

# Keynote Breakout Session One

## ANDREA BILLUPS

Executive Director of Editorial at Duke University

Day: Tuesday | Time: 9:45-10:45 | Location: Mainstage

## BRINGING YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF TO LEADERSHIP



**Session Description:** What kind of mask, or game face, do you put on when you step up to lead? Are you showing up as your authentic self or have you become an MBA-amped, LinkedIn-following manager bot? As we navigate a world of complicated messages about what it means to be a true leader, this talk centers on inspiring teams with a heightened focus on individuality. When we show up as ourselves, showcasing vulnerability, understanding, and personal investment in one another, we create significant trust within our organizations and inspire colleagues to approach new roles and ideas with a permission-to-try sensibility.

Andrea Billups is an award-winning communications leader with over 20 years of experience in journalism, higher education, nonprofit advancement, and digital media. As Executive Director of Editorial at Duke University, she leads storytelling and brand strategy for more than 180,000 global stakeholders.

Previously, she held senior roles at PEOPLE and The Washington Times, with work featured in major outlets including TIME, Newsweek, and The Washington Post. She is the author of *A Slaying in the Suburbs* and *Good in the Woods*, a Marshall University Journalism Hall of Fame inductee, and holds degrees from the University of Florida and Marshall University.

## The Leader Within: OWNING YOUR STORY, UNLOCKING YOUR IMPACT

Tuesday Session One  
*Breakouts*



### **JOHN BLANCHARD**

Leadership Development Consultant, Pittsburgh Pirates

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 9:45-10:45 | **Location:** Huron room

John Blanchard, Leadership Development Consultant for the Pittsburgh Pirates, helps individuals and teams reach full potential through leadership and growth.

“Know thyself” is more than an ancient axiom, it is a non-negotiable requirement for today’s transformational leaders. In this reflective session, participants will explore how self-awareness, vulnerability, and personal ownership form the bedrock of impactful leadership. Drawing from the openness captured in Blanchard’s autobiography, *Don’t Talk About It*, this session unpacks how our personal narratives, triumphs and trials, shape the way we lead. Transformational leaders learn to examine difficult chapters, integrate them, and leverage them to grow with courage and purpose daily.

## *Reframing Leadership:* YOU LOST BEFORE YOU STARTED



### **ZACH JENSEN**

COO, Washworld

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 9:45-10:45 | **Location:** Ontario room

Zach Jensen, Chief Operating Officer at WashWorld, builds clarity, accountability, and systems that help teams navigate complexity, growth, and change.

Most leadership challenges aren’t lost in execution, they’re lost before action begins. The way leaders interpret situations, people, and pressure quietly determines their outcomes before decisions are made or words are spoken. This interactive breakout helps leaders surface unseen hidden patterns shaping leadership and practice reframing real challenges. Rather than offering more tools or theory, this session shifts the lens leaders use better daily. Participants will walk away with a tangible practical reframe they can immediately apply to a every current leadership challenge today.

## Keep Flying the Plane



### **DR. DEAN HESS**

Transformation Leader, InitiativeOne

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 9:45-10:45 | **Location:** Michigan room

Dean's Bio: Dr. Dean Hess, Transformation Leader at InitiativeOne, brings 30 years in education and 20 years of Army leadership experience.

As part of this breakout conversation, we will reflect on our commitments and the importance of staying on purpose, not allowing pressure, personalities, pain, or politics to steer us off course. We will share how practicing vulnerability, transparency, and authenticity helps us become our best across all employee groups. We will also discuss lessons learned and how staying true to purpose strengthens communication, decision making, accountability, and goal achievement. Consistency in execution requires courage, self-talk, accountability, and a willingness to embrace discomfort.

## The Accountability Gap:

### WHAT AI REVEALS ABOUT YOUR LEADERSHIP CULTURE



### **SEKOU TYLER**

Founder, Royal Blue Analytics

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 9:45-10:45 | **Location:** Oneida room

Sekou's Bio:

AI is not failing in your organization because of bad technology. It is failing because leadership handed it off. This session will challenge you to see AI adoption as a culture and accountability issue, not just a technical one. You will gain a new way to think about your role in shaping how your team moves forward with clarity, ownership, and intention. Strong leadership creates the conditions where innovation is embraced, accountability is expected, and progress becomes sustainable across the organization.

# Keynote Breakout Session Two

## SCOTT SNIDER

President, Exit Planning Institute

Day: Tuesday | Time: 11:00-12:00 | Location: Mainstage

## *It's Not About Me; It's About We* — THE VALUE CREATION MINDSET



**Session Description:** Leaders who win and companies that last are the ones that shift away from the individual mindset and toward the collective mindset. In this powerful session, Scott Snider unpacks the most important leadership transformation of his career: taking the step from “me” to “we” and creating a culture that accelerates value, impact, and long-term significance. He introduces the Value Creation Mindset, a shift rooted in purposeful growth that strengthens trust, increases alignment, and empowers teams to contribute at their highest levels. Attendees will leave equipped to elevate their teams through shared mentality, vision, rhythm, and performance.

Scott Snider is the President of the Exit Planning Institute (EPI) and Operating Partner of Snider Premier Growth, a small family investment company. He is a nationally recognized industry leader, growth specialist, and lifetime entrepreneur.

Scott launched his first business at the age of 17 and sold it at 24, marking his first successful exit. He then joined his father’s exit planning and M&A firm, Aspire Management, helping it dominate Northeast Ohio’s exit planning space. Together, they purchased EPI, introduced the Value Acceleration Methodology, authored an award-winning book, and grew the organization tenfold. Scott is passionate about helping business owners and advisors create significant companies and align personal financial plans by educating and supporting professional advisors.

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Tuesday Session Two  
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# When Leadership Shifts, Everything Moves:

A DISTRICT CASE STUDY



## TANYA JONES

Superintendent, Tahlequah Public Schools

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 11:00-12:00 | **Location:** Ontario room

Tanya’s Bio:

Join Superintendent Tanya Jones and her team for a real-world case study on what happens when leadership transformation becomes a discipline, not a discussion. Representing Tahlequah Public Schools, Tanya and team will share how sustained pressure, trust accelerators, and aligned leadership behavior reshaped her team and the system they lead. Tanya will speak to where resistance showed up, what the process revealed, and how staying in the work led to measurable impact across the district, including student outcomes

## Integration of AI in Leadership: Yay or Nay?



### **GINA MARCHIONDA**

Technology Integration Specialist, Fond du Lac School District

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 11:00-12:00 | **Location:** Michigan room

Gina Marchionda, Technology Integration Specialist at Fond du Lac School District, designs inclusive, future-ready learning through coaching and innovation.

Artificial Intelligence is no longer on the horizon, it is already shaping how leaders think, communicate, and make decisions. But the real question is not if we should use AI in leadership, it is how and why. In this interactive session, Gina Marchionda invites leaders to explore AI through the lens of InitiativeOne's 10 leadership tools. Participants will examine practical applications that enhance, not replace, human-centered leadership, and leave with strategies for using AI responsibly while maintaining authenticity, trust, and stronger daily practices.

## The Convening Advantage:

HOW LEADERS TURN GATHERINGS INTO NETWORKS THAT CREATE LASTING CHANGE



### **DR. SHAWNRECE BUTLER**

President for Opportunity, Empowerment, & People at Northern Michigan University

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 11:00-12:00 | **Location:** Oneida room

Dr. Shawnrece Butler, Assistant Vice President at Northern Michigan University, leads opportunity, empowerment, and inclusion across higher education.

Something important is already happening in rooms like this one. Leaders are building relationships across sectors, investing in partnerships, and showing up consistently for shared work. What becomes possible when we design those gatherings more intentionally? Convening, the purposeful architecture of how we bring people together, can transform collaboration into coordinated leadership networks built on trust and shared understanding. In this interactive session, you'll map your collaboration landscape, identify your highest-leverage convening opportunity, and leave with a framework for coordinated action.

# Mainstage Breakout Session Three

Day: Tuesday | Time: 2:00-3:00 | Location: Mainstage

## Women in Leadership: Panel

**Panel Description:** Leadership often requires navigating pressure, expectations, and complex decisions with clarity and courage. In this panel, accomplished women leaders will share honest insights from their leadership journeys, including challenges they have faced, lessons learned, and the habits that have helped them lead with confidence and purpose. Through a candid conversation, panelists will explore how trust, accountability, and authenticity shape strong leadership. Attendees will gain practical perspective on how intentional leadership behaviors, disciplined thinking, and personal ownership can strengthen their ability to lead teams and influence meaningful outcomes.



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Executive Director of Editorial for Duke University's Office of Alumni Engagement & Development



**GINA MARCHIONDA**

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**MICHELL BARTLEIN**

Speaker, Educator, Business Coach, Entrepreneur, Podcaster



**DR. SHAWNRECE BUTLER**

Assistant VP for Opportunity, Empowerment, & People at NMU



**LISA FLANERY**

Chief Growth Officer, Security Benefits



**CARSIN BOECK**

HR & Culture Leader, Washworld Inc



**TRACY JOHNSON-MODERATOR**

CEO and Transformation Leader, InitiativeOne

# Time Isn't a Problem

It's the Path to Opportunity

## Tuesday Session Three

# Breakouts



### **DR. PHIL ERTL**

VP of Educational Leadership & Transformation Leader, InitiativeOne

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 2:00-3:00 | **Location:** Huron room

Dr. Phil Ertl, VP of Educational Leadership and Transformation Leader at InitiativeOne, brings 30 years of school leadership experience.,

Can positive intent really help in leading conflict? If I always use positive intent, won't I be taken advantage of and not be able to effectively lead through challenging situations? We will discuss how using positive intent not only helps in leading through conflict, but is critical to have success long term. Learn how positive intent will lead to proactive problem solving verses reactive responses.

# It's Not Willpower — It's Wiring



### **BRENT W. HUBBY**

President and CEO of PDP Global

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 2:00-3:00 | **Location:** Ontario room

Brent W. Hubby, President and CEO of PDP Global, helps organizations build stronger teams through behavioral insight and purpose-driven leadership.

Lead with clarity. Attract and hire the best. Build high-performing teams. In this session, Brent W. Hubby explores how leaders can better understand the internal wiring that drives behavior, performance, and team dynamics. Rather than relying on willpower alone, attendees will learn how greater awareness improves hiring decisions, leadership effectiveness, and team results. Participants will walk away with practical insight into making more intentional people decisions that support hiring, leadership, and team effectiveness.

# Connection Is the Real

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



## **GINA THORSEN**

Gina Thorsen, CEO, Stormy Kromer

**Day:** Tuesday | **Time:** 2:00-3:00 | **Location:** Michigan room

Gina Thorsen, CEO of Jacquart Fabric Products, leads Stormy Kromer's growth through innovation, partnerships, and strong, forward-thinking business leadership.

Business success isn't built in isolation – it's shaped by the people who walk alongside us. From a small town in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, Stormy Kromer CEO Gina Jacquart Thorsen has seen firsthand how connection shapes success and legacy. This session explores why reaching out, saying yes, and nurturing relationships – even when there's no clear immediate benefit – creates lasting momentum. Through heartfelt storytelling and practical takeaways, you'll learn how meaningful human connection fuels courage, innovation, and long-term leadership growth.

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# Keynote Breakout Session Four

**AARON SADOFF**

President, Marian University

**Day: Wednesday | Time: 10:30-11:30 | Location: Mainstage**

## The Art of Positive Thinking RIGHT NOW!



**Session Description:** Pain is inevitable. Suffering is a choice. Feeling stuck in a rut? Considering a career change? Working through loss or disappointment? Searching for personal renewal? You're in the right place, at the right time, to create lasting change. The Art of Positive Thinking will help you make your past more meaningful, your present more intentional, and your future brighter. Discover how to harness the power of your mindset to transform your outlook and your impact on others through the practice of positive thinking, right now.

Aaron Sadoff was born in 1971 in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. He is a Gulf War veteran and a graduate of UW-Madison and Marian University. His passion is developing, leading and sustaining a community and culture of happiness. He believes that the science of happiness and positive psychology can revolutionize the way that organizations and communities are working to best impact the success of the people they serve. He is grateful for his wife Kelly of 30 years and his three awesome adult children, Paige, Lilly, and Ethan.

Serving 25 years in education, formerly the Superintendent of North Fond du Lac School District Aaron and was honored to be chosen as the 2019 Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year. He is a past Executive Director of the Fond du Lac Area Foundation and now serves

# The Talent Pipeline

IS A TWO-WAY STREET

## Wednesday Session Four

# Breakouts



### TROY FARLEY

Director, GVSU Career Center

**Day:** Wednesday | **Time:** 10:30-11:30 | **Location:** Huron room

Troy Farley leads the Career Center at Grand Valley State University, connecting students and employers through partnerships, career development, and meaningful workforce opportunities.

Building a strong talent pipeline isn't a passive process. It requires intentional partnership, consistent presence, and a long-term commitment to developing future leaders. In this session, Troy Farley draws on over 20 years of experience across higher education and the corporate world to challenge traditional recruiting models and introduce a more dynamic, "two-way street" approach to talent development. Attendees will explore how organizations and universities can collaborate to create meaningful pathways that benefit

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# Mainstage Breakout Session Five

Day: Wednesday | Time: 12:30-1:30 | Location: Mainstage

## Inside the Executive Mind: Panel

**Panel Description:** What shapes the way top leaders think, decide, and lead under pressure? In this panel, experienced executives will share how they approach complex decisions, navigate uncertainty, and maintain clarity when the stakes are high. Panelists will discuss the mindset and leadership disciplines that influence how they lead organizations, build trust across teams, and stay focused on long-term outcomes. Attendees will gain insight into the thinking patterns and leadership behaviors that help executives move from reaction to intentional leadership in demanding environments.



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**AARON SADOFF**  
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**KATYA ANDERSEN**  
Senior VP & Chief Digital  
& Analytics Officer



**ANDREA BILLUPS-  
MODERATOR**  
Executive Director of Editorial for  
Duke University's Office of Alumni  
Engagement & Development

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Wednesday Session Five  
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