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# Why a 70-Year-Old Professional Organization Is Relevant to a New Generation of Entrepreneurs

In 2010, social networking was touted in the [Harvard Business Review](#) as the most significant business development not only for companies, but also for the chief executives who lead them. It also became a valuable tool for entrepreneurs hoping to kickstart their new ventures.

Morphing from a personal communications tool for young people into a new vehicle for business leaders, social networking transformed communications with

networks for CEOs, leaving many wondering if the [membership organization model was outdated](#).

But there are outliers who still believe personal, face-to-face connections and building personal and professional relationships are important for entrepreneurs because they provide an outlet separate from their business.

YPO is one such organization. What began 70 years ago with 44 members in one city has grown to more than 29,000 in 142 countries. While in the midst of a global pandemic that impacted businesses, families and lives, YPO added five new chapters affirming the value, resilience and continued growth of the organization.

## Leadership is inherently lonely

Since its inception, YPO's mission has been to create a community of leaders who could, in a safe environment, exchange best practices,



▲ Rana el Kaliouby

support each other and develop as leaders. This rings true for Rana el Kaliouby, Co-founder and CEO of [Affectiva](#), and author of "[Girl Decoded: A](#)

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I first learned about YPO, I was intrigued by the idea of being part of a network of like-minded presidents and CEOs who have to grapple with professional and personal challenges that come with running a business.”

For William Wolfram, Chairman at [Galton Voysey](#), YPO in many ways is his own personal board of directors. “I celebrate my wins with my fellow forum mates and get much needed support and counsel when needed.” He feels the YPO business network is one of a kind. “You can reach any business owner in any industry in any region with just a single message. Even more meaningful are the lifelong friends I’ve made along the way.”



▲ William Wolfram

Though all members belong to a local chapter, YPO’s most personal connection point is forum, a small, tight-knit group that forges deep, trusting

relationships, allowing leaders to share and offer support on the most delicate business and personal issues.

Fawn Weaver, Co-founder and CEO of [Uncle Nearest, Inc.](#), a super-premium whiskey made in Tennessee, joined the organization in July of this year. She likens YPO’s forum to what American self-help

highly influential and successful people who would take the success and influence they'd already gained and increase it together," says Weaver.

"My YPO forum is the one place I can be completely transparent, as it relates to every aspect of my life, and trust my forum



▲ Fawn Weaver

mates will not only help with navigating the trickier parts of life, but also in keeping everything confidential."

## Learning is core to YPO's ethos

Learning and peer knowledge-sharing drives the YPO experience. Members access thousands of high-value, unbiased, proprietary learning through interactive virtual, on-demand and in-person experiences that supports growth in every stage of their leadership.

"YPO is all about developing better leaders and better people; that aligns closely with my personal goals," says El Kaliouby. "I consider myself on a journey of lifelong learning and am committed to developing as a leader."

A focus on business learning helps YPO's members explore the most critical topics facing leaders today

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Peer-to-peer learning and sharing of resources is also key, and unique, to the YPO experience.

Most recently, as leaders navigate the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, the YPO community has served as their “go to” for both business and personal issues.

“They say never worry alone. Well, being part of YPO has helped me navigate this global pandemic, both personally and professionally. I am grateful beyond words,” says El Kaliouby.

Just a few days after laying off 15% of her team and furloughing a few others she reluctantly met for the first time with her YPO forum. To the company, her investors and pretty much the entire outside world, El Kaliouby says she projected confidence and hope. In reality, what she truly felt was far from that. Skeptical at first about what could possibly come out of a two-hour Zoom meeting with complete strangers, El Kaliouby joined the call.

“Within minutes, our forum of 9 were sharing openly and vulnerably; we went around opening up about our mental, emotional, physical and spiritual states. Wow! I left feeling supported, energized but above all, grateful for this newfound personal board of directors and friends.”

YPO was a chance encounter for Alisha Moopen, Deputy Managing Director at [Aster DM Healthcare](#). She has been a member for three years. “I didn’t think I had time for it, but especially during COVID-19, there has been no other platform for sourcing the best talent and know-how from across the world. You don’t have to go out and actively seek the critical information, you have it at your fingertips.”



## It is global

YPO's network enables leaders to connect with like-minded people across the globe on a different level, building a strong and diverse lifeline that embeds leaders within a valuable community filled with knowledgeable and resourceful people.

“Within about a month and a half after joining YPO, I had been

▲ Shadi Bakour

connected with (quite literally) 15-20 of the richest people and 100-plus of the largest organizations in the world,” says Shadi Bakour, CEO of PathWater. At 28, Bakour joined the organization in July of this year. Along with his team at Pathwater, Bakour is combatting the epidemic of single-use plastic water bottles with a novel invention: an aluminum water bottle that is both infinitely reusable and recyclable. The team has raised over USD20 million from the likes of Kevin Hart, Ryan Seacrest, Guy Fieri and Ninja Fortnite, to name just a few. He was named as a 2020 [Forbes 30 Under 30](#) social entrepreneur. “It truly blows my mind how quickly the connections happened. They say that what you put into YPO is

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▲ Robbie Ferguson

member, Robbie Ferguson, President and Co-founder of [Immutable](#), finds the YPO network most useful for self-development and business mentoring. Ferguson, 23, dropped out of university after

two years, and the peer mentoring he received has been a great asset for him.

“Unlike working for a big organization, one of the frustrating things about working as a young entrepreneur is that there is no one layer above you to learn from. That is were learning from my network of YPO peers has been valuable.”

Connecting both locally within his chapter as well as globally is really important to new member Dr. Andrés Simón González-Silén, Executive Chairman and Co-founder of Asistensi Global Insurance Inc.

▲ Dr. Andrés Simón González-Silén

“Having the opportunity of deep-diving in your local networks on a daily basis as well as the ability to access members throughout the globe who are living similar experiences really helps me navigate the different stages of life. This makes YPO unique.”

“It’s easy to identify the driving force behind the tremendous impact that this organization has had on the world: the people who make YPO. In my short time as a member, I’ve had the pleasure of interacting with hundreds of members and the management team, and every single one of them has engaged deeply with me on the basis of trust, support and growth.”

While YPO focuses on connecting leaders to grow stronger together, improve lives, business and the world, this cannot be done alone. Developing the “whole leader” is unique to YPO’s community and spouses, partners and children can participate in programs, experiences and leadership opportunities. “I love how there is something for every member of the family,” says El Kaliouby. “I can’t wait for my daughter to become part of YPO’s next generation network.”

YPO@70



“ The YPO business network is one of a kind. A business owner in any industry in any region is



along the way. ”

— William Wolfram, Chairman at  
Galton Voysey

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As the YPO community continues to grow, it appears that the personal peer-to-peer connections are the secret to its longevity. After 70 years, the original YPO community of 44 young business leaders from one city has grown throughout 142 countries and the mission of supporting one another while becoming better leaders is still finding relevance today.

“There is nothing like YPO and I am so honored to be one of its youngest members,” says Bakour. “I look forward to finding new ways to engage and give back, though I cannot repay this organization for what it has already given to me: a new sense of family and inspiration to become the best version of myself in life, business and beyond.”

By Mary Sigmond

Mary Sigmond is a content strategist, an award-winning storyteller and editor of YPO’s CEO Insights. She has the pleasure of...

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