



## Larry Brilliant

*Pioneering Physician and Philanthropist*

**TOPIC:**

Social Change

**SUBTOPICS:**

Inspiration; Global Policy and Economics;  
Environment and Climate Change; Innovation

### BIG IDEAS:

#### Birds, Bugs, and Business: Preparing for Crisis

The first years of this century have brought increasing shocks—technological, political, economic, and climatic. Now we are facing mounting concerns about a possible biological crisis: an avian flu pandemic. But what is its probability? What steps can we take to prepare? And what are the broader implications for business and society?

#### Changing the World: One Challenge at a Time

Larry's career reads like a movie script. It starts with him as a young doctor who gets recruited to deliver a Native American baby on the occupied Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay in the late 1960s. He then gets swept up into the literal making of a movie, which involves psychedelic buses traveling cross country with the likes of Wavy Gravy and culminates in a Pink Floyd concert in England. He and some others stay on the bus, and travel for the next few years all the way

to India. There, Larry meets Ram Dass and studies with a guru in a monastery in the Himalayas. The guru tells him to join the United Nations and eradicate smallpox. After numerous attempts to join the effort, accompanied with journeys up and down the mountain, he finally gets a UN job and eventually becomes a leader of the WHO program that indeed eradicates history's greatest killer. The story doesn't stop there. Brilliant goes on to launch a foundation that eventually helps as many as 2 million blind people regain sight—with the help of the Grateful Dead and Steve Jobs, among others. He also becomes involved in a technology company that provides the core hardware and software for the founding of the pioneering online community, the WELL. Brilliant's career is in every way remarkable. So, too, are his insights into where the world might be heading. In this presentation, he delivers multiple perspectives: those of a physician, a former CEO, a technologist, and—now—one of the world's most visible philanthropists, to challenge each of us to change the world.

## BIOGRAPHY

A self-described social change "addict," Dr. Larry Brilliant is a pioneering physician and global philanthropist. He is currently president of the Skoll Urgent Threats Fund, a new organization within the Skoll Foundation launched to address urgent threats confronting humanity and the planet. The focus of the organization is to identify and support innovative high-impact initiatives to combat climate change, water scarcity, pandemic, nuclear proliferation and Middle East conflict.

Prior to his appointment at The Skoll Foundation, Larry was the first executive director of Google.org, the company's philanthropic arm before becoming chief philanthropy evangelist for Google. An M.D., M.P.H., and board-certified in preventive medicine, epidemiology and public health, Larry was one of a four-person international team that led the successful World Health Organization smallpox eradication program in India and South Asia. He later founded the Seva Foundation of Berkeley, California, which works in dozens of countries around the world to eliminate preventable and curable blindness. Seva's projects have given back sight to nearly 3 million people. Last year, Time magazine named Brilliant one of the 20 most influential scientists and thinkers and one of the 100 most influential people in the world.

In addition to sitting on the board of the Skoll Foundation, Larry was elected to membership in the Council on Foreign Relations in 2009 and sits on the boards of Health Metrics Network and Omidyar Networks Humanity United.

Larry's work has been praised and awarded recognition throughout the last decade. In 2008, Brilliant was given a Global Leadership Award by the United Nations Organization. In 2006, he received the TED Prize. He was named "International Public Health Hero" by the University of California in 2004. He has also received numerous other awards, prizes and two honorary doctorates.