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Extra! Extra! Read All About It!

*Time may change me
But I can't trace time*
—David Bowie, “Changes”

The headlines just keep pouring out: “Price Matching: Thanks for the Memories”... “The Data Center Dilemma”... “All Charged Up, and Nowhere to Go”... “A Hot-Selling Food: Here to Stay or Flash in the Pan?”... “The New Forced Retirement Age: 55”... “AI Applications Spur... In-Person Interviews?” And that’s less than a month’s worth of our *This Week In Leadership* reporting.

I know, it’s almost boring to keep repeating how “unprecedented” business change has become. Still, it’s truly amazing what each week holds as our team hunts for provocative thought leadership (and we don’t have to hunt very hard). Even more remarkable is how almost no change today is small, not if you dig deep enough. Take price matching: For decades, consumers could count on retailers’ willingness to automatically match the price of a competitor’s prod-



uct, no matter how much this might dent profits. But now, some of the biggest firms have decided it won’t work, not in this era of slimmer margins, pressing activism, tariffs, and other fill-in-the blank crises. That might not make you jump out of your seat—until you begin to realize the gamble retailers are taking. What if consumers boycott those firms? What if they never come back? It’s a risk—a bold one in this sector.

In fact, you have to look no further than “All Charged Up, and Nowhere to Go” to see the myriad ways business decisions can end up. Here was an ambitious US auto industry, pouring billions of dollars into the electric-car market and assuming that the only major risk was whether enough charging stations for EVs would be built. As it turns out, the number of stations did go up, doubling since 2022. But a funny thing has happened to EV sales in the past year—they’ve stalled! Blame it on a loss of key US tax incentives and a cultural shift in this country, but somebody in the auto sector must be scratching their head.

The point is that changes, at least the way they are happening now, are truly fascinating to watch. And so is how leaders feel about these changes and the risks behind them. Our survey of 250 CEOs and board directors found that just 11 percent of respondents are “fully confident” their firms can handle the slew of risks facing them today, from geopolitical shifts to AI. It’s a number Jane Edison Stevenson, global vice chair of Korn Ferry, calls “stunning.” But the puzzlement many leaders feel today is almost as interesting as the changes they are facing.

Of course, you have to think perhaps AI, as a once-in-a-generation technology, may be able to make some sense out of all this change, and guide leaders to the right move. But is that too great an ask? To which I can only say: I suppose anything is possible. Just look at today’s headlines. ▀

