
Empowerment 2021: Advice from 11 Leaders We Met Last Year

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While 2020 was a challenging year, it was also a time to reflect – and innovate. The [Wharton Global Youth Program](#) at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, did lots of both as our team devised new ways to connect with high school students around the world, even while we could not meet the top global teams on the 8th Floor of Wharton’s Huntsman Hall for our annual [Investment Competition](#) Global Finale in May, or hold our [high school summer courses](#) on Wharton’s Philadelphia campus starting in June.

Still, the learning continued through this very different year.

We decided to pull together a few select quotes from some of the innovators and experts we invited into our online platforms in 2020. In most cases, you can follow the links to listen to, watch or read the full interviews. Enjoy this clearinghouse of great advice for the new year on leadership, life, business education and careers. We give you *Empowerment 2021*:

“Having your back against a wall forces ingenuity and creative solutions. When bad things happen to you, when you are able, try to realize why this ultimately could be good for you. Pick your head up and find a better path forward. We live in a turbulent world and this resilient approach to life is the only inoculation against the madness of the present.”

-*Entrepreneur Jack Abraham, in a [Knowledge@Wharton High School interview](#) about the business he started after his house burned down in California’s Tubbs Fire*

“Knowing what is happening in our nation and understanding the root of these problems is how they get solved. Even if you feel as though your one voice doesn’t matter, our voice in numbers is what is going to make a difference in the long run.” –*Sanjana Yeddula, creator of an app to help Gen Z learn about politics, and a guest on our [Future of the Business World podcast](#)*

“If you’re interested in investing in stocks, start by thinking about businesses that you like or admire and why that’s the case. We engage with a lot of businesses every day in our own lives. Why do you tend to shop at a certain online store? Why do you buy a certain brand? If you start thinking about what drives your own behavior, you can start gaining insights into companies and businesses...and that can inform your own investment decisions. It’s a starting point.” *Peter Ammon, Chief Investment Officer, University of Pennsylvania, a guest on our Wharton Global High School Investment Competition [Meet the Experts series](#).*

“Business is all about relationships. It’s about who is there with us, and who is there to guide us in how we collaborate and engage and how we think about things. My colleagues bring really great thinking to the party. Look at your classmates as your network. Be less judgmental and more open to people’s strengths. Every single person has something unique about them. Your job is to find it and connect with it. Once you connect with it, you will then understand what the power of relationship is all about. It’s not about being competitive; it’s that everybody has something to bring to the party.”-*Suzy Ganz, Wharton MBA and CEO of Lion Brothers, a guest on the Wharton Alumni Career Chat in our summer program online [Global Youth Meetup](#) community*

“Finance, data analytics and software or coding are three skills I recommend learning to be competitive in the world of finance and investing.” –*Vusal Najavof, Wharton MBA and managing director of Cowen Sustainable Investments, a guest on the Wharton Alumni Career Chat in our summer program online [Global Youth Meetup](#) community*

When it comes to having an impact on society, “One of the mistakes I see is that there is an arrogance that can come with business. People think, ‘Well, If you only had a business mindset, of course you could solve that problem.’ Not true. These are not easy problems to solve. You need to understand the issues. If you’re really interested in gender and women’s rights, for example, then make sure you learn about sexism and are taking gender-theory classes and are studying gender dynamics in countries around the world. That marriage of deep knowledge about a social or environmental issue and business is really good.” –*Katherine Klein, Vice Dean, Wharton Social Impact Initiative, during the [Meet the Deans](#) series in our online Global Youth Meet-up community*

“The ultimate privilege that I and other white people have is that we don’t have to think about race and racism every day — whereas Chris Bennett and other Black founders have to deal with this; it’s their life. I think what could be most powerful is to not take advantage of that privilege...Do the work that’s necessary to leverage your platform, leverage your network to make change when it’s not in the headlines and it’s not convenient.” –*Josh Kopelman, Wharton MBA and Managing Partner at First Round Capital, in the [Race and the Entrepreneur](#) conversation featured in our new Explore Business Mini-sites*

“Being confined during the pandemic is a great time to practice empathy. How are others feeling? How are your friends? How are your parents? If you can put yourself in their shoes, understand how they are feeling and think about their needs, then it’s only a short step to figuring out how you can help them. You need to understand your users and empathize with them if you want to develop a product and think like an entrepreneur.” –*Lori Rosenkopf, Wharton’s Simon and Midge Palley professor of management in a [Knowledge@Wharton High School](#) article about thinking entrepreneurially in times of crisis.*

“Don’t be afraid to go up to someone else and introduce yourself. Even though it might be awkward or vulnerable, great things and great relationships come from when you’re willing to put your ego aside for a little bit and get to know someone else who does something different than you.” –*Wharton senior Jordan Williams in a [Knowledge@Wharton High School](#) video interview about his book Breaking the System: Unlocking Your Limitless Potential*

“In my business career, anything I can do to help pull women over the fence...I’m going to do it. I want to tell young girls that you have a voice and if you have an opinion, don’t stay quiet. If someone is telling you no and that you can’t do it, kick the door down in their face. I like that it’s a somewhat aggressive message. Fight for your dreams and never say die.” –*Stephanie McCaffrey, former member of the U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team and a Wharton MBA candidate, in a [Knowledge@Wharton High School](#) interview about her future in finance.*

“Looking back, I wish I could have embraced my ignorance more. When you’re starting out on a journey of learning anything, recognizing the limits of what you know and don’t know is going to give you the horizon. When I was in high school, I thought I had it all figured out. I was launching ventures. None of them were successful. I thought it was easy to innovate and that I’d be a millionaire by the time I was 18. Of course, it didn’t happen. I didn’t know anything. I wish I had embraced that early on and not viewed it as a weakness, but really a strength. The world becomes a much more fascinating place when you realize that you don’t know much about it, and you use that as a motivation to expand your horizons and learn more.” *Tyler Wry, Wharton Associate Professor of Management, a guest on our Wharton Global High School Investment Competition [Meet the Experts series](#).*