

LEAN INTO PURPOSE

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

How intentional leaders catalyze meaningful impact

By GENNA ROSENBERG

WHAT ARE YOU uniquely positioned to do that no one else can?

I have thought about this question throughout my career, and I believe every leader should ask it. Our resources are not limited to money, authority or a prominent platform. They include our time, knowledge, relationships, creativity, influence, professional skills and ability to open a door. We can put those resources to work in countless ways; changing a hiring practice, creating a character who helps children feel seen, building a business around an adaptive product, or simply sitting beside one person each week and helping her learn to read.

The scale may be different, but the starting point is always the same: recognizing what we have to offer and choosing to put it to work.

Leadership is not defined by a title. It begins with a decision to make a difference. The most intentional leaders take that decision one step further by creating meaningful opportunities for others to participate.

CREATING A PATHWAY TO CONNECTION

Libraries have always been about more than books. They unlock access to knowledge, opportunity, connection and the joy that comes through reading.

In 1984, the Los Angeles Public Library extended that purpose through its Adult Literacy Services program, helping adults strengthen their reading,

writing and English-language skills. More than four decades later, that original idea continues to ripple across Los Angeles.

During the 2025–2026 fiscal year, 234 adult learners participated in one-on-one tutoring, supported by 507 volunteers serving in a variety of tutoring and teaching roles.

Among those volunteers is my 80-year-old mother, Sandy McGorty. A former teacher, she knew she would enjoy putting her skills to work helping others.



Now, twice a week at the Sherman Oaks Branch, she meets with Fanny Zhang, an adult literacy learner from China.

Their lessons extend well beyond books. They visit grocery stores and restaurants, share everyday experiences and turn ordinary moments into opportunities for Fanny to strengthen her English skills, confidence and independence. Along the way, what began as a literacy match became a treasured friendship.

“Sandy is not only my tutor; she is my guide in my life and an important part of my journey in America,” Fanny shared. “A good match is not just about teaching and learning. It is about connection, trust and

growing together.”

That growth is mutual. My mother says helping Fanny and her family navigate American culture has given her a renewed sense of purpose.

The library created the pathway. Sandy and Fanny brought it to life.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF CONTRIBUTION

I see the same principle at work at Shemesh Farms, a social enterprise of the Shalom Institute that creates pathways to purpose, belonging and meaningful work for adults with disabilities.

Participants develop skills and confidence as Farm Fellows, helping to grow, harvest and bottle herbs, seasonings and honey. But Shemesh also creates opportunities for others to join its “Hive” and support the mission. Volunteers become part of the Sunshine Gang, while customers help sustain the program by purchasing the products the Fellows create.

I have volunteered with Shemesh for the past two years, and now my family volunteers alongside me at its new Shemesh Garden at the Skirball Cultural Center.

Shemesh does not simply deliver a program to a community. It builds a community in which everyone has something meaningful to contribute.

That distinction matters.

People want to help, but they do not always know where to begin. Strong organizations make participation clear, accessible and authentic. They connect an opportunity to what they do best, then invite employees, customers, partners and community members to bring something of their own and amplify what is possible.



INNOVATION TAKES MANY FORMS

Throughout my career in toys, licensing and entertainment, I have discovered that some of the greatest opportunities for impact begin by simply seeing possibilities others overlook.

At JAKKS Pacific, I recognized that excess inventory sitting in warehouses could become joy in the hands of children who otherwise might go without. Over the course of a decade, that insight helped direct more than \$60 million in toys to nonprofit organizations serving children and families around the world.

Years later, while leading a campaign for Care Bears, we invited journalists and influencers to do more than cover the brand. We asked them to become #ShareYourCare Ambassadors, publicly pledging to spread kindness throughout the year. More than 200 ambassadors joined the movement, creating a ripple effect that generated millions of impressions while transforming a marketing campaign into a shared act of participation.

Looking back, I realize this has been the common thread throughout my career. Whether working with global brands, nonprofit organizations or community initiatives, the greatest impact has always come from uncovering authentic opportunities where people could contribute their talents, resources and passion toward something larger than themselves.

I have come to believe that leadership is not a position you hold. It is a decision you make.

Whether we lead a company, a team,

a classroom, a household or simply ourselves, each of us can innovate through what we create, whom we hire, the stories we tell, the programs we build, the time we give and the invitations we extend.

The question is not whether we have enough power to make a difference. It's whether we recognize the unique power we already have and whether we're willing to create opportunities for others to discover theirs.

\$143 MILLION
RAISED IN SUPPORT OF EASTERSEALS
THROUGHOUT 47 YEARS OF COMMITMENT

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SOCIAL IMPACT INNOVATION TAKES MANY FORMS

How a national commitment becomes a local invitation

Since 1979, the CENTURY 21 network has partnered with Easterseals to help people with disabilities, older adults and veterans live with greater independence.

In 2025 alone, the CENTURY 21 System raised nearly \$2.2 million, bringing its lifetime support of Easterseals to more than \$143 million. That commitment comes to life through national initiatives, regional fundraisers and campaigns led by independent offices and affiliated real estate professionals across the country.

While researching the partnership, I searched for participating offices in my community and discovered that a local CENTURY 21 Masters office was holding its 2026 Giving Week at that very moment. I clicked the donation button and contributed on the spot.

A 47-year national partnership had reached a local office, which extended a simple invitation that transformed me from someone studying the initiative into someone participating in it.

That's the Ripple Effect in action:
Shared purpose ➔ Sustained commitment
➔ Local activation ➔ Accessible invitation
➔ Wider participation ➔ Expanding impact



Genna Rosenberg is an award-winning innovator, strategic advisor and keynote speaker who helps organizations uncover authentic opportunities

where purpose and business naturally align. She works with companies and nonprofits to create pathways to participation that strengthen culture, inspire innovation and catalyze meaningful impact. Learn more at genncomm.com.



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