



# Andrea Kates Addresses MIT Legatum Fellows Graduates: Get To NEXT



LEGATUM CENTER  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

# Andrea Kates Addresses MIT Legatum Fellows Graduates: Get To NEXT

**Not once, in all the episodes of Batman, when Commissioner Gordon flashed the bat signal, did Bruce Wayne ever say, “I think I’ll just sleep in today.”**

**That’s because between Batman and Commissioner Gordon, there was a Circle of Trust.**

Today, as Legatum Student and Foundry Fellows, just like Batman and Commissioner Gordon, you have a new Circle of Trust . . . support you can tap into, to make your NEXT come true.

But, on Monday morning, life beyond MIT begins, and your superpowers will be challenged to stay fully charged.

**Starting Monday morning, a different journey begins.**

On Monday, the inspiration, achievements and magic of the Legatum experience will be surrounded by distractions, responsibilities, and new priorities.

**How do you make the leap from the Legatum experience to your NEXT:** How do you make the leap from the Legatum Your role as leaders of game-changing initiatives that will transform the worlds of finance, agriculture, creative arts, food, water, education, infrastructure, commerce, government, healthcare, energy, sustainable resources, technology, and bring opportunity and prosperity to the next level?

My “why” is the concept of NEXT. Ten years ago, I observed organizations, communities, teams, government leaders and entrepreneurs who were stuck, and needed to ENVISION . . . EXPAND . . . BUILD to make their visions realities.

**It’s a human imperative to know that our contribution matters.**

I wrote a book, Find Your Next, as a guide to envision, expand and build.

Then, I ran a software company dedicated to bringing NEXT to scale for innovation teams. Leaders, visionaries and inventors from large companies like Intel, the Mayo Clinic, and Nasdaq. University cohorts. Startups in agriculture, fintech, manufacturing, AI, circular economy, healthcare. Government leaders and community groups focused on IMPACT at Scale.

**Sadly, I made a harsh discovery. Of the 13,000 teams under my watch, we were leaving thousands of brilliant, important ideas on the cutting room floor.**

We were creating **orphans**, without the full support to make them big. Because we never mastered MONDAY MORNING. We didn't know how to take our early-stage successes and achieve true escape velocity to transform communities, countries, continents.

We didn't know how to Get To NEXT.

But now we do. I've spent the past five years changing the narrative on innovation to make sure we master Monday morning. Eliminate orphan projects. Embolden our efforts. Surround the intentions we have today with the support we need tomorrow.

Here's the secret.

**We need to transform the Circle of Trust into a Circle of Must.**

The road beyond Envision, Expand, and Build requires altogether different skills than the road that came before.

Starting Monday morning, we must learn two things:

- How to build Ecosystems of Purpose, and
- How to become experts at Enlisting Commitment.

**Monday morning is all about Engage and Activate.**

As leaders of ENGAGE, we need to fundamentally reframe our thinking about ecosystems.

Yes, we need to think about **ecosystems of profit**, where our impact allows our enterprises to thrive.

But that's not enough.

Yes, we need to expand to **ecosystems of platform**, to lead a system of parts that can all interoperate smoothly. A finance innovation that crosses borders and brings new levels of access to entire communities. An agtech initiative that drives sustainable practices inside a country. A creative arts program that becomes a flywheel for new narratives. A healthcare solution that widens the net of access to care. A reserve bank for the continent.



To truly make Engage work, we need to drive an **Ecosystem of Purpose**. We must have the courage and commitment to stand for something so strongly that our rising tide lifts many, many boats. Stand for something important enough and you'll expand that CIRCLE OF TRUST to include leaders, customers, community members and even competitors.

Engage.

The most important focus for each of us starting on Monday morning is:

**How to move from a circle of trust to a circle of must?**

To get other people to truly commit, they must be heroes of their own stories.

And it's our responsibility starting on Monday morning to honor those stories and weave those stories into a bigger narrative:

- What does the farmer care about that will bring her engagement to full commitment?
- What does the government prioritize to fully activate support?
- What matters most to our employees, our partners, our suppliers?
- What about our communities: Families, children, young talent that will inherit the leadership roles we're setting forth today?

**How can we let them be heroes of their own stories and create a collective narrative that completely changes the game?**

**Batman is all about fighting evil. Commissioner Gordon is all about the safety of Gotham City. Together, they make the world a better place. That's how we Get To NEXT.**

It's a tall order. And we might be tempted to make Sunday last forever. Stay in bed. Pull up the covers. Sleep in.

It's especially tempting when we think about the enormity of the task ahead.

As Legatum Student and Foundry Fellows you've taken on the world's biggest challenges.

But you also have **deep connections to a community of people through Legatum Center at MIT who will answer your bat signal. And you'll answer theirs.**

I congratulate you for your impressive achievements of innovation, entrepreneurship and impact. I invite all of you and all of tonight's guests to commit fully to engaging in ecosystems of purpose and fully activating the tremendous initiatives represented by the people in this room tonight.

I acknowledge Dina Sherif, Executive Director at the Legatum Center at MIT for her commitment to leading a Circle of Trust and inspiring an ever-growing Circle of Must.

I have one final confession. Before tonight, it seemed everyone I talked to asked me if I believed it was **a time for optimism.**

Did I think that with the struggles the world is going through we should see the glass as half empty: Confronting war, scarcity, insecurity, inequity, looming threats of technology, fundamental threats to humanity?

I can confidently say that after this Legatum experience, the glass is not just half full, but overflowing with the potential of what comes NEXT.

**Congratulations. Let's do this.**



Andrea Kates (akates@suma.com) is a Silicon Valley-based innovation advisor, former tech CEO, and author of the award-winning book, *Find Your Next*, a complete guide for transforming ideas into concrete actions. She is also the creator of the end-to-end leadership training program on strategic impact called *Get To NEXT*.

Andrea advises large enterprises (Ford, Shimizu, Cisco, Tata), innovative organizations (Mayo Clinic, Stanford Center for Responsible Digital Leadership), governments (National Science Foundation, Copenhagen Fintech), and nonprofits (NextMedHealth, Embrace Global) to drive impact for their stakeholders, customers, investors, partners, and communities and has spearheaded significant transformation across multiple industries, including future of work, mobility, healthcare, manufacturing, energy, education, and technology across 5 continents.

Previously, she was the CEO of the Silicon Valley SaaS company that pioneered the application of the lean startup process with more than 13,000 corporate teams and R&D labs funded by the US Government I-Corps. Andrea's original research has been featured in *Harvard Business Review* and *Research and Technology Journal*. A dynamic thought leader, Andrea is in high demand globally as a speaker and has delivered keynotes at some of the world's most prestigious conferences, including the TED main stage, Aspen Ideas Festival, Dubai2020, the Edison Awards, SoCap (social capital), Rueda de Innovación (Colombia), Nordic Fintech, OpenFinance Mexico, Innov8rs, and the CXO Forum in Tokyo. Andrea is Senior Fellow with The Conference Board, the global strategy think tank for c-level executives.

Andrea's university teaching includes the eLab at Princeton University, Stanford, UC Berkeley, USC, Notre Dame, Copenhagen Business School, Hitotsubashi University, and Singapore Polytechnic.

In the field of social impact, Andrea has been a pioneer in driving what she terms Ecosystems of Purpose - a structure that transcends profit + platform interoperability. As co-founder of ChangeOS, Andrea leads large-scale change initiatives, and hosts a weekly panel show called *What's Your Idea for Change?*

You can learn more about Andrea at [www.suma.com](http://www.suma.com)