before. Right. So, I think these are the forms of survival first, just movement second, as mindfulness, third meaning, and fourth is mastery.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** It's a great way to summarize all those wonderful aspects and activities and the focus that we should have there. Really good. What do you think we've learned from 2020? Does 2021 demand a new type of leadership? And are we ready for that moving forward?

**VR Ferose:** I think what 2020 did, what it exposed, the cracks in our society in ways never done before, you know, we've been always speaking about inequality in the world, right? I mean, we knew the haves and the have-nots, the five richest people have as much money as half of the world's population. But, you know, those were all statistics. But now you can see the impact. You'll see the number of people who are jobless, the number of people who don't have food. I live in California, probably the richest state in the world. And we are talking about people standing in long queues to collect food stamps. This is like the richest country in the world. And we are seeing in CNN queues of people driving for hours to collect food stamps. It exposes the massive inequalities in the world. Right. And I think it has given us an opportunity to build a much more equitable world. So, going forward, once all of us, you know, hopefully gets the vaccine and, you know, we get back to some sense of normalcy, I think we should look back and not waste this crisis. We should work on the things that didn't work and really make it better. You know, there's a beautiful saying that leaders don't choose a crisis. When the crisis happens, you know, are you ready with the best possible response? And I hope we take these learnings and make 2021 one much better than what we had when we entered the crisis.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** I hope so too. You've certainly given us plenty of food for thought and lots of inspiration in today's conversation. And to conclude today's episode, Ferose,

can I maybe ask you to summarize three key aspects that you would like us to take away from today's episode and maybe also act on. What would you like us to do after listening to this episode?

**VR Ferose:** Again, I think there are two ways to look at it. Know, number one, if you are in a position of authority, if you are in a position of power, leaders really have to remember that their core function is to lift people up. That's it, I said, if you walk into every meeting, if you walk into every conversation with the core belief that my job is to lift people up and if you keep every decision with that lens, I think you will make a fundamental change in the world. Now, what is it that you can do if you are not in a position of authority? We should always remember that everybody has an impact. Everybody has a power to make a small difference. It's important to be critical. It is important to give feedback. But don't be cynical. Being critical is important. But don't be cynical, right? Don't sit back and say, oh, my world ended because of the pandemic. But really, what can I what can I do to make this slightly better? Finally, what the pandemic has taught us is that the intangibles are more important than the tangibles, you know, human connection, is priceless. You can't put a value to it. You know, we can we can live in this fancy house. But you know what? It doesn't add up to anything. If I have to choose to go out and give a hug to my friend, that's priceless. And I think that is what the pandemic has taught us, that the intangibles, the love, the affection, the human connection, this is what makes us human.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Yeah, no, that that's so powerful and I think, you know, when the vaccinations are rolled out, I'm really hopeful that soon we can all start hugging one another again. I think having that human connection, that's something that we've all missed so much in in 2020.

**VR Ferose:** Yeah, I think that's going to be, you know what, all of us are so much longing and looking forward to do, right?

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Absolutely, and I thank you for really lifting us up with this episode. It's been an absolute pleasure to welcome you back to openSAP. I hope that our experiences together in 2020 help us be all the more stronger and better equipped to navigate the New Year.

**VR Ferose:** Thank you, Lizzie. You know, it's been such a delight speaking to you. Thank you for the opportunity and my gratitude and wishes to all the listeners. I hope they are all safe and doing well and Thank you so much.

**Elisabeth Riemann:** Thank you for listening to openSAP Invites Thought Leaders with V.R. Ferose. If you enjoyed this episode, please share rate and leave a review and don't miss your next invite. Subscribe now.

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