

Conversation with Fred Swaniker

In this inaugural People First Talk, we heard Fred’s insights about the leadership needed in Africa and how to develop this leadership. Watch the talk [here](#).

Key ideas

- Leadership cannot be taught, but it can be learned. Teaching is driven by the teacher whereas learning is what the person does for themselves.
- Three things can help foster environments for leadership to emerge: (1) Look for broad leadership potential (resilience, courage, values, imagination, academics) (2) Develop this potential through “learning by doing” (3) Create access to networks (e.g., mentorship, jobs, capital) so that leaders can fully realize their potential.
- The impact of leadership is scalable. When you lift up one leader, that leader enables many others.
- To move Africa forward, we don’t need best practice from the rest of the world, but new practice. We need to imagine and reinvent. We can still learn from others, but must apply this with a deep understanding of the local context.
- This work is hard. It requires imagination and persistence in the face of resistance.



Fred Swaniker

Founder & CEO, African Leadership Group



Joseph Munyambanza

Mastercard Foundation, Scholars Program Partner; student in inaugural class of African Leadership Academy

“We’re spending a lot of time treating symptoms. I started looking at the root cause of these problems, and my conclusion would always come to leadership.”

“The leverage from leadership is tremendous. The ripple effect that one leader can have...especially when there are weak institutions. A few leaders can have a transformative impact.”

— Fred Swaniker, African Leadership Group

The People First Community is a cross-sectoral and globally diverse group of practitioners, academics, and public and private sector actors with a shared belief in the importance of prioritizing investing in collective leadership development as a path for sustainable development. For more information on the People First Community and effort, please visit peoplefirstdev.org. If you are interested in joining this Community, please sign-up [here](#). To suggest a topic or speaker for an upcoming Talk, please email people@peoplefirstdev.org.