

Amid Holograms and Humanoids, Steven Bartlett Tells LEAP 2024 Investors to Embrace the Bizarre to Achieve Success

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, March 7, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Global business guru Steven Bartlett urged attendees at LEAP 2024 to embrace the bizarre if they wish for success. The world's most-attended technology event, running this week in Riyadh, features some of the planet's most cutting-edge creations, from holograms to humanoids, marching robots to mechanical baristas.

Speaking on the penultimate day of the four-day summit at Riyadh Exhibition and Convention Centre in Malham, the award-winning producer of Diary of a CEO – the world's most-downloaded podcast series – explained the need to run towards rather than away from the unknown. Citing his own ill-fated experience with non-fungible tokens (NFTs), he cited psychologist Leon Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance whereby the brain dismisses what it hears to make sense of the world.

"If you're a smoker, and I told you smoking is bad for your health, the first sentence out of your mouth is an attempt to eliminate the cognitive discomfort," said the British entrepreneur and best-selling author. "You will say: 'Yes, but it helps me with stress.' That is cognitive dissonance at play.

"There are two types of people: Lean-out people who experience that dissonance or lean-in people who have experienced something that sounds bizarre – like AI or Web3 – and they lean into the dissonance. The future is going to be owned by people that are capable of hearing



Global business guru Steven Bartlett



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something really strange and leaning into the dissonance.”

Bartlett recalled when he first started reading about people buying NFTs in the form of stylised cartoon monkeys for huge sums and spending weeks criticising them, suspecting it all to be part of a fraudulent investment scheme. However, on realising his reaction was similar to that which people had to his social media marketing company back in 2010, he stopped and leaned into the dissonance, buying a monkey NFT for US\$250,000.

The token is “worth very little now” in financial terms, he said, but it furnished him with knowledge about a technology that he would later channel to create Thirdweb, a Web3 startup that has since raised \$31m, is now valued at \$160m, and employs a team of 50 staff in San Francisco.

“If I had kids, I wouldn’t be trying to teach them about any particular subject; I’d be trying to give them a mentality towards change,” he said. “How do we deal with dissonance, challenge, threats? Are we ostriches; do we bury our heads in the sand? Or are we lean-in people? I would be telling my kid when something sounds strange and you feel threatened by it, lean in.”

On his Diary of a CEO podcast, the Botswana-born Briton has interviewed everyone from Virgin Galactic founder Richard Branson to astrophysicist Neill DeGrasse Tyson, One Direction’s Liam Payne to former footballer and renowned pundit Gary Neville. Bartlett said the best learning he has taken away from close to 500 episodes, came from Mo Gawdat, the former chief business officer of Google X and author of Solve For Happy: Engineer Your Path To Joy.

Gawdat, who is also speaking at LEAP 2024 this week, said humans are most happy when their expectations about how their life is supposed to be going are met, and are unhappy when those expectations go unmet.

Bartlett compared his mother’s happiness at receiving a hot bowl of rice in Botswana to a billionaire’s anger at receiving his steak cooked the wrong way in an expensive restaurant. Most of it comes down to whether the person’s expectations are being met, exceeded, or unmet, he explained.

“I flew here first class and I’m probably used to that now, so it’s having a lot less impact on me,” he said. “But seven years ago, the first time I got on a plane as an adult, I flew economy and I was way happier in economy because that first flight I couldn’t believe my eyes – my expectations were being exceeded. Now on my flight over here, my expectations are no longer being exceeded, so the reaction is different.

“You can think about everything through that exact same lens of expectations: Relationships, team members, pay rises, emotions, your wife or husband... That’s how you understand why people are happy – typically just figure out what their expectations are.”

LEAP 2024 is organised by Tahaluf alongside Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT). Tahaluf is a strategic joint venture between Informa PLC, the Events Investment Fund (EIF), and the Saudi Federation for Cybersecurity, Programming and Drones (SAFCSP).

For more information visit www.leap.com

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About LEAP:

Saudi Arabia is putting itself at the forefront of emerging tech through large-scale adoption and

ambitious pilot projects. Its ambition will be showcased on a global stage and the Kingdom will become a hub that connects three continents. LEAP is a manifestation of this ambition. A seismic event that accelerates the adoption of technology and transforms Saudi Arabia's economy. Together with LEAP, the Kingdom will see mass tech adoption, a shift away from oil as the principal strategic economic resource, and instead become a regional hub for both traditional and emerging technology.

Saudi Arabia has an endless ambition to shoot for something beyond that thought possible, to achieve a significant impact from game-changing tech and globally disruptive projects and to always keep one eye on the stars.

About Tahaluf:

Headquartered in Riyadh, Tahaluf brings together strategically important commercial communities from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the wider Gulf region, and from around the world to a portfolio of world-class exhibitions and digital platforms.

Tahaluf is a joint venture partnership between Informa PLC, the world's largest tradeshow organiser, the Saudi Federation for Cybersecurity, Programming and Drones (SAFCSP), and Events Investment Fund (EIF). Sela, the Saudi-owned event production company renowned for its creation of spectacular event experiences, intends to join the joint venture in the near future. Following the highly successful launches in the Kingdom of award-winning tech events LEAP, Black Hat Middle East, the artificial intelligence event DeepFest, Cityscape Global, the Global Health Exhibition and InFlavour for the food industry, Tahaluf plans to launch further diverse original concept events for the Infrastructure sector, the VC community, and multiple other sectors including Health, Consumer, Aviation, Consumer and Luxury. Tahaluf will also bring iconic Informa brands to Saudi Arabia, including CPHI and Cosmoprof, serving the global pharmaceutical and beauty industries, respectively.

For more information about Tahaluf, visit <https://tahaluf.com>.

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