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Leading Through Complexity: CEOs at YPO EDGE Focus on Global Shifts, Leadership and Legacy

YPO's final day in Barcelona delivered a powerful close to [EDGE](#), bringing together top CEOs for conversations that cut through the noise and address the realities of leadership today. From geopolitics and democracy to luxury brands and business strategy, the day was a deep dive into the forces

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shifting world order. The notion of a single dominant power, he argues, no longer holds. The BRICS nations — Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — now surpass the G7 in global GDP share on a purchasing power parity basis, yet they remain a fractured alliance rather than a unified force.

Ferguson highlights widening rifts between the U.S. and EU, particularly over Ukraine, and warned of America's growing debt burden. "When a great power spends more on interest than defense," he cautions, "its power diminishes." Meanwhile, China is recalibrating its export strategy, leveraging the Global South to maintain access to U.S. markets. Rather than a new Cold War, Ferguson suggests we are witnessing a geopolitical realignment still taking shape.

Governing in a time of division and fragility

If Ferguson focused on the macro forces shaping global power, former Irish President Mary Robinson and former Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová turned the conversation toward leadership itself. Both spoke candidly about the complexities of governing in a time of political division,



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grassroots movements alike.

Čaputová, meanwhile, reflected on the personal responsibility of leadership, noting, “Power is seductive, and it’s very important to pay attention. The quality of our service in politics depends entirely on the quality of who we are as people.”

Self-awareness, she argues, is an essential leadership skill — one that helps navigate the pressures of decision-making while keeping ego in check. Both leaders acknowledge the unique challenges faced by women in leadership, from gender-based attacks to persistent biases, and called on business leaders to champion greater representation, equity and sustainability.

Balancing legacy and reinvention in leadership

Leadership plays out in both business and politics. John Galantic, CEO of Tod’s Group and former Chanel president, shared insights from decades in luxury, where legacy and reinvention must coexist. Family-owned businesses, he notes, often maintain long-term vision and

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— Zuzana Čaputová,
Former Slovak President

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Success, he adds, comes from understanding people. One of his best leadership lessons came from his wife: listen more, solve less — a principle especially valuable in female-led organizations like Chanel.

Galantic also highlights the growing overlap between luxury and sports, where brands like Ferrari and AS Roma thrive on craftsmanship, performance and emotional connection. “The strongest brands,” he says, “stand for more than just transactions — they embody passion, commitment and a long-term vision.”

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shaping the world, to understand the people within an organization and to make decisions that balance the immediate with the enduring. In geopolitics, in business and in society, the leaders who succeed will be those who know when to adapt, when to hold their ground and when to listen.

By Mary Sigmond



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