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Principles for the
Post-Pandemic Organization

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sparks & honey

Culture Forecast 2021

EQ·UI·TY

/ˈEKWƏDĒ/

The quality of being fair.

INTRODUCING THE EQUITY EFFECT

The lessons from 2020 have illustrated our endless capacity for resilience, rebuilding and empathy. But they have also shown the vast disparity in opportunity, justice and economics that still prevail in the U.S. and globally. As leaders, we have an opportunity like none other to forge a more equitable and successful future for all.

At sparks & honey we have recognized, along with other leaders, equity as a leading determinant for well-being. It's the responsibility of organizations of all kinds to claim equity as a strategic, grounding ideal. In this report, we examined the cultural forces that are driving a more human-centric approach to an organizational transformation grounded in fairness: from the Ergonomics of Health to Human Betterment and the principles that guide

our Shared Future and Resilience; and finally, how we can be held accountable for our actions, specifically with an eye on diversity.

Our future is asking us to redistribute and share wealth, resources and know-how to create more parity in a world where people, organizations and the environments we inhabit can thrive. When that happens, the effect will reverberate from people to organizations and society.



Terry Young
CEO, sparks & honey

CONTRIBUTING THOUGHT LEADERS

Expert interviews with contributing thought leaders, including sparks & honey Advisory Board members



Jonathan Jackson

Co-founder, Blavity, Inc., writer and entrepreneur, sparks & honey Advisory Board member



Dr. Fiona Kerr

Founder and CEO, The NeuroTech Institute and Focus Consulting, sparks & honey Advisory Board member



Heather McGowan

Future of work strategist and author of *The Adaptation Advantage*, sparks & honey Advisory Board member



Dr. Vivienne Ming

Co-founder, Socos Labs, theoretical neuroscientist, serial entrepreneur, author, sparks & honey Advisory Board member



Geraldine Moriba

SVP, TheGrio.com, filmmaker, journalist and writer, sparks & honey Advisory Board member



David Price

learning innovation consultant and author of *The Power of Us: How We Connect, Act and Innovate Together*, sparks & honey Advisory Board member



Sanjay Purohit

Chief Curator, Societal Platform, EkStep Foundation, technologist, sparks & honey Advisory Board member



Judy Samuelson

Founder and executive director of the Aspen Institute Business and Society Program, author of *Six New Rules of Business: Creating Real Value in a Changing World*



Andy Walshe

Founding partner, Liminal Collective, sparks & honey Advisory Board member

METHODOLOGY

What are the cultural shifts affecting the future of the post-pandemic organization, and what does equity mean in such a landscape?

To answer that question, we followed a unique methodology designed to decode culture with the best of big data and human expertise.

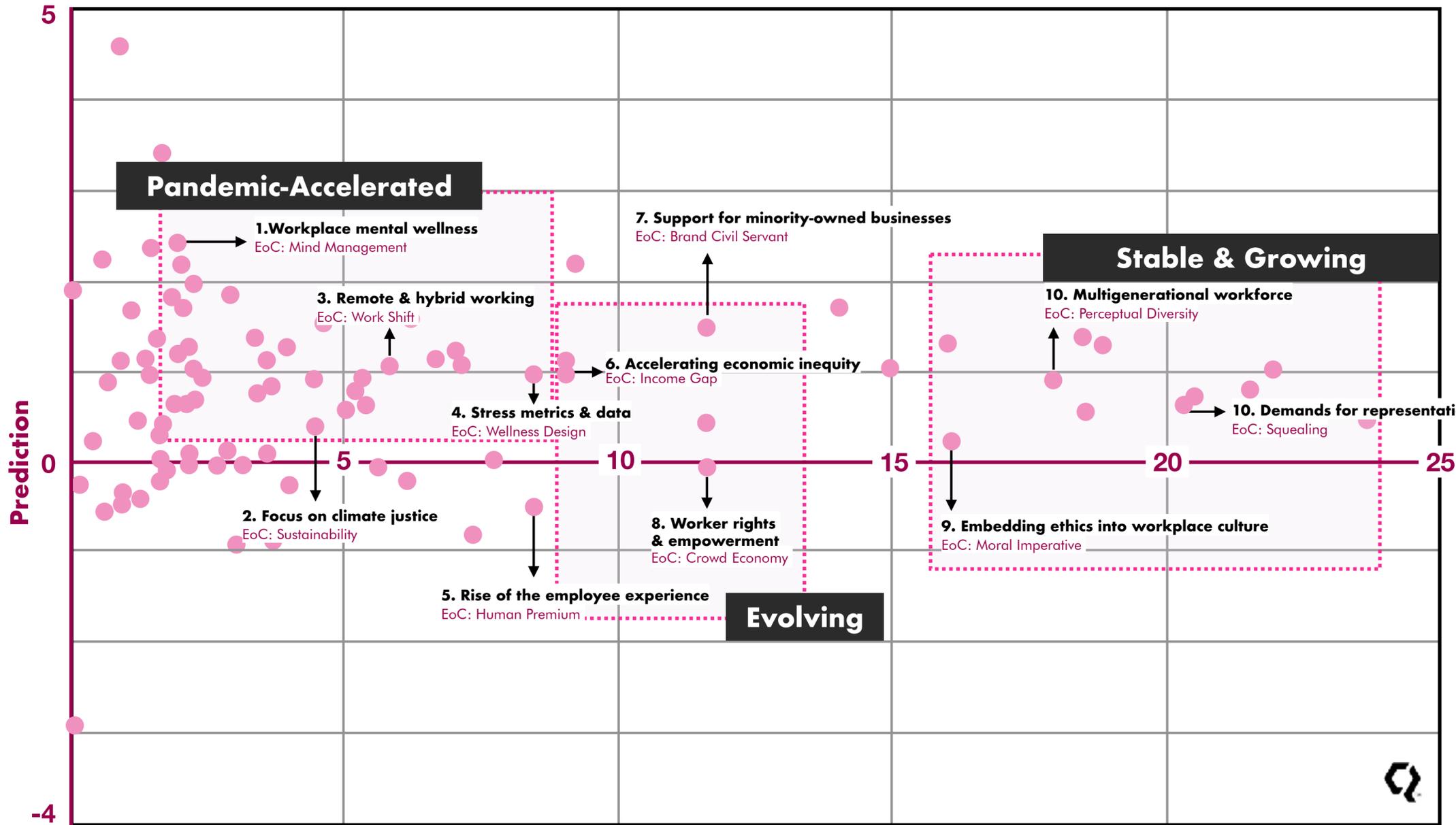
To start, we turned to our cultural intelligence system Q™.

At sparks & honey, we believe that quantifying culture is the key to decoding the future. Q™ is our cultural quantifier. Q™ brings quantification to trend forecasting, using AI to condense days of research into minutes of exploration that get you to data-backed, cross-industry trend insights you can bet on.

We used Q™ to decode, quantify and predicts culture. It does this through a suite of features that transform amorphous, hard to quantify cultural concepts into data-backed, named, measurable mega- and macro-trends (our Elements of Culture).

METHODOLOGY

Mapping trends defining the future of equity



EoC: Element of Culture

sparks & honey's proprietary taxonomy of cultural trends

Prediction Score

Prediction measures the estimated growth or decline in a trend's reach over the next year.

Cultural Energy Score

Energy measures how much attention a trend is getting in culture

Cultural Energy





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Equity at work



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Mental, physical, emotional well-being is your business



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HUMAN BETTERMENT

Welcome to the human capital era



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SHARED FUTURES

Purpose for powerful change

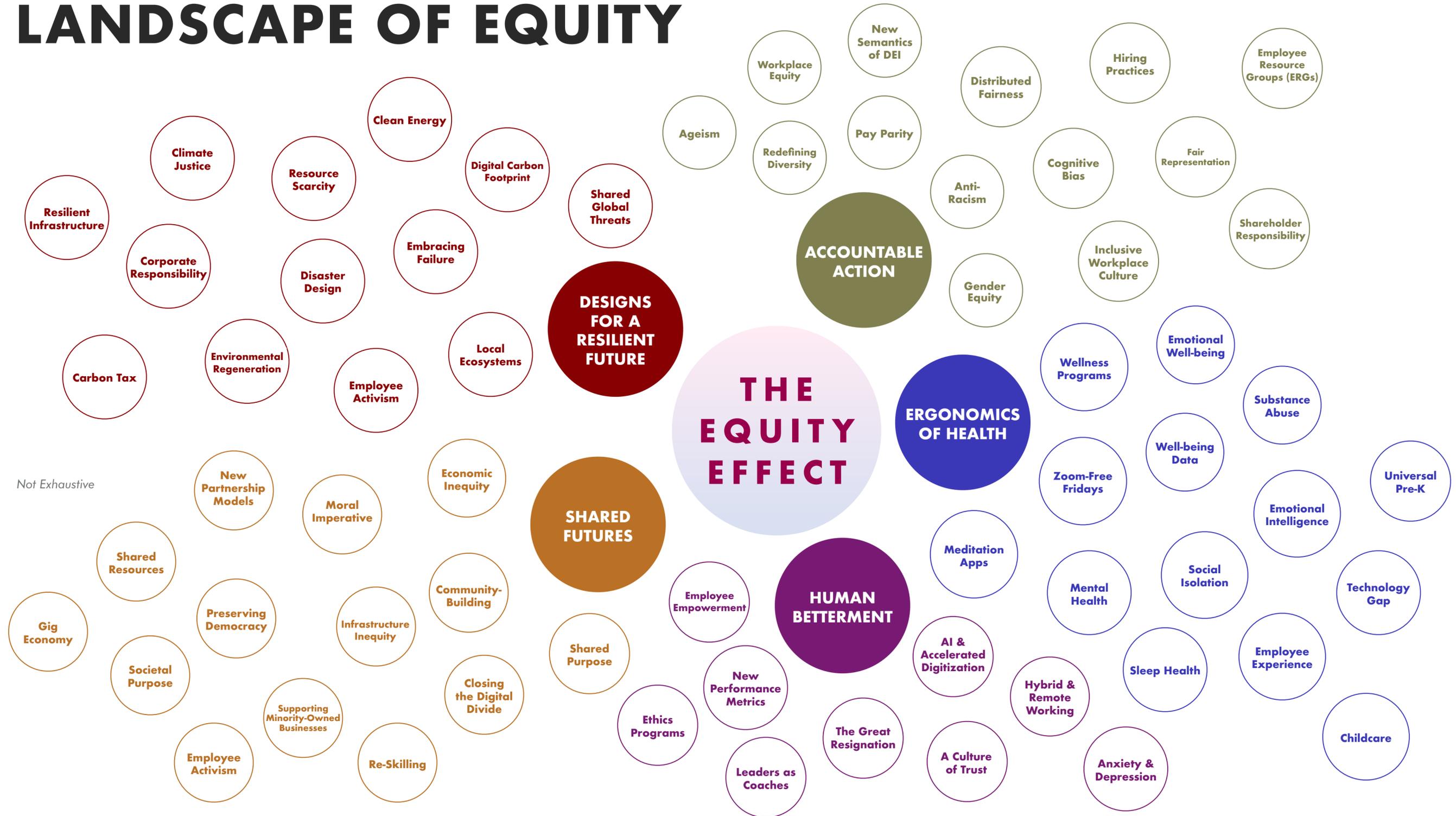


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DESIGNS FOR A RESILIENT FUTURE

Nourish local ecosystems to mitigate threats

THE EVOLVING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF EQUITY



ACCOUNTABLE ACTION

EQUITY AT WORK



DIVERSITY AND DISTRIBUTED FAIRNESS

From sticker solution to buzzword, “diversity” appears to be everywhere. In reality, the term diversity is a one-note descriptor that does not encompass its true, well, diversity.

Beyond race, diversity is a label with many faces and facets, often intersectional ones: These can include ideology, thought, gender equality, ageism, faith and belief systems, cognitive diversity and LGBTQ+ rights, and groups that are on the periphery of any system, such as those with physical or cognitive disabilities.

Every cohort brings different demographics, thoughts, perspectives, abilities to the workplace — all of which are critical to innovation, company culture and creating a space for people to thrive. At its core, diversity is an organic part of a system grounded in fairness.

Few organizations, however, are truly engaged in meaningful diversity. A bare minimum would be acknowledging the need for addressing diversity. As of early 2021, 76 percent of companies admit that they do not have diversity or inclusion goals to begin with. To lead into the future, leaders will be tasked with understanding and taking action to reflect the vast cultural landscape — and building an organization that reflects those values from the ground up.

It’s not a choice, it’s an expectation. No demographic is sounding the alarm more than your future workers: Gen Zers. Their worldview is organically one of inclusivity and

fairness, and they expect organizations they work for to reflect those values.

People also want to work on diverse teams: 88 percent of workers say that a diverse workforce will become even more significant in the future, as expectations of roles, skills and organizations evolve, according to research from *Harvard Business Review*. And science tells us that simply adding collaborators into a team positively impacts the creativity of the group, resulting in more multidisciplinary and innovative work, as Dr. Vivienne Ming highlights in the Socos Labs newsletter, [Remote Work, Part 6](#).

At the same time, organizations are instrumental in driving what Dr. Vivienne Ming calls the diversity-innovation paradox.

“Trust and diversity play fundamental and opposing roles in innovation and distributed cognition. Our well-documented preference for trust over diversity drives organizations into the paradox,” said Dr. Vivienne Ming.

For example, cognitively diverse teams are more effective, but coworkers tend to group into cognitively homogeneous groups over time. People are naturally wired to gravitate toward the familiar in a bias that runs so deep most are unaware of it.

Businesses, too, will need to take a hard look at their own diversity narratives, which tend to elevate the company into the hero's role. It is a tension that people can see through when overt diversity efforts do not match their lived experiences. Executives will be tasked with providing hard data and transparency that resonate not just in numbers, but in a culture from within that meets the expectations of the people it serves: its employees, communities and the world.

The richness that a post-diversity world can bring is part of a future that is yet to unfold.

ABANDON THE 'BUSINESS CASE' FOR DIVERSITY



FAIRNESS IS A FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE OF DIVERSITY



— Dr. Vivienne Ming,
Co-founder of Socos Labs, theoretical
neuroscientist, sparks & honey
Advisory Board member

“Abandon the ‘business case for diversity’. It is still true. It can be the argument that moves you to act, but it cannot be the act itself. Fairness first abstracts away from the transactional nature of the business case: simply, fairness is a foundational principle to be supported independent of other considerations.”

GEN Z: 'DIVERSITY' IS A GIVEN



“If you’re still making the business case for diversity, your company isn’t the right place for us.”

— Gen Z

— Kahlil Greene, a Yale University senior, writes in *Harvard Business Review's* [Dear CEO's: a Gen Zer's open letter to his future employers](#)



Gen Z will see through any inauthentic expression of “diversity.” Your future workers want to work for organizations that reflect their values in the world.



Of Gen Z are politically or socially engaged - a major part of their identity.

Source: [Irregular Labs](#)

The economic toll
of systemic racism
is longstanding

\$16
TRILLION



In lost U.S. economic activity due to
structural racism (2000 - 2018).

Source: Citi, [Closing the Racial Inequality Gaps \(2020\)](#)

ACCOUNTABLE ACTION

01

A mass exodus of women from the workforce



33

-YEAR LOW

In women's labor force participation, as three million women left the labor force over the pandemic, as of January 2021.

Source: [National Women's Law Center](#)

ERGONOMICS OF HEALTH

02

Women leaders mitigate risk for organizations



\$7.84

MILLION

Amount saved by banks with more female directors per year, on average — those institutions had less-frequent fines for misconduct.

Source: [Harvard Business Review](#)

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Diversity PR

The rise of social justice movements both inside and outside the walls of organizations is changing the workplace, forcing leaders to rethink DEI from both a moral and strategic lens. Organizations are starting to recognize that external diversity efforts resonate with consumers and are seen as positive contributions to their communities.



Ethical culture

Facing skepticism and pushback, leaders are struggling to advance their initiatives beyond arbitrary quotas and 'diversity theater' to truly build more inclusive workplace and ethical cultures that see their moral ambitions manifest into everyday practice. Biases run deep and organizations will have to listen, absorb and consider diversity as a long-term moral imperative that goes far beyond their own walls.

UNDERREPRESENTATION IS AN INSTITUTIONAL FAILING

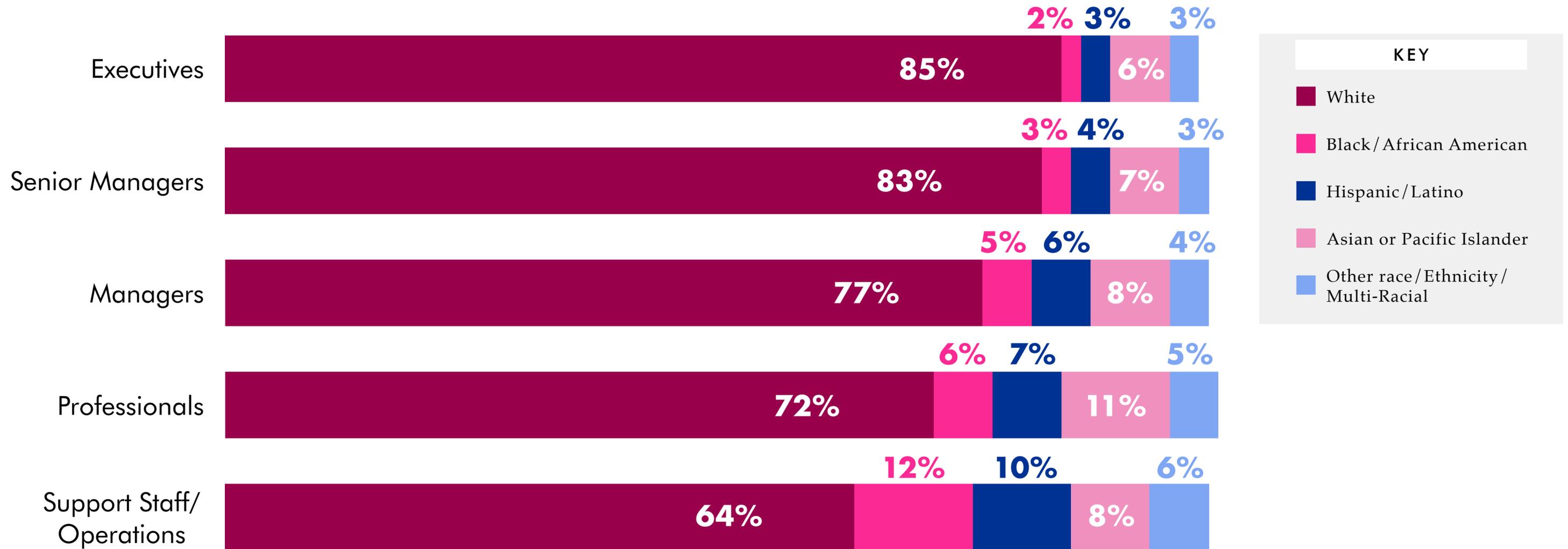


— Jonathan Jackson,
Co-founder, Blavity, Inc., writer and
entrepreneur, sparks & honey Advisory
Board member

“Instead of saying a group is historically underrepresented, you could say that it has been institutionally failed. This shifts the context from an issue of solely being not present, to a space of more intellectual honesty, because you can pass them on to people, are seeds to actual environmental change.”

COMPANIES HAVE TO PUT IN THE WORK — LOTS OF IT

EMPLOYEE DISTRIBUTION BY RACE, ETHNICITY AND CAREER LEVEL



Source: Mercer, United States Census Bureau, [CNBC](#)



We need new words for *that

For many, diversity is a focus and measurement of minority representation, or representing the underrepresented. Even the term “minority” carries undertones of being that on the outside of the majority. Organizations will need to expand the very definition of diversity today to encompass

aspects that are merely on the fringe now, from ageism to inclusivity that embraces trans rights and disability rights, to cognitive diversity and even organizational factors that drive deep-set biases. The lens on racial inclusivity in the workplace is only the beginning of a long haul of looking within to encompass all that culture will demand of them.

For starters, companies will need to find new language and metrics to talk about “DEI.” The awareness to take these steps comes with organizations turning the lens on themselves to ask, ‘How is inclusivity manifested and practiced in our workplace culture?’ The answer will speak volumes.

In the end, actually diverse workforces and organizations will reap in the profits, too.

Companies that are seen as diverse are 70% more likely to capture new markets than organizations that do not actively seek out and support talent from under-represented groups, according to Market Watch.

In addition to integrating new metrics to measure and track diversity (such as retention or promotions), leaders will need to understand and use new language around workplace diversity in authentic and meaningful ways. A simple change to an email signature showing pronoun preferences is a small start, but others can and should embrace and celebrate

intersectional identities, which include but are not limited to: race, gender and sexual expression, creed / nationality, age, ability, political affiliation, religion, socioeconomic background. Everything that makes a person a person.

YOUR PEOPLE WILL HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE



— Judy Samuelson,
Founder and executive director of the Aspen
Institute Business and Society Program,
author of *Six New Rules of Business:
Creating Real Value in a Changing World*

“The best companies that will change in a positive way will look at diversity as an asset, not a threat. With people being more present, employees have become the new accountability mechanism.”



EMPLOYEES ARE AN ORGANIZATION'S CONSUMERS

Listen to people who do the work.

An organization's toughest critics may come from the inside. From Google to renowned running group North Brooklyn Runners, organizations have changed their inclusivity policies due to uproar that stemmed from the

inside out. Leaders can expect to be held to higher levels of accountability by their employees — because of that they may face skepticism and backlash, not from consumers but from within the walls of organizations. Consider thinking of employees as not just people who work there, but as a consumer that the organization is accountable to internally and externally.

CULTURAL SIGNALS



BLACK TECH EMPLOYEES REBEL AGAINST DIVERSITY “THEATER”

The reckoning on race and racism has revealed what many working on diversity have long known: Silicon Valley’s own diversity and recruitment strategies can be a roadblock to opening doors to people from different backgrounds with new ideas. “Diversity theater” obscures the line between the value of diversity and how companies actually treat their own people trying to make a change. “We must continue our work,” wrote Melonie Parker, Google’s head of diversity, in 2019. Google had only five Black women listed among its top 357 officers in 2018, the most recent numbers available.

Source: *Wired*, [Black tech employees rebel against diversity “theater”](#)



DISCRIMINATION AGAINST OLDER WORKERS IS A DEEPLY INGRAINED BIAS

Older people can be an easy target for discrimination at work. Mark Zuckerberg famously said that “younger people are just smarter,” while Sun Microsystems co-founder Vinod Khosla suggested that “people over 45 basically die in terms of new ideas.” The glaring lack of criticism of these opinions highlights how acceptable ageism is against older workers. Ageism is almost condoned in American culture as people don't really regard it as an 'ism' at all, and certainly not on a par with sexism or racism.

Source: *Forbes*, [Even the staunchest defenders of equality will discriminate against older workers](#)

CULTURAL SIGNALS



COMPANY SYSTEMS FAIL AT INCLUSIVITY FOR LGBTQ+

Many trans people face difficulties updating workplace systems where their names and genders appear. Often, these systems can't be edited, are tied to legal documents, or offer narrow options. These limitations can make it painful and difficult for trans and nonbinary employees to fully focus on their jobs and contribute to their organizations. Even at the most ambitious, forward-looking tech companies, fundamental platforms like email and HR are failing trans and nonbinary employees. Tech companies, which pride themselves on using technology to solve problems and offering the best possible work cultures, should be pioneering the solution.

Source: *Wired*, [Crucial tech like email is still failing trans employees](#)



DATA IS OFTEN SKEWED FOR MARGINALIZED GROUPS

The tools we turn to can be embedded with bias in AI systems. Even if sensitive variables such as gender, ethnicity or sexual identity are excluded, AI systems learn to make decisions based on training data, which may contain skewed human decisions or represent historical or social inequities. The hidden use of AI systems in our society can be dangerous for marginalized people. In use, no one has the choice to opt out.

Source: *Forbes*, [The Role of Bias in Artificial Intelligence](#)

ACCOUNTABLE ACTION

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Creating an inclusive culture starts with designing systems, teams, and spaces that speak to every individual

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Of LGBTQ employees are not fully out at work.

Source: [NBC News](#)

ACCOUNTABLE ACTION

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Persistent ageism is one of the least acknowledged forms of prejudice — it may be due to a lack of quantifying its economic costs



\$63
BILLION

Estimated health costs caused by ageism, over one year alone in the U.S.

Source: Yale School of Public Health study, [Ageism Amplifies Cost and Prevalence of Health Conditions](#)

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SOCIAL GOOD IS ALSO A SHAREHOLDER RESPONSIBILITY



— Jonathan Jackson,
Co-founder, Blavity, Inc., writer and
entrepreneur, sparks & honey Advisory
Board member

“I haven't seen many organizations successfully make changes that had permanence. I've seen messaging developed which was responsive, and they needed to adapt due to the pressure of the moment. Things that were conveniently thought of as social good or socially responsible, suddenly became components of shareholder value overnight, in how they were spoken about.”

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EQUITY IS ABOUT FAIRNESS

Understand that people show up with their own set up advantages or disadvantages. An equitable culture is about creating parity and reflecting a world view that is based on fairness from the ground up. Diversity will become an organic part of an equitable culture.

BUILD A CULTURE OF DISTRIBUTED FAIRNESS — YES, IT TAKES TIME

Diversity is more than a quota or a press release. It's a principle of fairness that requires long-term commitment, and not near-sighted goals. Building a culture that embraces the tension between trust and diversity takes time and effort, according to Dr. Vivienne Ming, co-founder of Socos Labs. "Fairness first allows us to see individuals as more than tools to compete with this week's deliverables."

TAKEAWAYS

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LISTEN TO PEOPLE

An organization's toughest critics may come from the voices of those who know it best. From Google to running group North Brooklyn Runners, organizations have changed their inclusivity policies due to uproar that stemmed from the inside out. Leaders can expect to be held to higher levels of accountability by all of their stakeholders.

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TURN TO TOOLS FOR SUPPORT

The threat of global disasters will become more imminent and tangible than ever. As increased climate change, resource scarcity and viral pandemics threaten human health and quality of life, government policy will need to leverage technological advances at scale to develop more resilient cities, public infrastructure, and housing. In parallel, global political powers will need to collaborate to rethink how capitalistic norms impact sustainability and the future of humanity.

PAY ATTENTION TO RETENTION

As leaders think about implementing more inclusive cultures, it's not just about representation or checking off boxes. Tools, such as ADP, to track representation rates. It's a start but not the full picture. A true metric is employee retention — if your doors are not spinning with employees departing, you may be doing something right. Consider retention as another metric of an inclusive culture.

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REFLECT A LIVED EXPERIENCE



— **Geraldine Moriba**,
SVP, [TheGrio.com](https://www.thegrio.com), Filmmaker,
journalist, writer, sparks & honey
Advisory Board member

“Leadership has to be diverse enough that they recognize the needs of employees as not just as an item on a box, but as as a lived experience.”

ERGONOMICS OF HEALTH

MENTAL, PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL
WELL-BEING IS YOUR BUSINESS

MENTAL, PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING IS YOUR BUSINESS

A place of work used to be just that: a place. For many, it was a destination, a location where you spent endless hours earning a paycheck. Before 2020, an openness toward mental health as a pillar of wellness and the common human condition was only just starting to surface, propelled by a comfort in expressing a need for a mental health day or a known face publicly announcing conditions from depression to postpartum, and more. In the pandemic,

mental health became a five-star alarm — for all. Research by the U.S. Census Bureau show that clinically significant symptoms of depression and anxiety have more than tripled since the beginning of the pandemic, disproportionately affecting people of color. And for people who held down jobs, the Global Well-being Index revealed that only 15 percent of workers agreed that their employers offered resources to support their overall well-being. The strife was particularly acute for Gen Z, 92 percent of whom mentioned a severe lack of well-being due to stress, inadequate resources, among other factors.

Compounded by the pandemic, people everywhere — including those in the workforce — are desperate for solutions to ease and address the mental health issues, from grief to loneliness

and substance abuse, and overall emotional wellness. Access to such services is a barrier for many, however. The need is only set to escalate, as we react to the long-term effects on our minds from undergoing trauma, which doesn't just affect emotional wellness, but how people perform, and ultimately thrive.



Mental, physical, and emotional health is critical. A lack of insurance is only one barrier of access to quality health care; wealth disparities, culture and language impede access too. How do you reach people and make sure you are accounting for all of the various health needs and demographics, and not just those of an elite few?

— Geraldine Moriba, SVP, TheGrio.com, filmmaker, journalist, and writer, sparks & honey Advisory Board member



What neuroscientists call “poor cognitive function” affects how we problem-solve or approach creative tasks. Emotional health leaves an imprint not just our own lives but also our ability to be productive and well-functioning humans. Experts agree that many of the long-term effects of 2020 on our well-being are only starting to surface, but they will need to be acknowledged and addressed.

Technology is responding to this shift, too. Some solutions, such as the Work Well App, remind us of the benefits of natural human processes, like breathing or taking breaks. Others focus on easing anxiety, such as Microsoft Teams integrating Focus and Headspace mode to decrease stress and stay focused. Technology focused on behavioral health is growing, and 67 percent of companies say they

offer a digital platform for mental health services, according to research from Willis Towers Watson. And rising investments in startups focused on enhancing company wellness, such as Lyra, are on the rise, reflecting how health and wellness is a growing priority for organizations of all kinds.

The Ezra Klein Show’s discussion of Annie Paul Murphy’s new book, “The Extended Mind,” illuminated how disconnected we have become — as a society and by extension in workplaces — of any activities associated with leisure, play or rest. The book argues that these habits are crucial to thinking and living well. How we live and think is a part of how we show up at work, too.

Organizations will have a growing stake in ensuring the well-being —

physical, mental, emotional — of its people. A baseline nod to well-being is mainly seen in white-collar businesses, and leaves out a vast cohort of workers. Access to being and feeling well is a privilege for the select few that will need to evolve beyond the have’s and have-nots.

The future of your organization will depend on it.

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Well-being is a privilege

Today, some organizations mainly focus on baseline physical health with one goal: humans who are just well enough to work. The norm is mainly seen in white-collar businesses only, and promotes visual cues to health, such as break rooms, gym discounts or the odd office plant.



Well-being is everyone's right

In the future, organizations will need to place equal emphasis on all aspects of well-being, including emotional, physical and mental health. Through design and operational thinking, supporting holistic well-being is a bridge to equity in health and wellness not just for the elite few, but for everyone.

Due to overwhelming demand, people are desperate for products and services to address a range of urgent issues, such as loneliness, grief, substance abuse and emotional wellness. Skyrocketing investments in mental health benefits for organizations reflect this rising need.



54%

Increase in funding for mental health to \$852 million, buoyed by mega-rounds raised by late-stage mental health and wellness benefits platforms geared toward the workforce.

Source: CB Insights, Top Healthcare Trends



4.6
BILLION

Valuation of Lyra, a mental health platform for workers and their dependents, which includes therapy, coaching, and medication support.

Source: [Forbes](#)

WELLNESS GETS PERSONAL



— Andy Walshe,
Founding partner, Liminal Collective,
sparks & honey Advisory Board member

“In the future, companies will consider the specific characteristics of wellness that relate to a person. You’re setting up work, home, life, relationships, or hybrids that support all of those needs. And it’s going to become highly customized.”

CREATE SPACES FOR ORGANIC RECHARGING

“We need to make space for people to be safe — to be healthy. Do Zoom-free Fridays or take a day off and go do something. Give people the space to recharge as opposed to asking for more metrics to track how ‘well’ they’re doing.”

— Heather McGowan,
Future of work strategist and author of
The Adaptation Advantage, sparks & honey
Advisory Board member



Black women in public-facing positions are often targets for harassment, adding to underlying stress



84%

Of black women were more likely to experience harassment online than white women, according to a review of 778 tweets received by journalists and politicians.

Source: Amnesty International, [Troll Patrol Findings](#)



IN EARLY
2021

No, the kids (and adults) are not okay

84% of U.S. adults reported at least one emotion strongly associated with prolonged stress, including anxiety (47%), sadness (44%) and anger (39%).

Source: [American Psychological Association](#)

MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS ARE A LONG-HAUL ISSUE



— Heather McGowan,
Future of work strategist and author of
The Adaptation Advantage, sparks & honey
Advisory Board member

“There’s a tremendous amount of stress and grief out there, a trend that started surfacing even before the pandemic. It’s probably going to take a decade to unravel what we’ve been through. The future of humanity is front and center.”

LISTEN MORE, PROCLAIM LESS

“A sense of community really matters. Post-covid leaders will put their people’s mental wellness ahead of shareholder value. They will listen more and proclaim less often.”

— David Price,
Learning innovation consultant and author of
*The Power of Us: How We Connect, Act and
Innovate Together*, sparks & honey Advisory
Board member



While in Western Europe, stress declined in 2020:



39%
COMPARED TO

46%
in 2019.

Source: Gallup, [State of the Global Workplace](#)

There is a global divide in workplace stress



57%

Daily stress experienced by U.S. and Canadian workforce in 2020.

WELLNESS IS A CORE BUSINESS FOCUS



— David Price,
Learning innovation consultant and author of
*The Power of Us: How We Connect, Act and
Innovate Together*, sparks & honey Advisory
Board member

“Health and wellness is now front and center of organizational strategies — or it ought to be. It used to be that the employee had to fit in around the demands and the nature of the work. Now, work is built around the needs of the employee.”

CULTURAL SIGNALS



NIKE BACKS NAOMI OSAKA AFTER FRENCH OPEN WITHDRAWAL DUE TO MENTAL HEALTH

Ranked number one in the world, tennis star Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open due to mental health reasons. The decision came after she skipped media interviews and later cited her mental health as a reason to exit the tournament. Nike, Osaka’s sponsor since 2019, supported her decision and applauded how open the athlete has been about her depression.

Source: CNN, [Nike backs Naomi Osaka after she withdraws from French Open](#)



KOREA’S COUPANG PROVIDES CASH TO DEAD WORKERS’ FAMILIES

Coupang reacted to overworking employees to death in concrete terms: by providing cash-in-hand to the bereaved families — at their workers’ funerals. The Korean ecommerce company, which listed in the New York Stock Exchange earlier this year, valued at \$80 billion, handed \$2600 in an envelope to one employee’s family. According to funeral registries, the company also provided funds to at least two other of its deceased employees’ families.

Source: *Financial Times*, [Korea’s Coupang hands cash to bereaved families at workers’ funerals](#)

CULTURAL SIGNALS



'I'M IN A REALLY DARK PLACE'

A group of first-year Goldman Sachs employees ignited debate over workplace mental health after creating a “Working Conditions Survey” that made the rounds on social media, saying they routinely worked over 100-hour weeks and considered themselves victims of workplace abuse.

Source: *The New York Times*, [Complaints at Goldman Sachs set off a workplace debate](#)



BRAIN FOG CAUSED BY TRAUMA, UNCERTAINTY AND ISOLATION

A year into lockdown, the effects of trauma, uncertainty and isolation have left their mark on our minds and memory. Neuroscientists and researchers say our inability to remember, pay attention or even think is a normal reaction to trauma. Catherine Loveday, professor of cognitive neuroscience at the University of Westminster, describes brain fog as poor cognitive function, covering everything from memory to attention and our ability to problem-solve and be creative.

Source: *The Guardian*, [Brain fog: How trauma, uncertainty and isolation have affected our minds and memory](#)

TRUST AND CONSISTENT VALUES ARE KEY



— Dr. Fiona Kerr,
Founder and CEO, The NeuroTech
Institute & Focus Consulting,
sparks & honey Advisory Board member

“Trust and consistent values are really critical because you need to believe that an organization has your best interests in mind. Our level of patience and our capacity to deal with turmoil is massive, but as soon as you lose trust in your company, it’s gone.”

GLARING INEQUITIES OF WELL-BEING

The pandemic has exposed inherent flaws in access to health and wellness, which disproportionately affects marginalized groups. The strain across physical, mental and emotional levels is evident for many populations. With gaps in healthcare access often attributed to lack of financial means or economic status, financial resources and tools are surfacing to enhance and sustain well-being across mental, emotional, and physical needs. Organizations will have their work cut out to build trust to use many such tools and their resulting data in the first place. The bridge between privacy and productivity may be a thin one.

DEMOCRATIZED HEALTH DATA

Studies have shown that people who work longer than 55 hours per week are at greater risk of developing health conditions. Organizations can address detrimental work-related health concerns by encouraging holistic well-being. We can expect health data to become increasingly democratized as the part of a holistic wellness strategy. People may react adversely to wellness data being collected by organizations. Some companies will start providing on-site health services — a model that has established roots in many European countries.

CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH

Grief, languishing, numbness. Families around the world are confronting long-term grief. Grief is particularly present for groups who have disproportionately suffered in the pandemic: in the U.S., 20 percent of black children are grieving the loss of a parent, even though they only make up 14% of children in the country. Grief can also mean simply grieving the loss of routines or relationships. How we show up every day has an undercurrent of mental stress, which often goes undetected. Acknowledge the realities people are facing and take supportive action.

THE STRUGGLE IS REAL

“The question is whether companies are starting to realize that even in the best organizations, people are still struggling. And that response has to be tailored.”



— Jonathan Jackson,
Co-founder, Blavity, Inc., writer and
entrepreneur, sparks & honey Advisory
Board member

HUMAN BETTER- MENT

WELCOME TO THE HUMAN CAPITAL ERA





A strong moral compass is the new metric of aspiration for organizations in a pandemic-marked world. The betterment of people is both a guidepost for flourishing and for the bottom line. Leaders will strive to make business decisions according to a core principle: how does this propel the lives of the workforce forward? It's a future emerging from the intersection of three trends, including Human

Premium, Moral Imperative and Frictionless. The blurring lines between life and work, new hybrid work models and the mainstay of technologies and AI will only fast forward the need for leadership that hones in on one thing: being human.

For this to unfold, leaders will need to forge a new relationship with their workforce. The shift of power is toppling away from executives and empowering those outside of the boardroom with more stake and say in the future of business. This shakeup started before the pandemic, with younger generations demanding more purpose from work, and it has been accelerated by rapid changes brought on by mass digitization and new models of working that enabled innovation and business to keep going

against all odds — and speeds. In 2020, digital products and services moved forward at a whopping seven years over just a few months, McKinsey reports. But the human side is also catching up.



We could be entering the human capital era, where the greatest investment you can make is in another human, in human potential.

— Heather McGowan,
Co-author, *The Adaptation Advantage:
Let Go, Learn Fast and Thrive in the
Future of Work*



THE PRIVILEGE OF HYBRID WORK

For many, hybrid working models that emerged overnight created options for where, why and how we work. This was particularly true for midsize organizations, of which 46% will be working in hybrid models, according to Gartner estimates. For organizations of all sizes in the U.S. and Europe, from multinational to small businesses, 70% will be looking at hybrid work as a permanent fixture, research from Forrester revealed. Every organization must be flexible enough to adapt to technologies and engagement to address the blurring of lives and work, or what Kaleido Insights highlights as one of the key tech

urgencies for businesses coming out of the pandemic.

But how these changes will affect people and behaviors is only beginning to surface. On the productivity side, longer working hours have increased productivity by nearly half, or 47%. While being productive from the comfort (or discomfort) of home is good business, in the long-term experts warn of a wave of burnout among people. The role of technology isn't about what the tech can do, but what it allows people to do. In a hybrid world, it can free up space for collaboration, independent of the individual or their physical presence.

Hybrid work may also stratify physical presence from remote locations, even when collaborating via technology that

defines such boundaries. In the long run, hybrid work may promote equity for some and inequity for others. People may be stratified according to who shows up and who stays behind a screen, when in-office interactions turn into career boosts for some, leaving those working behind technology in secondary positions. Human behaviors that emerged overnight will set the stage for expectations of the future, in which productivity, potential and success meet.

The ability to engage in hybrid work is a privilege. The

pandemic only accelerated the racial and socioeconomic divides that had already begun before 2020, as Dr. Vivienne Ming highlights in Remote Work.

There's a budding demand for reskilling at the top with

leadership based on empathy, ethics and a renewed focus on human development and potential. The European Council has called out empathy as a key competency for the leaders of the future. It also means leaning on technology tools that will create space for more focus on the relational aspects of business transformation, with the ultimate goal of designing more nimble, successful future organizations. An organization's evolving future role is to elevate the potential inherent in every stakeholder in business.

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FROM NOW

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The outdated boss

Organizations have been forced to look at their outdated leadership models which often focus on set-in-stone processes and tasks, at the cost of human benefits.



New power dynamics at work

New power dynamics are evolving in work places, moving away from simply tasks to relationship-building and communication. You are not the leader anymore, your people are.

A LEADER IS A CONSTANT LEARNER — NOT THE EXPERT



— Heather McGowan,
Future of work strategist and author of
The Adaptation Advantage, sparks & honey
Advisory Board member

“We need a completely different profile of a leader who can focus on inspiring human potential, coaching people and integrating systems, even if they don’t have the technical knowledge. Leaders can’t be the unquestioned experts anymore. They’ve got to be knowledgeable learners.”

Gen Z and Millennials' rising bargaining power



Of Gen Z and Millennials would consider quitting if their organizations were not flexible regarding remote work.

Source: [Bloomberg Survey](#)



Productivity advantages, but potential for burnout



Extra day a week: the additional time people who are working from home end up working.

Source: [Apollo Technical](#)



DESIGN ORGANIZATIONS TO PERCEIVE, FEEL AND RESPOND



— Sanjay Purohit,
Chief Curator, Societal Platform, EkStep
Foundation, technologist and strategist,
sparks & honey Advisory Board member

“The idea is to create an organization that can perceive, feel, and respond — these are not the words I’d use to describe a company very often. We are talking about a company’s sentience. Why are humans sentient? It’s because of their ability to perceive, feel, and respond.”

CULTURE AT WORK REFLECTS VALUES AT WORK

“A learning organization is culture first. People are connected to an expression of their values. They are energized by work because they’re allowed to express themselves, and they’re allowed to follow their beliefs. A successful learning organization helps people learn in new ways.”

— Heather McGowan,
Future of work strategist and author of
The Adaptation Advantage, sparks &
honey Advisory Board member



The great resignation wave shows people want more from their lives



People quit their jobs in April 2021.

Source: [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey](#)

A LEADER BECOMES A COACH



— Andy Walshe,
Founding partner, Liminal Collective,
sparks & honey Advisory Board member

“You’re going to become a coach. The first thing a coach does is try to understand your state. ‘How are you doing? How are you feeling?’ As a coach, my number-one role is to help you grow to where you want to be. Then, my role as a leader becomes focused on encouraging you to reach your ultimate potential.”

TECH TO DECODE HUMAN STRESS

“Day-to-day stress metrics could be measured by looking at computer vision to determine how a person’s actually feeling. All sorts of technologies can be used to help you look at a human in a more holistic perspective instead of, ‘Hey, how are they performing?’”

— Andy Walshe,
Founding partner, Liminal Collective,
sparks & honey Advisory Board member



CULTURAL SIGNALS



IT'S TIME TO RETHINK YOUR ETHICS PROGRAM

The pandemic and racial-justice protests accelerated the ethical responsibility of companies, from diversity to human-rights advocacy, sustainability and more. Companies no longer just have to run their businesses legally but they must also be ethical. There are ethical minefields everywhere. It has never been more important for organizations to rethink their ethics programs and explicitly design them to consider the risks involved from being perceived as unethical by any of a company's stakeholders.

Source: *The Wall Street Journal*, [How Companies Can Create an Ethics Program for a New Era](#)

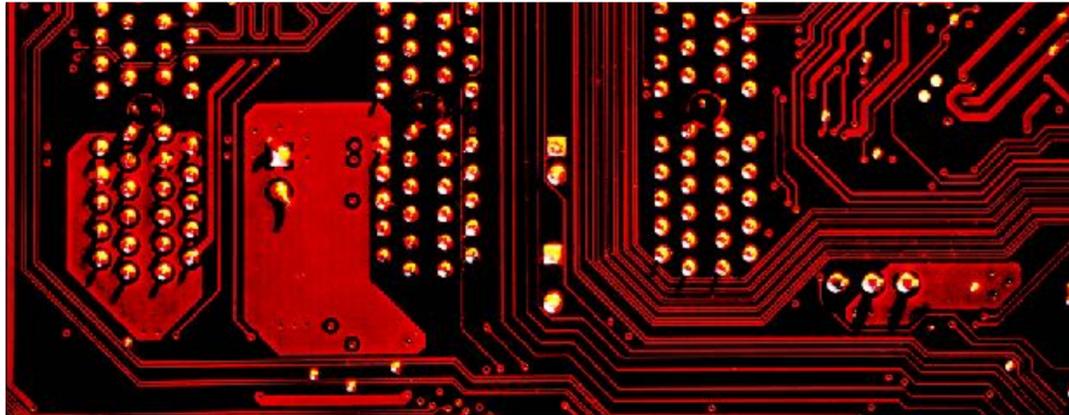


YOUR WORKFORCE HAS THE UPPER HAND

The relationship between American businesses and their employees is undergoing a profound shift: For the first time in a generation, workers are gaining the upper hand. Across the wage scale, businesses are becoming more willing to pay a little more, to train workers, to take chances on people without traditional qualifications, and to show greater flexibility in where and how people work. Companies are becoming aware that yes, it's about pay, but also about quality of life.

Source: *The New York Times*, [Workers are gaining leverage over employers right before our eyes](#)

CULTURAL SIGNALS



HUMAN SKILLS HAVE SOPHISTICATED AI COMPETITION

IBM's Project Debater is a powerful AI algorithm designed to challenge the most skilled human minds at speech and debate, and it's getting more powerful. The autonomous debating system, as it's described in a research paper published in the journal *Nature*, can stitch together coherent and convincing arguments from the content of millions of news articles.

Source: [Futurism, New AI is designed to debate people](#)



SPAIN'S 4-DAY WORK WEEK TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND GLOBAL COMPETITION

Spain's progressive party Más País piloted a 4-day work week, which won the Spanish government's approval in January. Expected to last three years, the 4-day week will use 50 million euros in European Union funding to compensate an estimated 200 companies for reducing their employees' work week to 32 hours — without cutting wages. For Más País, the change would achieve important environmental and social goals. "Climate change obliges us to do things differently; we have to transform our way of working in order to reduce carbon emissions," says Íñigo Errejón, party leader and member of parliament. "How we work now is also not biologically or socially sustainable. European economies can't compete with China to work more hours for less money. We should compete to work in better conditions."

Source: [TIME, Spain is going to trial a 4-day work week. Could the idea go mainstream post-pandemic?](#)

INVEST IN HUMAN STRATEGIES

Invest in relational and human aspects of your business as a competitive advantage for long-term success. Automated processes and technology can free executives to focus more on human leadership. Expand from existing responsibilities to ones that take on new roles as coach and human advocate, which will require executives to rethink communications and learning strategies.

DEVELOP A CULTURE OF TRUST

People who work in organizations that lead with empathy are more than twice likely to agree to see their working environments as inclusive. Creating a culture of acceptance and trust equates with high levels of productivity, retention and economic success. Andy Walshe, human potential expert and a sparks & honey Advisory Board member, suggests that leaders think of themselves as coaches, not bosses.

TAKEAWAYS

RESILIENT COMPANIES, RESILIENT CULTURES

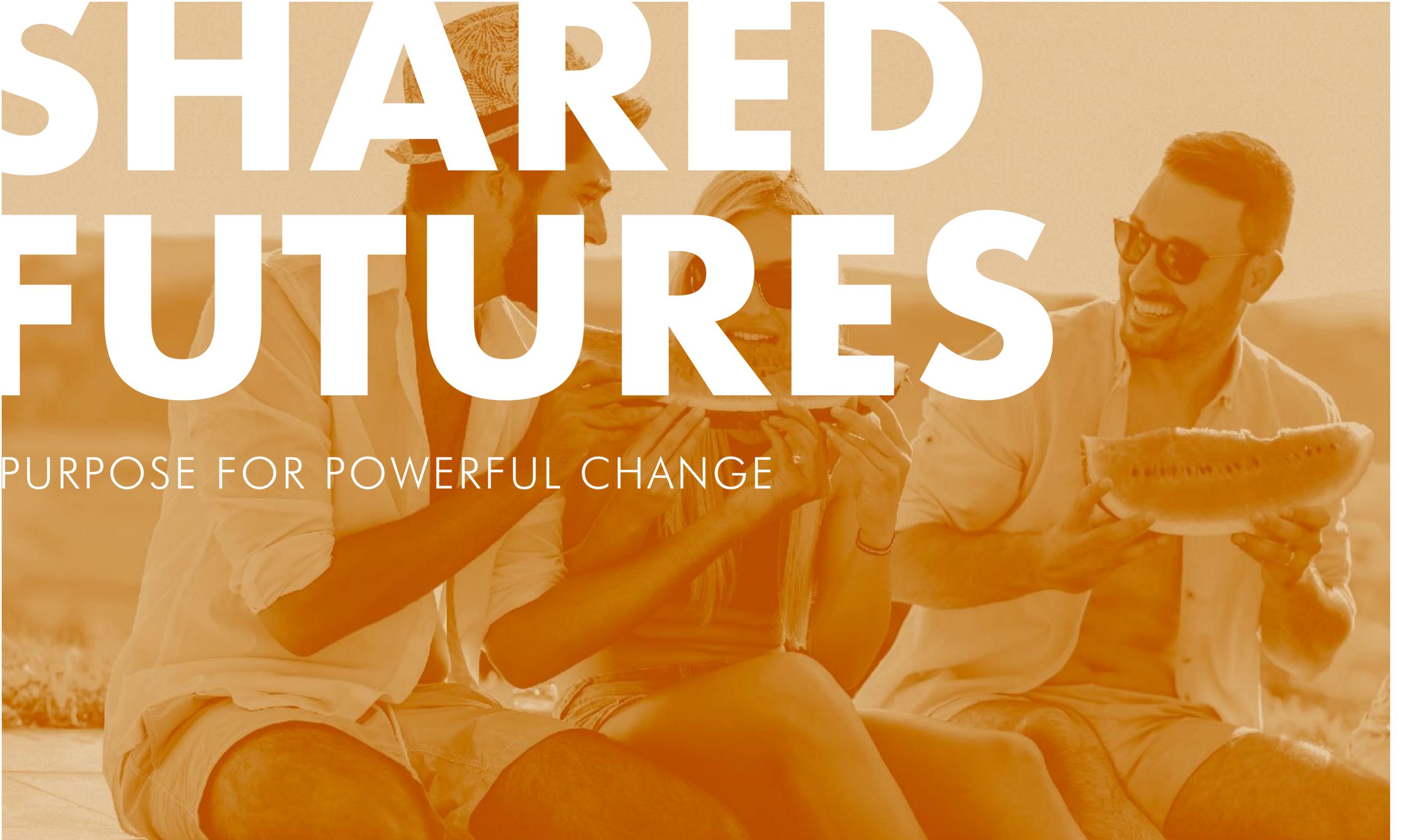


— Judy Samuelson,
Founder and executive director of the Aspen
Institute Business and Society Program,
author of *Six New Rules of Business:
Creating Real Value in a Changing World*

“I tend to think that companies that value their employees are going to be better at building resilient companies and cultures.”

SHARED FUTURES

PURPOSE FOR POWERFUL CHANGE





Everyone is keen to get back to business. But the world is still reeling from a lack of access to vaccines, economic uncertainty and social and racial strife. In this environment, organizations large and small can propel positive change not just within their business, but in their localities and industries — what some might say is a moral duty. Many companies have been responding to the voices of activists, whether it's demanding climate change

efforts or action against voter rights suppression bills, such as in Texas. Brands from HP to Estée Lauder and Under Armour are among 200 companies demanding that the government protect voter rights to ensure democracy. A shared future also means an openness to helping economic revival by tackling inequalities at a time when the U.S. alone saw over 200,000 permanent closures of businesses due to the pandemic, many of which were small- to medium-sized organizations. Critical to this mission is looking beyond company walls to new partnerships, collaborators and shared resources.

More than ever, organizations have a greater obligation and opportunity to flatten inequities across racial, economic and technological divides, reflecting the trends of Blurred Responsibility and Moral Imperative. At the same time, a number of well-known executives have been in the spotlight as individual perpetrators of inequality, who have seen their own income skyrocket as the world suffers. And the dramatic gaps in the distribution of wealth and inequalities are under a glaring focus even more so amid differences in tax distribution among rich and middle class.

With the developing world looking forward to a strong economic recovery, there's a great risk that a huge portion of the population will not be able to share in those gains, leaving the

gap between rich and poor even larger than it was before the pandemic hit. Global organizations need to recognize the threat to society — and to their own businesses — that growing inequities cause, and do their part to address them. Leaders will need to rethink how and with whom they collaborate, share resources and the lasting effect they will leave on the world they inhabit.

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INVEST IN THE POWER OF A SHARED PURPOSE



FROM NOW

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Banding together to do some good



Banding together for global good

Organizations and brands are starting to join forces and collaborate to address certain issues, most often those of racial inequality.

Organizations of all sizes will need to consider inequality more comprehensively. Not just focusing on racial or social disparity, but economic inequality, and working to rebuild systems that promote inequities. Open collaboration to tackle many overlapping issues that affect everyone.

The World Bank estimates that by the end of 2021, the pandemic will have increased the number of extreme poor — people living on less than

\$1.9
A DAY



By as many as 150 million.

Source: [Bloomberg](#)

Gaping — and growing — disparity between the extremely wealthy and those in extreme poverty



2
TRILLION

Amount the world's billionaires gained in wealth in 2020.

Source: [Forbes](#)

COMMUNITY BUILDING BUILDS YOUR BUSINESS



— David Price,
Learning innovation consultant and author of
*The Power of Us: How We Connect, Act and
Innovate Together*, sparks & honey Advisory
Board member

“The organizations that already felt that it was their job to build community — not necessarily just to please customers — they are going to be in a much stronger position at the end of all this.”

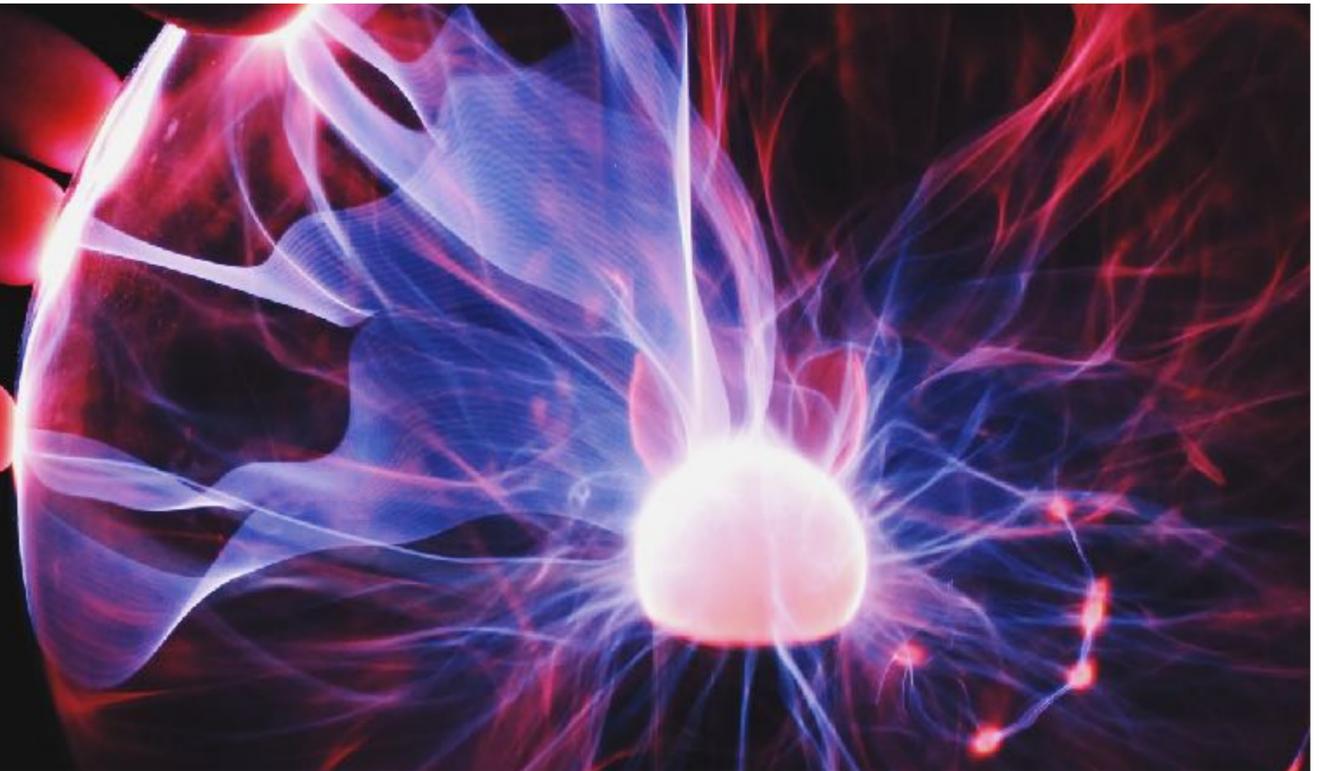
GREATER FLUIDITY BETWEEN BUSINESS AND SOCIETY

“What underlies the biggest change we’re seeing is the empowering of the employees. It’s not that Boomers didn’t care about these things, but they were not internet-enabled, and communication inside a firm was about matters within the walls of the business. Today, those walls no longer exist; there’s great fluidity between business and society.”

— Judy Samuelson,
Founder and executive director of the Aspen
Institute Business and Society Program,
author of *Six New Rules of Business:
Creating Real Value in a Changing World*



TECH EXPERIMENTS TACKLE INFRASTRUCTURE INEQUITY



Bridging the technology divide among the haves and have-nots is an escalating concern, particularly in remote regions. Access to vital services, such as education, healthcare or connectivity many take for granted is a luxury from those who cannot afford them, or for people who may live in remote areas. While the Biden administration is tackling renewed infrastructure plans, many companies have launched their own efforts. Facebook, for one, has looked at ways to quickly and cheaply install fiber, including through tightrope-walking robots, and it has experimented with

programs like internet-beaming drones and apps that let users briefly browse text on any mobile website for free. Google's Loon project aimed to beam internet to rural users from balloons, but the company shut down the project earlier this year because it wasn't sustainable. Such experiments come and go, but they point to the greater investments and responsibilities organizations, including technology companies, are making in their local and global spaces.

CULTURAL SIGNALS



THE RIGHT TO BROADBAND ACCESS FOR ALL

Microsoft’s Airband program is expanding to eight cities — Atlanta, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York, El Paso, Texas, and Memphis — to provide inexpensive broadband access and digital services access to the underserved. The company is also making devices more affordable by providing free and low-cost refurbished computers and tablets to communities of color through partners like PCs for People, Human-I-T and PlanITROI. Microsoft will also help efforts to teach community members digital skills.

Source: CNET, [Microsoft expands low-cost broadband push to 8 cities to address racial, digital inequality](#)



INVESTING IN THE FINANCIAL HEALTH OF UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

PayPal has committed to investing \$135 millions into mission-driven financial institutions and management funds that help underserved communities tackle barriers to economic equity, including Hope Credit Union, OneUnited Bank, among other institutions through a CNote Promise Account. Overall, PayPal has dedicated \$535 million for Black businesses and underserved communities to drive financial health, access and generational wealth creation.

Source: Street Insider, [PayPal deposits \\$135 million in financial institutions serving Black and underserved communities](#)

CULTURAL SIGNALS



GETTING BIG BRANDS TO SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC POWER OF BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES

Aurora James, the founder of sustainable accessories brand Brother Vellies, started the 15 Percent Pledge, a registered charity to get Black-owned businesses on the shelves of major retailers. By drawing up a list of major retailers from whom support for Black-owned businesses could bring about seismic change — including Whole Foods, Sephora, Shopbop, and Walmart — the 15 Percent Pledge is modeled on sustainability, fair compensation, design ethics and a policy of no discounts or sales.

Source: *Vogue*, [Aurora James on her 15-percent pledge campaign to support Black-owned businesses](#)



700 COMPANIES BAND TOGETHER TO PROTECT DEMOCRACY

In an historic public declaration, more than 700 corporations, law firms, nonprofit leaders, and other individuals signed an historic public declaration in *The New York Times* and other major newspapers affirming their support for voting rights in America. The statement states that “for American democracy to work for any of us, we must ensure the right to vote for all of us.”

Source: *Forbes*, [Why corporate America opposes voter suppression](#)

PREPARE TO SHARE YOUR RESOURCES

It's your moral imperative, but also your financial and economic imperative to care and work collectively to tackle systemic inequities. That means turning to new partners to share resources, from data to strategic plans, to flatten issues that affect everyone, regardless of economic status.

BE BOLD ABOUT YOUR PURPOSE

Whether it's driven by political, personal or consumer pressure, the imperative to counter systemic social, economic and technological challenges directly affects the future of your business. Be clear about defining your purpose for all your stakeholders. Coming out of 2020, people are desperate to make sense of their pandemic experiences, looking for ways to find more meaning, including in work. Consumers will pay attention to your purpose by either supporting or potentially boycotting your business.

TO SERVE SOCIETY IS TO EXIST WITH PURPOSE



— Sanjay Purohit,
Chief Curator, Societal Platform,
EkStep Foundation, technologist and
strategist, sparks & honey Advisory
Board member

“Serving society is not something that you do because you should, it’s a good thing to do but you do it because that will retain your purpose to be. If you don’t do it, your purpose will get questioned in the post-pandemic world.”

DESIGNS FOR A RESILIENT FUTURE



NOURISH LOCAL
ECOSYSTEMS TO
MITIGATE THREATS



Getting comfortable with everything uncomfortable is a given in a pandemic-marked world. Embracing what lies ahead requires nimble strategies — not just for the benefit of a single company but for the community and environment around it. The new risk is not taking any risks at all. To succeed, organizations will find power in purpose, connecting to living ecosystems in local communities, the environment, and culture at large.

Gone are the days that you can have a business that's solely built on one type of business model

of revenue. Companies that have been quick to maneuver their models in the pandemic — such as Zara closing 1,200 retail locations in favor of expanding their online stores or the movie industry shifting to streaming hits — reflect the necessity of nimble decision-making.

What's more, it's expected that organizations shift the focus from what you sell to how you show up.

From local stakeholders to people in workplaces, expectations are rising for organizations to become more culturally engaged: **74 percent of employees expect their work places to engage more actively in cultural debates**, according to research from Gartner.

A company's cultural presence extends far beyond its headquarters. If you have employees in Bangkok or Stockholm, you have an obligation to care about what's happening in those places as well. The same can be said globally in a planet threatened by climate change.

THE CLIMATE CHANGE PRESSURE COOKER

Organizations have greater stakes in infrastructure and standards to counter environmental disasters and climate change, the effects of which are becoming more evident by the day, as floods decimate European cities and the smoke of fires burning in Oregon reaches the East Coast. By 2070, some parts of the world will be unsuitable for human habitation, *The Economist* projects. The rise of undeniably extreme weather events with a human toll is changing TV network business strategies, too, with broadcasters from Fox to the Weather Channel building new streaming services dedicated to weather.

Among many climate change actions, everyone will have a role to play in meeting the

ambitious U.S. targets to reduce carbon emissions by 50%. The consumers of tomorrow will be taking them to task for it, led by climate activist Gen Zers. Most businesses, though, are not ready for this pressure.

Resiliency design is often visible in infrastructure and architecture. From internet access for fringe communities to adding more trees and green spaces and concepts that support sustainable smart cities, organizations can create a resilient future in the spaces they occupy.

The leaders of tomorrow will have to dare to look beyond their walls to understand their part in a societal structure — and strategically create positive effects in the world. To remain competitive and succeed, having a firm interest in local communities and environments is a way to not just strengthen, but to also thrive for a better future for all.

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CLIMATE JUSTICE IS AN ECONOMIC URGENCY



FROM NOW TO THE FUTURE

Avoiding risk

The pandemic highlighted the significance of building resilience and value outside of business models that focused solely on risk management.



Embrace failure and hope

Release fear-based strategies, such as risk avoidance and mitigation. Learn from the pandemic's tough lessons by embracing potential failure and uncertainty as a norm, and create resilient futures by purposefully connecting with communities and the environment.

TAKE ACTION TO BUILD COMMUNITIES



— David Price,
Learning innovation consultant and author
of *The Power of Us: How We Connect, Act
and Innovate Together*, sparks & honey
Advisory Board member

“We’ve moved beyond CSR now. The disruptions of the pandemic offer a fantastic opportunity for organizations to actually help reconstruct their communities. My hope is that organizations will now realize that if you are more purpose driven, you also need to be more action oriented.”

The Alliance of CEO Climate Leaders sent an open letter to G7 world leaders calling for immediate action on climate change



Amount managed by 79 CEOs and investors known as the Alliance of CEO Climate Leaders, who are calling for “bold action” from world leaders to meet emissions targets.

Source: Reuters, [CEOs and investors push world leaders for action on climate change](#)

CULTURAL SIGNALS



EU TO CLOSE HALF ITS OFFICE BUILDINGS - BUT WORKING FROM HOME MEANS MORE EMISSIONS

“More than 90% of our staff is very much in favor of having two to three days per week of teleworking,” said EU Administration Commissioner Johannes Hahn. That means radical change for Brussels’ EU district — it may make it harder for governments to hit climate emissions targets unless they undertake expensive building renovations: private homes are usually less efficiently heated and cooled than newer, larger structures. Emissions from private buildings in Europe are roughly double that from private transport — canceling out any emissions saved from fewer people commuting.

Source: Politico’s Global Translations newsletter, 5.28.21



PANDEMIC GROWS AMERICA’S APPETITE FOR FROZEN FOODS

Nearly a year after the pandemic began, “The Power of Frozen in Retail 2021” report from The American Frozen Food Institute and FMI revealed frozen foods were among the fastest-growing categories in the grocery store, with clear signs that Americans’ fondness for frozen will continue to grow. In 2020 frozen food sales grew in both dollars (+21%) and units (+13.3%), with nearly all types of frozen foods seeing double-digit sales increases.

Source: Food and Beverage Insider, Pandemic boosts frozen food sales, category growth

CULTURAL SIGNALS



NEW CONSUMPTION HABITS, LIKE STREAMING, AFFECT THE ENVIRONMENT

Netflix has revealed specific details about its carbon footprint. Using a tool called DIMPACT, developed by researchers at the University of Bristol, Netflix claims that one hour of streaming on its platform in 2020 used less than 100gCO₂e (a hundred grams of carbon dioxide equivalent) – that’s less than driving an average car a quarter of a mile. Now that streaming platforms have a way to measure their imprint, it’s time for them to take action on the environment.

Source: *Wired*, [We finally know how bad for the environment your streaming habit is](#)



A DUTCH TOWN PREPARES FOR 2030 CLIMATE CHANGE BY TEARING UP ASPHALT

The town of Arnhem in the Netherlands is on track for a 10-year plan to counter the effects of climate change by tearing up asphalt — and replacing it with trees. The plan is part of the city council’s goal to reduce the use of asphalt to ensure resilience against flooding and heat waves due to climate change.

Source: *Dezeen*, [Dutch city swaps asphalt for trees to adapt to climate change](#)

Organizations invested in fossil fuels are failing to take action against climate change

Many utility companies have goals to become carbon neutral by 2050 — but research shows that only a fraction of utilities in the U.S. are moving toward clean energy in the time frame needed to avoid the worst of the climate crisis.



The very low collective score measured for utilities companies' plans to retire coal, stop constructing new gas plants, and aggressively build out new clean energy by 2030.

Source: Sierra Club, [The Dirty Truth About Utility Climate Pledges](#)



The scramble to digitize everything overnight ignited debate over the downsides of all systems being forced to move online. From digital currencies to the growing streaming habits of an entertainment-hungry pandemic audience, carbon emissions and data-hungry servers are negatively affecting the environment.

The move to respond to a rapidly changed world also means having to deal with the long-term effects on the climate and environment, and every company's role in having a carbon-neutral vision as their strategy. They have to be more aware of how they impact the world, locally and environmentally.

CONSIDER NEW METRICS FOR FLOURISHING



— Andy Walshe,
Founding partner, Liminal Collective, and
sparks & honey Advisory Board member

“Consider a metric like the GDP of happiness. Globally, countries will have to start looking at new measures of success, such as the flourishing of their human capital across the country and across the society as a metric.”

TAKEN AWAY

THE EQUITY EFFECT

ACCOUNTABLE ACTION

01

RISING EXPECTATIONS FOR ACTION

Responding to change is no longer an option, but a critical part of mitigating risk. Consumers have also become more conscious of companies' social and environmental mark, and their voices will only grow louder. The urgency to respond to everything from the pandemic to climate threats is only growing.

ERGONOMICS OF HEALTH

02

FOCUS ON HOW YOU SHOW UP

Companies will have to strengthen their relationships with communities, people, and public and private partnerships. Whether it's working to create a safe environment for employees, or reconfiguring supply chains for sustainability, the pandemic has shown that there is no way to survive and thrive without involving everyone. Shift the focus from what you sell to how you show up: your efforts will reverberate in positive changes, locally and globally.

HUMAN BETTERMENT

03

GLOBAL THREATS ARE YOUR THREATS

The threat of global disasters will become more imminent and tangible. There's an urgency to address climate change, resource scarcity and pandemics that threaten human health and quality of life. Government policy will turn to technologies at scale to develop more resilient cities, public infrastructure, and housing. Similarly, global political powers will be called to collaborate to rethink how capitalistic norms affect sustainability and the future of humanity.

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TO SERVE SOCIETY IS TO EXIST WITH PURPOSE



— Judy Samuelson,
Founder and executive director of the Aspen
Institute Business and Society Program,
author of *Six New Rules of Business:
Creating Real Value in a Changing World*

“People used to say, ‘It’s not business and society, it’s business in society.’”

TAKE ACTION ON EQUITY - BUT HOW?

June 2020 propelled organizations to ignite DE&I (diversity, equity and inclusion) discussions, yet very few have had success in integrating DE&I principles into their company culture or behavior, much less addressing the systemic inequities within their industry, company and consumers.

The effects of equity run wide and deep. It's not only about treating people fairly and making them feel like they're included. It's about taking a long, hard look at everything that your organization creates, talks about and represents. It's about developing a *Diversity Operating System* that orients your *People, Products, Practices* and *Partnerships* around diversity, equity and inclusion.

As an initial step for creating a *Diversity Operating System*, an *Equity Audit* can reveal where the organization is currently, and where it is *willing* to be. Equity work requires an investment of time and resources to establish the priorities, needs and barriers that exist within the company and across the

industry. Next, an *Equity Accelerator* model can define real solutions and actions the organization must take to embed DE&I across its people, products, practices and partnerships. Finally, establishing an *Equity Playbook* becomes the bedrock for the organization's strategic planning, corporate behavior and business metrics.

Let's work toward creating an equitable future together.



Davianne C. Harris
Chief Client Officer and Head of Diversity,
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01

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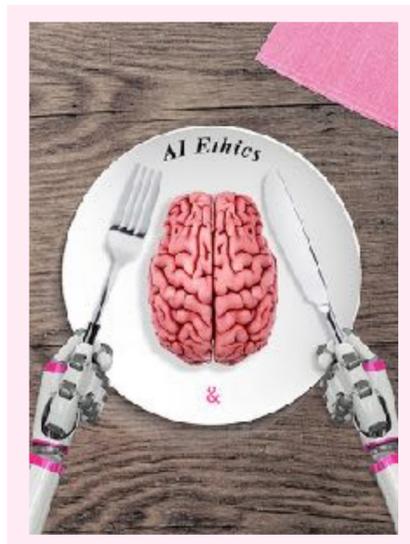
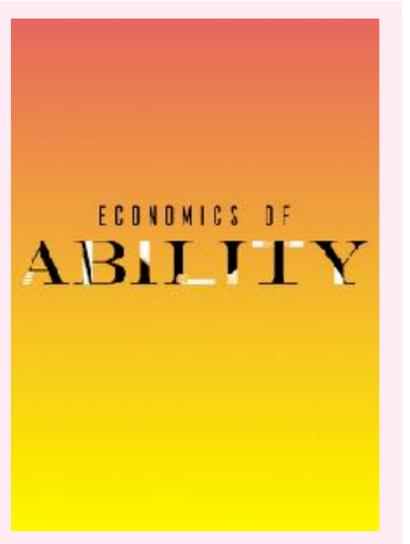
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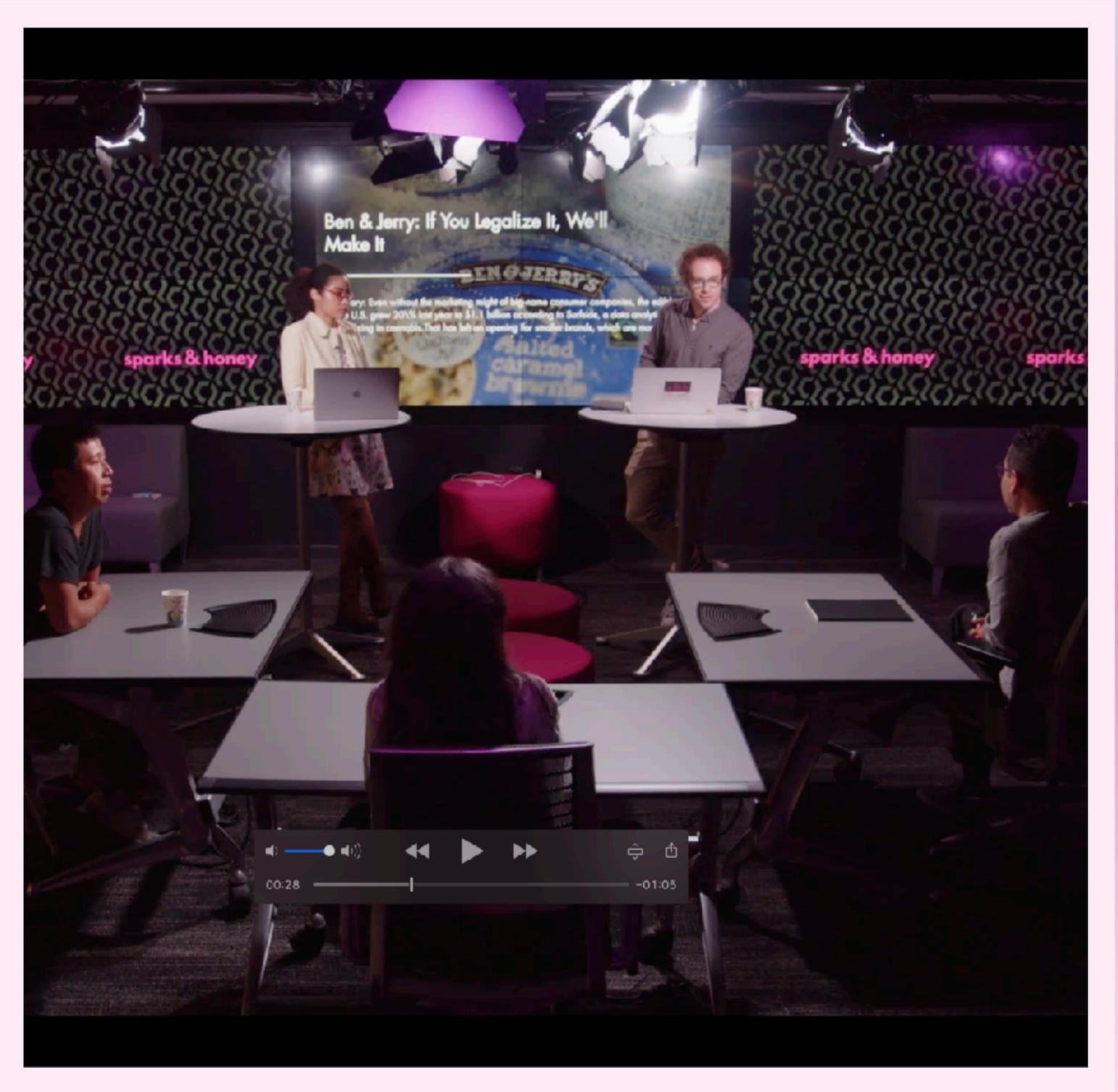
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