

Moving Humanity Forward

An Interview with Peter H. Diamandis, MD, Founder and Executive Chairman, XPRIZE Foundation

EDITORS' NOTE Peter Diamandis (diamandis.com) is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of over 25 companies in the areas of health-tech, AI, space, venture capital, and education. He is cofounder of Singularity University and curator of Abundance360. He serves as cofounder of two \$500 million+ venture funds: BOLD Capital Partners, focused on health/longevity, and Link-xpv focused on AI. He is the founder and Executive Chairman of XPRIZE which has launched



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\$550 million of incentive prizes driving \$10 billion in R&D. In the field of longevity, Diamandis is cofounder and chairman of Fountain Life. He has degrees in molecular genetics and aerospace engineering from MIT and an MD from Harvard Medical School. He has been named by Fortune magazine as one of the "World's 50 Greatest Leaders." He has written six books including four New York Times bestsellers. His Moonshots Podcast focuses on AI and other exponential technologies, routinely exceeding 1 million downloads.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF XPRIZE (xprize.org) is the recognized global leader in designing and executing large-scale competitions to solve humanity's greatest challenges. For 30 years, its unique model has democratized crowd-sourced innovation and scientifically scalable solutions that accelerate a more equitable and abundant future.

What inspired you to launch XPRIZE, and how do you define its mission?

The inspiration for XPRIZE started with a childhood dream – I wanted to be an astronaut. Growing up during the Apollo era, I was enamored with space and certain that NASA would one day take me there. But as I got older, I realized that spaceflight was becoming stagnant. NASA had shifted focus, the shuttle program was grounded, and the vision for human exploration beyond Earth seemed stalled. That's when I turned to the past for inspiration. I read about the Orteig Prize, which in 1927 incentivized Charles Lindbergh to fly solo across the Atlantic. That \$25,000 prize sparked a \$300 billion aviation industry. It was a lightbulb moment: What if we could do the same for space? So, I launched the \$10 million Ansari XPRIZE for

private spaceflight. Everyone told me I was crazy – there wasn't a single private team in the world building rockets at the time. But sure enough, 26 teams from seven countries signed up. And in 2004, Scaled Composites won, making history.

Today, XPRIZE is about so much more than space. Our mission is to tackle the world's biggest challenges through incentive competitions that drive radical breakthroughs for the benefit of humanity. We don't fund research papers. We don't fund talk. We fund results. We've

launched prizes to clean our oceans, extend human healthspan, reinvent education, and even build carbon-removal systems. Our goal is to inspire entrepreneurs, democratize innovation, and accelerate technologies that move humanity forward. If it feels impossible, it's probably exactly the kind of challenge XPRIZE was made for.

What advice do you give entrepreneurs trying to tackle today's biggest global challenges?

If you're an entrepreneur with the itch to solve big problems, first of all – thank you. We

need more of you. My first piece of advice is this: don't be afraid to take on something massive. In fact, the world's biggest challenges are often the world's biggest business opportunities in disguise. Feeding a planet of 9 billion? Massive. Bringing education to every child on Earth? Trillion-dollar market. Solving for clean energy or reversing aging? Even bigger. So, think Moonshot. Not incremental. Audacity is a strategy.

Second, embrace exponential technologies. AI, robotics, 3D printing, CRISPR, and quantum computing are not tools for tomorrow – they're here now and growing more powerful by the month. A small, focused team with these tools can now out-innovate the largest corporations or governments. We're living in a world where the barriers to entry are collapsing – and entrepreneurs who leverage these tools can make magic happen.

Third, define your Massive Transformative Purpose (MTP). What's the big, soul-aligned reason you wake up in the morning? If you're solving something that matters, people will rally around you – investors, employees, customers. The gravitational pull of a meaningful mission is real.

Finally, be ready to fail forward. Innovation is messy. You'll stumble. That's part of the deal.



XPRIZE Founder, Peter Diamandis, at the Evolution Global Healthspan Summit held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in November 2023

But iterate fast, learn faster, and keep going. We live in a world where a teenager with a laptop can write an app that reaches a billion people. The power to change the world has never been more accessible – it just needs to be aimed at something that matters.

What are the characteristics that make a challenge XPRIZE-worthy?

An XPRIZE-worthy challenge has to check a few key boxes. First, it has to be audacious – something that feels bold, maybe even borderline impossible. We love problems that spark the imagination and make people say, “That’s crazy – but what if?” That sense of wonder, that sense of “what if” – that’s the seed of innovation.

Second, it must be measurable and objective. At XPRIZE, we’re not interested in vague goals or open-ended research. We create competitions with clear, quantifiable finish lines. For example, can you build a system that removes 1,000 tons of carbon from the atmosphere at less than \$100/ton? Or can you extend the healthspan of a mammal by 20 percent? Clear metrics allow for bold action – and real accountability.

Third, the impact must be global and scalable. A great prize doesn’t just solve a problem in one country – it has the potential to uplift billions. Whether it’s reinventing learning for children in rural villages or delivering clean drinking water in drought-stricken regions, the outcome must change lives on a massive scale.

And finally, it must catalyze a new market. The best XPRIZES don’t just award a winner – they ignite industries. Think of what the Ansari XPRIZE did for private spaceflight. We want to see startups launched, investment capital flowing, and new ecosystems born.

In short, an XPRIZE-worthy challenge is audacious, measurable, impactful, and catalytic. It’s designed to take humanity from “that’s impossible” to “we did it.”

Your book, *Abundance*, presents a very optimistic future. How do you maintain that optimism in the face of today’s global crises?

I get this question a lot. People look at the chaos in the news – climate change, political division, war – and they wonder how I can remain so hopeful. The truth is, I don’t ignore the problems. I just don’t let them define the narrative. I believe that optimism isn’t about burying your head in the sand – it’s about having a clear-eyed view of what’s possible, and then working to make that future real.

Abundance was born from data. When you zoom out, the trendlines are astonishing. Over the past 100 years, we’ve seen massive drops in poverty, child mortality, and illiteracy. Lifespan is up. Access to clean water, food, energy, and education is up. And this isn’t happening by chance – it’s happening because of innovation. Entrepreneurs armed with exponential technologies are solving problems that once seemed unsolvable. The problem is that most people don’t hear this story. The media is designed to sell fear, because our brains are wired to pay attention to danger. But that creates a warped sense of the world. My goal – and the goal of *Abundance* – is to rebalance



Peter Diamandis speaks at the XPRIZE Healthspan Awards Ceremony held in New York in May 2025

the narrative, to show that, while we face real challenges, we also have unprecedented tools to solve them.

My optimism comes from the incredible minds I meet, the technologies I see, and the progress that continues, quietly but powerfully, every day. The future is not something that happens to us – it’s something we create. And I choose to be a builder.

What breakthrough technologies are you most excited about when you look to the future?

That’s like asking a parent to pick a favorite child – but okay, here goes. I’m incredibly excited about AI as a force multiplier. It’s not just transforming industries – it’s becoming a cognitive co-pilot that can help us solve problems faster than ever before. Combine that with CRISPR and gene therapy, and suddenly we’re talking about editing out genetic diseases or even reversing aspects of aging.

Then there’s longevity tech – my personal passion. We’re approaching a time when we’ll detect diseases years before symptoms arise, thanks to liquid biopsies and whole-body MRI scans. Regenerative medicine, cellular reprogramming, and senolytics are on the cusp of revolutionizing how we age.

And let’s not forget robotics and space tech. Humanoid robots will transform caregiving, manufacturing, and companionship. Starship and lunar habitats are real now, not just sci-fi.

The magic happens at the intersection of these technologies. It’s not one breakthrough – it’s dozens converging at once. We’re living in the most exciting time in human history. Buckle up.

How do you measure success for XPRIZE?

At XPRIZE, success isn’t about the prize money – it’s about the ripple effect. We measure success by whether we’ve catalyzed a new industry, solved a global problem, or created breakthrough innovation that didn’t exist before. If a winning team collects \$10 million but the market

they ignite becomes a \$10 billion ecosystem, we’ve done our job.

We also track how many teams build viable companies, how much outside capital flows into the space, and whether we’ve influenced policy or inspired new government or philanthropic initiatives. The goal is to create impact far beyond the prize itself.

The Ansari XPRIZE led to the founding of Virgin Galactic and launched the commercial space industry. The Global Learning XPRIZE produced open-source software now helping kids in rural Tanzania learn to read. These are lasting legacies that continue to grow long after the check is handed out.

Ultimately, our mission is to inspire and empower the world to solve its biggest challenges. When we see that happening – at scale – that’s success.

When you look at the impact that XPRIZE has made, what are you most proud of?

What I’m most proud of is how XPRIZE has shown the world a new way to innovate. We’ve proven that you don’t need massive institutions or decades of bureaucracy to solve hard problems. You need a clear goal, the right incentive, and belief in the power of entrepreneurs and innovators worldwide. The Ansari XPRIZE didn’t just get a rocket into space – it shifted our entire mindset about who could go to space and who could build the future. Since then, we’ve taken on education, health, food, oceans, and now healthspan – with the \$101 million Healthspan XPRIZE aiming to restore function by 10 to 20 years.

But maybe the proudest moments are the stories of unexpected heroes – teams from small towns or underfunded labs who beat the odds, built something incredible, and changed lives. That’s what keeps me going. The spark of possibility, the democratization of problem-solving. We’ve made it cool to tackle the world’s biggest problems – and that’s a legacy I’m deeply proud of. ●