

HBR CASE STUDY

29 | How to Change the World

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Alan Wilson has a decision to make. The CEO of his company, Grepter, wants him to relocate to Zurich, where he can gain valuable experience for a rise to the top. Karl, his best friend, hopes to lure him to a hedge fund that promises big money fast. Shiori, an enticing former girlfriend, wants him to join her in delivering medical care to patients in developing countries. Alan knows for sure only that he wants to make an impact. Four experts comment on this fictional case study.

Laura Scher, the CEO of Credo Mobile, advises Alan to consider what each option will deliver in terms of money, power, quality of life, and – most important – personal values. As long as he brings his values into the workplace, any of the three could be the right choice.

Daniel Vasella, the CEO of Novartis, cautions Alan to examine what truly drives him, personally and professionally. All things considered – not least the potential hazards of working with a friend – his future looks most promising at Grepter.

Barbara H. Franklin, the CEO of an international trade consulting and investment firm, thinks Alan would do well to join Shiori's enterprise. The experience with social policy might draw him to public service, where his impact on society could be significant.

Christina C. Jones, the CEO of Extend Fertility, has also faced a variety of choices combined with an urge to do meaningful work. She believes that Alan should cultivate his skills at Grepter while developing a firmer notion of what he wants to be and do.

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