



EDITION 2 | 2020 - 2021

CAROL CONE
ON PURPOSE 



FROM THE HOST | FEBRUARY 2022

In this second edition of the Purpose 360 eBook, we shifted from asking our guests “What is your purpose?” to “What is the **power** of your purpose?”

The power of purpose—to inspire employees, unite a diversity of stakeholders, ignite innovation, and guide growth—is evident within each organization included in this edition. All are somewhere on the path to embed purpose throughout their organizations, making this an especially timely moment to share the rich insights of these guests.

Why? 2022 will be the year of embedding purpose. Stakeholders from Wall Street to your next door neighbor have made it clear: Companies must embrace the power of purpose.

Perhaps no individual has proven this quite as effectively as Paul Polman, former CEO of Unilever, and today the mind behind IMAGINE. Speaking with him was the highlight of my year—and I trust you will find his insights equally invigorating.

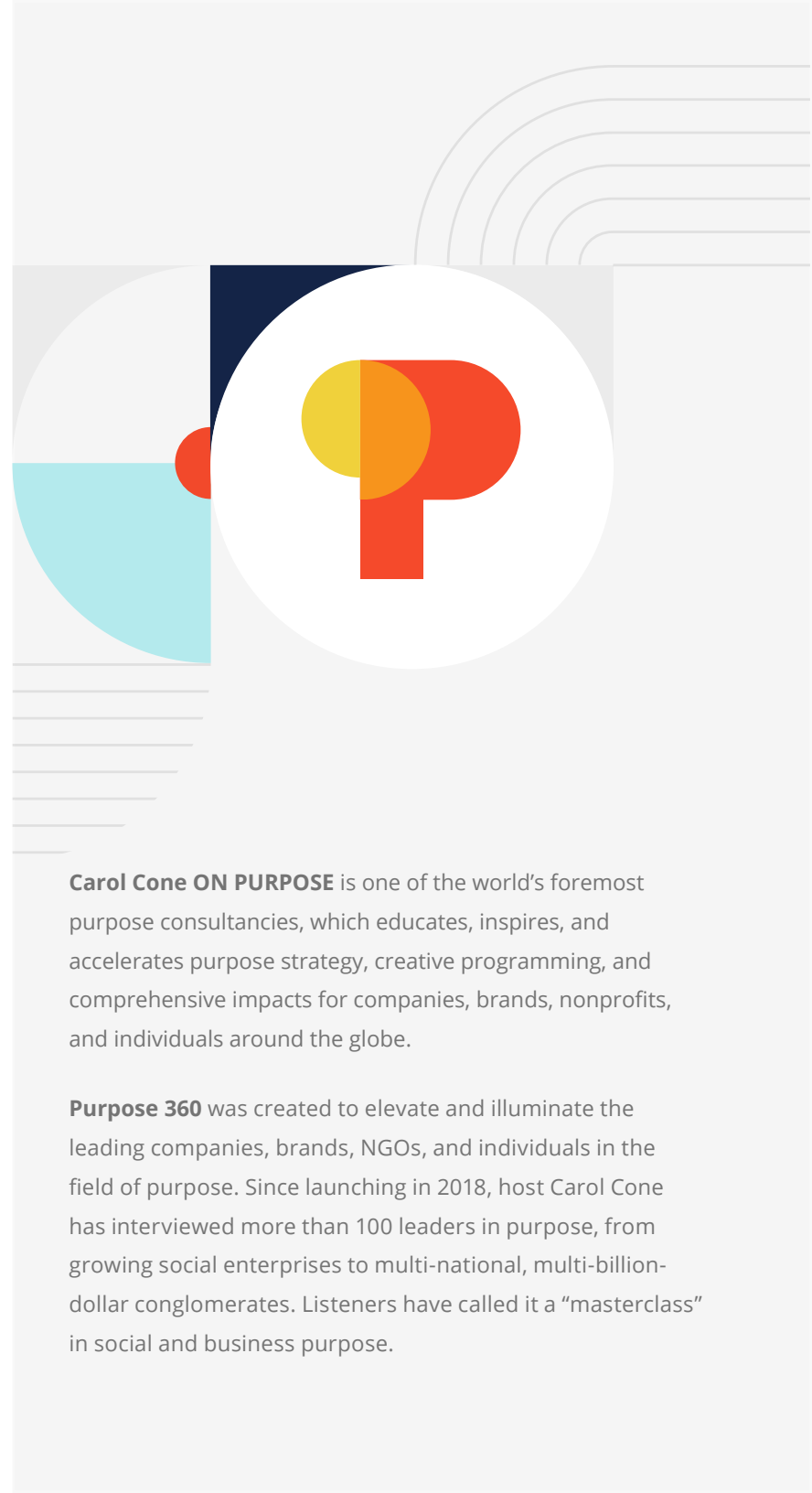
I hope you are inspired by the lessons shared by each of our accomplished guests. I hope you are moved to share them with your team, and perhaps bring some of them to life within your own organization and network.

Until then, I ask: What is the power of your purpose?

CAROL CONE

CEO

Carol Cone ON PURPOSE



Carol Cone ON PURPOSE is one of the world’s foremost purpose consultancies, which educates, inspires, and accelerates purpose strategy, creative programming, and comprehensive impacts for companies, brands, nonprofits, and individuals around the globe.

Purpose 360 was created to elevate and illuminate the leading companies, brands, NGOs, and individuals in the field of purpose. Since launching in 2018, host Carol Cone has interviewed more than 100 leaders in purpose, from growing social enterprises to multi-national, multi-billion-dollar conglomerates. Listeners have called it a “masterclass” in social and business purpose.



Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose (CECP) is a trusted advisor to companies on their corporate purpose journeys to build long-term sustainable value and tell their impact stories.

The last couple of years have provided an inflection point for how companies respond to stakeholder needs—from new COVID-19 variants to racial reckoning to climate change and more. As Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose® (CECP) guides 200+ of the world's largest companies that represent \$23 billion in community investment on their purpose journeys, we share actionable insights with our CEO-led coalition on community investment, employee engagement, environmental social governance (ESG), diversity equity and inclusion (DE&I), and telling the story. As Carol explores with her guests, we too ask, what have we learned and what path are we charting for the future?

Employees and customers seek to associate with companies that share their values, and the pandemic has only strengthened these affinities. CECP's *Giving in Numbers™* found corporate social investments increased an unprecedented 41% over the last year, due to companies' rapid pivot to respond to community needs.

Companies should expect increased demand from all stakeholders for data demonstrating progress on goals on climate, human capital, and more. Our recent *Frontline Worker Wellbeing in a Time of Crisis* report, with support from the Ford Foundation, found that wage is not the only critical factor for workers; stability of pay, paid time off, safety, shift schedules, and flexibility, plus a sense of purpose and dignity are also vital.

The thread that connects this demand is integration: all business units of a company should understand the intersection of DEI, environment, wellbeing, and more. Our *Global Impact at Scale* report found that 75% of companies predicted full integration of ESG across departments within five years; and 74% of companies consider investors when sharing data on the S in ESG.

Hard questions are being asked of all of us, but especially of CEOs. The public is relying on them for their response to global challenges with agility and perseverance. We are pleased to partner with Carol Cone on this eBook, capturing how solutions to these issues are coming to life for leading companies and organizations across all sectors.

DARYL BREWSTER

CEO

Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose



Contents

06 **PAUL POLMAN**

IMAGINE, Unilever

10 **GAYLE SCHUELLER & MICHAEL STROIK**

*SVP, Chief Sustainability Officer & Vice President
3M*

12 **TIMOTHY MCCLIMON**

*Former SVP, Corporate Social Responsibility and President, American Express Foundation
American Express*

14 **JUDY SAMUELSON**

*Executive Director
Aspen Institute*

16 **CHRIS MARQUIS**

*SC Johnson Professor of Sustainable Global Enterprise
Cornell University*

18 **MAURY WOLFE & BOB JIMENEZ**

*AVP, Corporate Responsibility and Public Affairs & SVP, Corporate Affairs
Cox Enterprises*

20 **MICHELE PARMELEE**

*Chief People and Purpose Officer
Deloitte*

22 **ARIA FINGER**

*Former CEO
DoSomething*

24 **SAUNDRA PELLETIER**

*CEO
Evoform*

26 **WENDY SALOMON**

*Managing Director, Reputation and Corporate Strategy
The Harris Poll*

28 **ERIN MEEZAN**

*Chief Sustainability Officer
Interface*

30 **SOPHIA MENDELSON & SARA BOGDAN**

*Former Chief Sustainability Officer & Director, Head of Sustainability and ESG
JetBlue*

Contents, cont.

32 **MARTIN WHITTAKER**

CEO
JUST Capital

34 **KELLY MCGINNIS**

SVP & Chief Communications Officer
Levi Strauss & Company

36 **KATE BEHNCKEN**

Vice President, Lead of Microsoft
Philanthropies
Microsoft

38 **ELLIOT KOTEK**

Founder and CEO
The Nation of Artists

40 **AMY WEISENBACH**

Senior Vice President of Marketing
The New York Times

42 **MARYAM BANIKARIM**

Head of Marketing, Global and Community
Nextdoor

44 **JENNIFER BRUNELLE**

Head of Charitable Giving
NRG

46 **CORLEY KENNA**

Head of Communications and Policy
Patagonia

48 **P.J. MARSHALL**

Founder & Executive Director
Restore the Earth Foundation

50 **AMY SMITH**

Chief Strategy & Impact Officer
TOMS Shoes

52 **GEORGE TAYLOR**

CEO
Tru Colors

54 **DANIEL EPSTEIN**

CEO and Founder
Unreasonable Group

56 **REBA DOMINSKI**

EVP, Chief Social Responsibility Officer and
President, US Bank Foundation
US Bank





LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Paul Polman

IMAGINE, UNILEVER

UNILEVER'S STORY MAKES THE BUSINESS CASE FOR PURPOSE

As one of the most revered pioneers of the stakeholder capitalism movement, former Unilever CEO Paul Polman is known for his unwavering commitment to business done differently, and his transformational vision is only matched by his boundless capacity for hope.

His new book, *Net Positive: How Courageous Companies Thrive by Giving More Than They Take*, co-authored with sustainability leader Andrew Winston, is the first to chronicle the entire Unilever purpose journey. Serving as a roadmap for embedding purpose into an organization, the book poses a simple but loaded question: How can a company profit from solving the world's problems rather than creating them?

Polman's tenure at Unilever illustrates the answer, and in the next chapter of his life, he wants to bring more change-making executives along for the ride. When Polman became CEO of Unilever in January 2009, growth had been stagnant for more than a decade and leadership wasn't reinvesting in the business. It was the middle of the financial crisis, and the company needed change.

Most executives would have drastically cut costs, but Polman took a different course that would prove to make business history. He revisited Unilever's roots in 19th century Europe, a time when one out of two babies didn't make it past their first year and hygiene issues were rampant. Founder William Hesketh Lever launched the company with a simple objective: to make hygiene commonplace and affordable for everyone. Polman resolved to recreate Lever's vision for a new generation: "Instead of making hygiene commonplace, why don't we lift that purpose up and make sustainable living commonplace?" he recalls.

The Unilever Sustainable Living Plan, launched in November 2010, established a framework to halve the company's environmental footprint, improve the health of a billion people, and better lives and livelihoods for millions around the world — all while doubling sales and delivering growth for shareholders.

By 2018, Unilever's purpose-driven brands were growing 69% faster than the rest of the business, and they delivered 75% of its overall growth that year. When Unilever marked the 10th and final year of the Sustainable Living Plan in 2020, its health and hygiene programs had reached more than 1.3 billion people, and millions more were touched by economic empowerment initiatives delivered across the company's supply chain. The value of the company had also tripled compared to 2009.

Still, "it's not the success of Unilever that counts," Polman says. "If Unilever does this but nobody else follows, we're still in trouble."

That's where the visionary leader focuses his time these days, supporting CEOs in their work to implement purpose as cofounder and chairman of Imagine, which mobilizes business leaders around the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“We are at a crucial juncture where we have to decide to live together in harmony and in sync with planet Earth, or become one of the statistics of extinguished species. I know which side of history I want to be on.”

The Traits of a Net Positive Leader

In his new book, Polman codifies the characteristics that helped him succeed as a leader while driving positive change and putting people first. He describes the five critical traits that help create a net-positive leader as:

- A sense of purpose, duty and service
- Empathy with a high level of compassion, humility and humanity
- The ability to inspire and show moral leadership
- A penchant for developing transformative partnerships
- Courage above all

What is a Net Positive Company?

“We need to bring humanity back to business,” Polman says. In his book, he calls out five markers of the type of business we need today.

According to Polman, a net-positive company:

- Serves others
- Follows the golden rule
- Observes moral boundaries regarding treatment of others
- Tries to repair, restore, reinvigorate and regenerate its products, materials, supply chain and overall engagement with society and the environment
- Improves wellbeing for everyone it impacts

FOSTERING NET POSITIVE LEADERS

“This might be a little provocative, but this is not a crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change, food insecurity or inequality. This is a crisis of apathy, of greed, of selfishness that needs to be addressed,” Polman says. “Therefore, it starts first and foremost with your own journey and your own leadership.”

In his book, Polman advocates for the activation of net positive leaders to drive net positive companies. “You cannot get a systems transformation or a business transformation if you don’t have a leadership transformation,” he says.

That means taking ownership of the impact you have on the world and figuring out what’s yours to do when it comes to making it better. “Purpose is defined by Colin Mayer as ‘to profitably address the issues of people and planet,’ but first you need to understand these issue of people and planet,” Polman explains. “It starts with taking responsibility for your total impact and with listening very carefully to all of your stakeholders: your communities, your suppliers, your trusted peers and the people you serve. That’s what we did at Unilever.”

CREATING NET POSITIVE COMPANIES

“We describe a net positive company as a company that gives more than it takes,” Polman says. “It’s not good enough anymore to focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is basically dealing with the ‘less bad.’ We have to make the shift toward responsible social corporations.”

Eliminating negative impacts, often called net zero, is a clear first step — and here, the business community is already on its way: About a fifth of the world’s largest companies have set a net zero goal for greenhouse gas emissions, and thousands more have set targets to reduce their consumption of energy, water and waste. That’s encouraging, Polman says, but it’s not nearly enough.

“As we are passing these planetary boundaries, we need to think about restorative, reparative, regenerative — and this is what we call net positive,” he says. “How can you show that you have a positive impact in this world by being around? And if you can’t show that, why should the citizens of this world keep you around in the first place?”

Answering these questions with authority and authenticity is a “very tall order that, frankly, no business has really achieved yet,” Polman concedes. Yet, he remains hopeful. “People are now broadly convinced of what needs to be done, but what is missing is the speed and scale, and this is what the book is trying to address,” he says. “Many people struggle with that. In essence, I believe in the goodness of human beings, of CEOs, et cetera, but it’s the ‘how’ that needs to be answered now, not the ‘what.’” To get to the “how” behind transformational change within your organization, read on for Polman’s top insights — and 60+ more from leading purpose-driven executives.

Insights

ENGAGE YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

“No CEO or company alone can solve the issue of plastics in the ocean, stop deforestation or move a sector to regenerative agriculture,” Polman says. “So the first thing to do to make your business models more robust, to lower negative externalities, and seize these opportunities is to work with the people in your value chain.” For Unilever, that meant engaging suppliers around sustainability practices through the Partner to Win program. By 2020, the company was sourcing 92% of its top 12 ingredients sustainably. “Bit by bit, we converted this value chain,” Polman says.

BE AUDACIOUS ABOUT GOALS, TRANSPARENT ABOUT PROGRESS

The Sustainable Living Plan included time-bound targets and clear progress updates on an annual basis. “By setting these targets, you assume responsibility. You can be held accountable,” Polman says. “And by making these targets public, you create trust.” Equally important is to be bold in your targets and avoid the trap of setting goals you know will be easy to accomplish. “We see a lot of companies ticking the box and saying, ‘we do ESG,’ but frankly they know these targets are not sufficient.”

CATEGORIES



Culture, Behavior & Values



Change Management



Signature Programs

CEOS MUST RISE TO THE OCCASION

“CEOs are being held to higher standards,” Polman says. “If you only take responsibility for what people call Scopes 1 and 2, what is under your own control, you can only influence so much. People increasingly expect companies to be part of solutions.” And make no mistake: “The fish rots from the head,” he says bluntly. “If the CEO is not fully behind it, if you don’t believe in it, then, frankly, step down from your job because it’s too much of a responsibility given to you.”

**3M**

Gayle Schueller & Michael Stroik

SVP, Chief Sustainability Officer & Vice
President

3M

3M AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1902, 3M sells more than 55,000 products across 800 brands in the consumer, industrial, transportation, electronics and healthcare segments. It employs nearly 100,000 people worldwide, with 2020 revenues exceeding \$30 billion, and the 3M Foundation directs over \$70 million in community investments annually.

PURPOSE

Science. Applied to Life.

3M's purpose statement is fitting in more ways than one. The Minnesota-based company has been using science to solve everyday problems for over a century — from the happy accident that became Post-It notes to innovations in aerospace, manufacturing and healthcare.

The company allows employees to use 15% of their work time to tinker and try new things, and it hosts an internal tech forum with more than 10,000 scientists and technologists from around the world. But new products and inventions aren't the only way 3M applies science to make life better. The company also has a strong track record of investing in its people and the communities it serves — including a signature focus on STEM education and equity.

In particular, 3M has a knack for creating space for employees to use their skills to help young people succeed, lifting up a new generation of innovators while giving employees plenty of opportunities to feel fulfilled at work. Those opportunities include 3M Visiting Wizards, which mobilizes 3M volunteers to host fun science demonstrations in schools, camps and museums to get K-12 kids interested in STEM, along with 3M STEP, which places students in the lab alongside 3M scientists. Passport-toting 3Mers can also take advantage of the Impact Program and use company time to work on skills-based social impact programs in international locations.

“We’ve learned time and again that purpose is incredibly important to our people,” Michael Stroik says. “I ask colleagues, ‘What drew you to 3M? What keeps you at 3M?’ And it’s the potential impact our folks can have on the world when we come together.”

The coronavirus pandemic put that commitment to the ultimate test — and the company stepped up in a big way. Along with investing more than \$20 million in direct relief, global R&D and support for STEM education amidst the pandemic, 3M dramatically ramped up production of lifesaving products and ensured their availability worldwide. It made 2 billion N95 respirators globally in 2020, more than tripling its standard production. Even under intense pressure to hoard respirators, masks and other personal protective equipment for the U.S. market, CEO Mike Roman worked to ensure they remained available at fair prices in all markets that depend on 3M as a supplier. The company also actively addressed PPE price-gouging and fraud.

“We have not raised our prices, and we are committed to making sure that the right materials are getting to the right people all around the world,” Schueller says. 3M continues to supply PPE globally and enable COVID-19 vaccine and therapeutic production, while employees volunteer virtually and in person to support communities affected by the pandemic.

CATEGORIES

-  **Employees**
-  **Technology & Innovation**
-  **Community Engagement**

Insights

BE WHO YOU ARE

“Being authentic to who you are is the most critical thing,” Stroik says. “There are a million directions you can go. You talk to different stakeholders, and everybody has an opinion. But to be great, you need to focus on who you are as a company, identify your core competencies, and capitalize on them to drive impact.”

IT STARTS FROM THE TOP

“When Mike Roman came on as CEO in 2018, he wanted to step up our efforts on sustainability and provide a new approach that would resonate with people around the world and be contemporary to today’s expectations,” Schueller says. Roman’s vision catalyzed 3M’s industry-leading sustainability strategy and its focus on climate action, promoting the circular economy and engaging communities, all in line with 3M’s ambition to improve lives through science.

STUDY YOUR COMPANY

“Be curious about your company and the role it plays in society,” Stroik advises. “Ask questions about why you’re doing things and how you could do things better. I’ve learned that I have a lot to learn from other people at 3M, which is really fun.”





LISTEN TO THE EPISODE


**AMERICAN
EXPRESS**

Timothy McClimon

Former SVP, Corporate Social Responsibility
and President, American Express Foundation

AMERICAN EXPRESS

AMERICAN EXPRESS AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1850 as a parcel delivery service, American Express is now a multinational financial services company headquartered in New York City. It employs over 60,000 people worldwide, with 2020 revenues exceeding \$36 billion.

American Express is a purpose trailblazer in more ways than one. The company launched one of the first employee giving campaigns in 1885 to help build the pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. Nearly 100 years later, it created the first modern cause marketing campaign, raising nearly \$2 million to restore the iconic statue and catalyzing decades of work to preserve historic U.S. monuments.

The American Express Foundation was created four years before the first American Express credit card and has since provided nearly a billion dollars to thousands of causes around the world. As the company has evolved, so too has its approach to purpose. “A lot has changed in the past 15 years,” Timothy McClimon says. “We’ve gone from focusing on philanthropy and how it can support communities to integrating responsibility into the business.” That includes leveraging the company’s substantial capital to solve some of the world’s toughest problems, chief among them climate change and social inequality.

American Express has been certified carbon neutral and powered by 100% renewable energy since 2018, with a goal of reaching net-zero emissions across its entire value chain by 2035. The company is also looking to advance climate solutions beyond its own four walls, including at least \$10 million in new philanthropic funding for climate action initiatives by 2025. The American Express Leadership Academy, founded in 2008 with the Center for Creative Leadership, aims to give tomorrow’s leaders the resources they need to improve their communities. The program has trained over 5,000 nonprofit leaders across 10 countries, many of whom went on to become CEOs and senior leaders at their organizations.

“For me, the biggest accomplishment is that this is a diverse group of leaders,” McClimon says. “We’ve been able to impact individuals, who have then impacted their organizations, who have then impacted their communities.” About half of Leadership Academy participants are people of color, a figure American Express is looking to grow to 75% as part of racial equity commitments made in 2020. The company also outlined a \$1 billion equity action plan, including \$50 million to support nonprofits led by people of color and \$10 million to support Black-owned small businesses.

You’ve likely also heard of Small Business Saturday. American Express was behind that, too, and it remains one of the key ways the company supports small business owners. More than 88 million U.S. consumers “shopped small” on the Saturday after Thanksgiving in 2020, with 77% saying it inspired them to visit more local business all year. As the pandemic left small business owners in crisis, the Shop Small movement expanded to include Dine Small and Takeout Tuesdays, created to help restaurants stay afloat, and Stand for Small, a coalition of 40 large companies pledging to support small businesses. “The way to support these businesses is to drive customers there and get other corporations involved,” McClimon says. “These small businesses are important to their neighborhoods.”

Insights

PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR EMPLOYEES

“They are your ambassadors in the community,” McClimon says. “They want to be involved, and they are your primary stakeholder in corporate social responsibility. Some may think it’s your customer, regulators, the media or nonprofits, but your colleagues are the ones who really help you get the work done.”

DON’T KEEP SECRETS

“Your communities, customers and colleagues have to know what you’re doing, why you’re doing it, how you’re doing it and how you’re measuring it,” McClimon explains. “We live in a world with no secrets, so don’t even attempt to keep a secret. It doesn’t make any sense, because your power comes from sharing this information.”

YOU DON’T HAVE TO ‘OWN’ EVERYTHING

“We like putting our name on things. We like founding initiatives and being identified as the founder, but sometimes ownership can get in the way of success,” McClimon observes. “It was never going to be a movement if it was ‘American Express Small Business Saturday.’”

CATEGORIES



Change Management



Social Issues



Sustainability



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Judy Samuelson

Executive Director

ASPEN INSTITUTE

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1949, the Aspen Institute brings leaders together to solve some of the toughest global challenges across nine distinct practices, including Business + Society and Energy + Environment.

MISSION

Drive change through dialogue, leadership and action to help solve the greatest challenges of our time.

In case you haven't heard, the landscape of business is changing. Nearly three years ago, the Business Roundtable, which includes CEOs from more than 180 large public companies, issued a statement revising the "purpose of a corporation" as a duty to serve all stakeholders, including employees, customers and communities. The new stance bucks the longstanding business doctrine of shareholder primacy and economist Milton Friedman's famous words that the only "social responsibility of business is to increase profits." Less than a year later, ahead of its annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, the World Economic Forum updated the Davos Manifesto in favor of a "better kind of capitalism"—again insisting that companies have a duty to all of their stakeholders.

In the months since, a global pandemic, a worldwide reckoning around racial justice and rising pressure to take action on climate change have put these words to the ultimate test. Some leading companies have responded in kind — making renewed social investments, setting science-based emissions targets, and pledging to stand for equity and justice. Still, trust in business remains shaky. It's clear the private sector, arguably the most powerful force in the world, is in desperate need of a new operating manual — and Judy Samuelson provides it with her 2021 book, *The Six New Rules of Business: Creating Value in a Changing World*.

With a rich background in everything from business and banking to major foundations and think tanks — including over 23 years as Executive Director of The Aspen Institute's

Business + Society Program, which she founded — Samuelson has a unique vision for how business must evolve. In her book, she details why success is no longer defined by the balance sheet and codifies the attributes that help businesses thrive today. Chief among them:

“Reputation, trust and other intangibles drive business value,” and “culture is king.”

“What’s abundantly clear today is the companies that really succeed are the ones with a robust culture,” Samuelson says. That means listening to consumers, treating employees well, and recognizing that companies will be held accountable for far more than what happens within their own four walls. “Purpose is ground zero,” Samuelson says. “It’s the organizing principle for activity. It’s the reason employees get up in the morning and want to go to work. It is central to setting the company’s direction, and it’s fully within the control of the executive. You have to be clear: Why are you in business? Why did the public give you the license to operate, and how do you honor that?”

Insights

UNDERSTAND THE TRADEOFFS

“Investors and consumers engage in magical thinking that they can have it both ways,” Samuelson says. “There are actual tradeoffs between profits and return and creating high-quality goods and services. It’s more expensive to have high labor standards, for example, but what’s the tradeoff involved? There are companies with superb reputations that have figured this out.”

WAKE UP TO THE NEW ROLE OF EMPLOYEES

“The old rule was that employees are a cost of doing business. Today, it is increasingly clear that employees are the accountability mechanism for a company,” Samuelson says. “Employees are your allies: They’re well aligned with the long-term health of the enterprise and open up both risk and opportunity to better view.”

ALIGN CEO PAY WITH PURPOSE

“It’s not about how much they make, although that’s clearly a concern for many. It’s more about what we’re paying them to do,” Samuelson explains. “As long as total shareholder return is allowed to signal pay, which it clearly is today, we’re essentially telling the CEO to work against the grain of the intentions laid out by the Business Roundtable. These systems need to harmonize.”

CATEGORIES



Employees



Culture, Behavior & Values



Change Management



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Chris Marquis

SC Johnson Professor of Sustainable Global
Enterprise

CORNELL UNIVERSITY

AT A GLANCE

B Corporations are companies voluntarily certified through the nonprofit B Lab, founded in 2006 when friends Jay Coen Gilbert, Bart Houlahan and Andrew Kassoy left the corporate world to develop a new way of doing business. To become a B Corp, companies must score at least an 80 out of 200 on the rigorous B Impact Assessment and have their information validated by B Lab every three years.

In his seminal 1970 essay published in the New York Times, Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman asserted: “The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits.”

“It sounds like just some academic writing, but this essay set off a sea change in corporate governance and the priorities of corporate America,” Chris Marquis says. “Before the 1970s, companies were much more community focused. Since then, they’ve been primarily focused on shareholders.”

On the 50th anniversary of the famous essay, Marquis released his latest book, *Better Business: How the B Corp Movement Is Remaking Capitalism*, to promote a break from the so-called Friedman doctrine of shareholder primacy and celebrate a new way of doing business. Marquis has been studying the B Corp Movement since a former student asked him about it in 2008. “I must admit I was a little embarrassed because I didn’t know what B Corporations were at the time,” Marquis recalls. He went on to write the first Harvard Business School case study on B Lab, the nonprofit that certifies B Corps, and began to reorient his classes around social entrepreneurship. In the years since, the broader business community has moved to embrace a purpose beyond profit — from the Business Roundtable’s 2019 statement to “redefine the purpose of a corporation,” to BlackRock CEO Larry Fink’s successive shareholder letters promoting stakeholder capitalism.

Meanwhile, the B Corp movement has exploded — from the first 82 companies certified in 2007 to more than 4,000 B Corps in 70 countries across 150 industries today. Over 100,000 companies manage their impact with B Lab’s B Impact Assessment and SDG Action Manager. And 10 years after B Lab began lobbying U.S. states to pass benefit corporation legislation, 35 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico, as well as the nations of Italy, Colombia and Ecuador now recognize benefit corporations as legal corporate entities.

Further, in a marked departure from the early days — when B Corps were mostly smaller companies with purpose at their core (think: Patagonia, Ben & Jerry’s and Tom’s of Maine) — major multinationals like Danone North America and Natura are now counted among the movement’s certified companies.

“I call it the B Corp movement because I feel it’s not just about B Corps,” Marquis says. “Not all companies can be B Corps, but all companies can be more like B Corps. B Lab and the community of B Corps have created a series of processes, systems and tools that allow all companies to be part of this movement.”

Insights

PURPOSE BUILDS BETTER BUSINESSES

“Doing environmental, social and governance (ESG) work makes the company better as a whole,” Marquis says. “This goes even beyond ESG: I titled the book *Better Business* because so many of the executives I talked to said, ‘This is not even something that made us better socially and environmentally. It has actually made us a better business.’”

ACCOUNTABILITY MATTERS

“Measurements, accountability and transparency are the core of this in many ways. You need to be able to walk the talk,” Marquis says. “What you measure matters, and going through the B Impact Assessment helps companies in their accountability and their overall way of management.”

TO BUILD A MOVEMENT, LEARN FROM THE BEST

“Learn from the famous movements of the past — the civil rights movement, the gay rights movement, the women’s liberation movement,” Marquis advises. “Latch on to key events, be careful about your framing, and get diverse and powerful networks behind you — that’s really the key to achieving a social movement.”

CATEGORIES



Change Management



Culture, Behavior & Values



Social Issues



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Maury Wolfe & Bob Jimenez

AVP, Corporate Responsibility and Public
Affairs & SVP, Corporate Affairs

COX ENTERPRISES

COX ENTERPRISES AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1898, Cox Enterprises is the parent company of Cox Communications, America's third-largest cable company, and Cox Automotive, owner of Autotrader and Kelley Blue Book. With nearly 50,000 employees and \$21.1 billion in pre-pandemic revenues, Cox is one of the largest family-owned businesses in the U.S.

PURPOSE

Empower people today to build a better future for the next generation.

Cox Enterprises is a family-owned company with purpose at its core. It was founded by James M. Cox, a farmer, teacher and journalist who championed progressive reforms as a three-time governor of Ohio. After losing a bid for U.S. president in 1920, Cox pivoted to focus on growing his business, a burgeoning communications conglomerate that started in newspapers and later expanded into radio, television, cable and automotive.

More than 80 years later, Cox's grandson, Jim Kennedy, has worked to put environmental sustainability at the core of the company. Under Kennedy's stewardship, the company launched its national sustainability program, Cox Conserves, in 2007. It has since invested nearly \$1 billion in sustainable businesses and technologies, and the latest ambitions under Cox Conserves have the company on track to become waste neutral by 2024, and water and carbon neutral 10 years later. In 2018, as Cox's great-grandson Alex Taylor took the helm, the company formally articulated its purpose—one that has kept Cox at the forefront for more than a century.

"We worked together to develop the company's purpose at this really critical time in our history," Jimenez recalls. "It was an amazing eight-month journey of discovery, bringing in the voices of all of our employees."

As part of its mission to “build a better future for the next generation,” Cox doubled down on its investments in clean technology and is striving to become a “multibillion-dollar cleantech business” in under a decade by investing in and acquiring businesses that provide sustainable energy, food and water.

Cox has also spoken out on social issues like voting rights, and continues to invest in its home city of Atlanta through a startup accelerator and social impact accelerator in partnership with seed investing platform Techstars. “Part of Alex Taylor’s vision is to put Atlanta on the map in the startup ecosystem,” Wolfe says. “We think Atlanta is the right city to compete with the West Coast.”

Through it all, employees remain at the center of everything at Cox – from mentoring impact entrepreneurs in Atlanta to taking small actions to lighten their environmental footprint through Cox Conserves. “We ask our employees, first and foremost, to live our purpose,” Jimenez says. “We truly believe Cox is an American business success story and one that is still in the making after 122 years.”

Insights

PUT PURPOSE AT THE CENTER

“A purpose without action is just some great words that folks can feel good about,” Jimenez says. “We use purpose as the lens through which we make all of our decisions. We want to have a ripple effect that elevates other individuals and communities, particularly those in need, and raises them in the process.”

SHARE WHAT YOU’RE DOING

“Despite the fact that we’re a private company and don’t have the same pressure as public companies do to report, we want to make sure we’re keeping up with transparency,” Wolfe says. “We’ve realized that in order to inspire others, we need to be better about how we’re sharing the work we do and our lessons learned.”

NEVER STOP EVOLVING

Cox’s history of constant evolution has helped it stand the test of time, and leadership knows the journey isn’t over yet. “Our history is in connectivity, then mobility. Now we’re setting up a cleantech business, and that premise is a great example of our purpose coming to life,” Wolfe says. “It’s an intersection of environmental sustainability and new technology for the future of the business.”

CATEGORIES



Culture, Behavior & Values



Sustainability



Employees



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE


Deloitte.
Michele Parmelee

Chief People and Purpose Officer

DELOITTE

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1845, Deloitte is a multinational professional services network headquartered in London. The company employs more than 310,000 people in 150+ countries and territories, with 2020 revenues exceeding \$50 billion.

PURPOSE

To make an impact that matters.

“We are our talent,” Michelle Parmelee says. Those four simple words define how Deloitte brings its purpose to life.

It was one of the first of the Big Four to deeply integrate purpose and a set of shared values into its business, catalyzing transformational change for the organization and its clients around the world. Because the company lives its purpose and values so well, every year it receives more than 3 million applications for less than 100,000 job openings and is consistently recognized as a great place to work.

“Our talent strategy has been designed to bring purpose to light,” Parmelee explains. “We know it’s important to communicate our purpose in our recruitment materials, in our orientation materials, and how we talk about life at Deloitte.”

Fostered from their first interview, employees’ connection to Deloitte’s purpose powers insights that lead industries and social impact programming that makes a real difference in communities worldwide. Deloitte’s signature impact initiative, WorldClass, is on a mission to positively impact 100 million people by 2030 through nonprofit partnerships and skills-based support from Deloitte employees and clients. “All of our people have an opportunity to volunteer for pro bono projects,” Parmelee says. “We also see it as a way to strengthen our client relationships. We know we can’t do this alone, and we have ambition that goes broader than our four walls.”

As the coronavirus pandemic disrupted lives and livelihoods around the world, again it was Deloitte employees who led the charge in response. Deloitte created a COVID-19 information hub on its website to host its team's best insights for business, and it worked to help clients and nonprofit partners virtualize their operations and respond to the crisis.

Employees around the world also developed their own ideas for how to help their communities — including a grocery delivery service for frontline workers in Canada and an effort to 3D print thousands of pieces of medical equipment for hospitals in Spain — which the company helped to finance and grow.

"That's our core strength: the innovation and entrepreneurial attitude of our people who want to make a difference," Parmelee says.



Insights

LEARN FROM YOUR OWN RESEARCH

Marking its 10th year in 2021, the Deloitte Millennial and Gen Z Survey explores the connection between business purpose and loyalty among young consumers. This industry research powerhouse also learns from what it finds. "Consistently, loyalty is driven by young professionals seeing businesses living their purpose," Parmelee says. "It's a tool we've used to talk to our clients about how they might approach their talent strategy, but it also very much informed our own."

EMBRACE YOUR ROLE AS A STORYTELLER

Regularly updated with timely articles and videos, Deloitte Insights offers a powerful opportunity to speak directly to employees and the public. "It's really important to us to personalize our stories of impact," Parmelee says. "We want to highlight the personal impact we're having on people, as well as the impact on our own people. We try to make these videos very personal, honest and authentic, and we find it really resonates."

KEEP YOUR EYES FIXED ON PURPOSE

"Purpose will continue to be just as important, if not more important, to everything we do," Parmelee predicts. "The definition of purpose and the expectations around it will continue to broaden, so I think it's an incredibly relevant thing for everyone to be thinking about and challenging."



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Aria Finger

Former CEO

DOSOMETHING.ORG

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1993, DoSomething is the largest nonprofit exclusively for young people and social change. Seventy full-time employees work at the nonprofit and its social impact consulting arm, DoSomething Strategic. DoSomething unites more than 5 million members from all 50 U.S. states and 131 countries.

PURPOSE

We are a youth-led movement for good.

The name DoSomething says it all: This global nonprofit is focused on giving young people the inspiration, tools and power to create change. What that means has certainly evolved over the years. In 2005, 22-year-old Aria Finger actually sent a fax to apply for her first job at DoSomething. Today, millions of members use DoSomething's digital platform to join volunteer, social change and civic action campaigns on causes they care about. "This generation sees they have a power to make change, and they want to," says Finger, who jokingly referred to herself as DoSomething's "chief old person."

The platform hosts more than 300 campaigns at any given time. Recent standouts include Mental Note, a men's mental health awareness campaign in partnership with shaving brand Harry's, and Aeropostale's Teens for Jeans, which has so far collected more than 5 million pairs of jeans for youth in homeless shelters. "Once you hear that a third of all homeless people in the United States are under the age of 18, you think: How could we not be helping these children? It's exciting to see the youth of this country step up," Finger says. While DoSomething primarily reaches members digitally, some of its most successful campaigns are those that engage young people in the real world. The 2017 Defend Dreamers Week of Action campaign, centered on a path to citizenship for undocumented young people who arrived in the U.S. as children, saw nearly 100,000 signups in 48 hours, and DoSomething registered more than 350,000 young people to vote in the 2018 and 2020 elections.

“The biggest myth is that the most successful campaigns are digital, and we see that’s absolutely not the case,” Finger says. “When we ask young people how they want to raise their voices on social issues, they say face-to-face, at school, talking to their parents. Social media is number six. So, if you’re not using IRL (in real life) tactics, you probably won’t get the engagement you want.”

Leveraging years of experience bringing brands and young people together, DoSomething launched its social impact consultancy, DoSomething Strategic, back in 2013. The shop has since worked with the likes of Nike, Spotify and Microsoft and donated all profits back to DoSomething (more than \$5 million to date).

“We saw the increasing excitement that both brands and nonprofits had about engaging young people through purpose, and we knew we could help,” Finger says.



Insights

COMMUNICATE OFTEN

“Young people’s favorite brands are the brands that speak to them the most” about the issues they care most about, with climate change and inclusivity being top of mind, Finger says. “Brands that have articulated a strong purpose have avid followers who will be advocates for them for the long term.”

EMPOWER PEOPLE TO TAKE ACTION

“Try to think of a company that, besides just telling you about their social change campaigns, actually gave you a way to take action with them. That’s not the way most brands engage with young people,” Finger says. “Yet 50% of Gen Z say they are excited to and want to take action with brands. That’s 30 million young people.”

KEEP IT REAL

“The most important thing is running an authentic campaign that reaches young people in the way they want to be reached, and you can do it about any cause,” Finger says. “You don’t need to be on the bleeding edge of advocacy or a controversial issue to resonate with this demographic. But you do need to be consistent and true to your brand — and you need to do this again and again.”



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

EVOFEM
BIOSCIENCES®

Sandra Pelletier

CEO

EVOFEM

AT A GLANCE

Evoform is a biopharmaceutical company committed to commercializing innovative products to address unmet needs in women’s sexual and reproductive health, starting with a first-of-its-kind hormone-free contraceptive that provides protection from certain sexually transmitted diseases.

Sandra Pelletier’s story is one of tenacity, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to provide agency to women around the world.

Raised in Caribou, Maine — a town of about 8,000 people on the border of New Brunswick, Canada — Pelletier’s early years were challenging. “Even leaving the county line wasn’t really suggested to women or girls,” she recalls. “That’s when I first recognized that women should have an equal say in every aspect of life.”

After cutting her professional teeth in the women’s healthcare division of G.D. Searle, Pelletier went on to become the founding CEO of WomanCare Global (WCG), an international nonprofit now considered the product introduction platform for contraception in emerging markets. She never expected to make a move when she was approached by the fledgling healthcare company Evomed, but the more she learned about the company’s first women’s health product — a hormone-free, on-demand contraceptive developed by researchers at Rush University — the more promise she saw in it.

“They had a product I considered game-changing,” Pelletier says. For the next three years, she served as CEO of both WCG and Evoform Biosciences, a spinoff company developed around the contraceptive, forming what she called a “true manifestation of a public-private partnership.” When the product was ready for market, Evoform would sell it in North America and Europe, and WCG would distribute it in developing nations at a discount. But the path ahead wasn’t easy.

The FDA initially declined to approve the product due to some trials being completed outside the U.S., telling the company to trial again — something it had no money to do. During this time, the firm's head researcher and two coworkers were killed in a plane crash while en route to a meeting at the FDA. Following this horrific tragedy, "it was one thing after another," Pelletier remembers. "Some people told me, 'These are signs you should throw in the towel.' And I said, 'You know what these signs are? These are signs that women are worth it, and I have to have the backbone to continue forward.'"

After wrangling \$40 million from investors to go ahead with new trials, that game-changing product launched commercially in the U.S. in September 2020 as Phexxi: a hormone-free vaginal gel that can be used up to an hour before sex to prevent pregnancy, with anti-microbial properties that protect against chlamydia and gonorrhea. The company is now securing investments to take the product global. "For years men have been able to go out with a condom in their pocket, have sex with women, not get them pregnant and not get a sexually transmitted infection. Women didn't have that empowerment," Pelletier says. "Well, now they do."

Insights

BE OPEN TO INSPIRATION

Early in her career, Pelletier accompanied a friend on a trip through Africa that shifted her entire perspective on her chosen field. "It profoundly hit me that women are these amazing creatures, and we're the same everywhere in the world," Pelletier says. "Women in Africa are the same as women in New York or San Diego or anywhere else. I knew if I had the chance to deliver something innovative to women all over the world, it would make a huge difference."

PEOPLE WANT PURPOSE, NOT JUST A PAYCHECK

When Pelletier spun off Evofem Biosciences from Evomed, she built a new team from scratch. "It was an all male board, all male executives," she recalls. "I told the board, 'I will never be able to attract the kind of quality people I need just with the paycheck.' In today's society, extraordinary people can get a job anywhere. They want to do something bigger."

WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IS NOT PHILANTHROPY

"Donations don't work," Pelletier says simply. "They do not work. It is temporary. Even women in the poorest villages say, 'I don't want the poor women's product. I don't want you to give me your leftover garbage. I want the white woman's product. I want to be treated with the same decency.'"

CATEGORIES

 Products with Purpose

 Signature Programs

 Social Issues



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Wendy Salomon

Managing Director, Reputation and
Corporate Strategy

THE HARRIS POLL

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1963, The Harris Poll is one of the oldest and most preeminent public opinion organizations in the U.S. It conducts more than 100 surveys a year and is also a key polling partner in third-party research studies.

MISSION

We strive to reveal the authentic values of modern society to inspire leaders to create a better tomorrow.

“The Harris Poll has been in a really privileged position for more than 50 years, where we’ve had a front-row seat, on culture, business and politics,” Wendy Salomon says.

“That privilege becomes a responsibility.”

The coronavirus pandemic put that responsibility to the ultimate test. As lives and livelihoods were disrupted in ways unseen in a generation, The Harris Poll did what it does best: asked Americans how they feel, what’s most important to them and what they’d like to see done about it.

The Harris Poll has conducted biweekly surveys since the start of the pandemic, having interviewed nearly 115,000 U.S. adults in 2020, and the results are enlightening.

More than two-thirds (68%) of Americans say “the U.S. needs business leaders now more than ever to help lead us out of the pandemic and address racial injustice and other inequities,” according to 2020 data from The Harris Poll. Further, 82% say “this is an opportunity for large companies to hit the ‘reset’ button and focus on doing right by their workers, customers, community and the environment.”

One thing is certain: Stakeholders are paying attention to how companies respond — and how they treat their employees and communities when it matters most.

Seventy-two percent of 2020 respondents to Harris polling agree: “I will remember the companies that took missteps in their response to the issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, economic security of their workforce, or racial injustice long after this is over.”

“When I talk to people about corporate character and about how companies behave in times of crisis, you know what the answer is? You behave in times of crisis pretty much as you behave in normal times,” Salomon says. “If you find your best self and things are seen as authentic, it’s because it reflects how you are in your life and in your working.”

The Harris Poll COVID-19 Tracker is updated multiple times per week with new insight into what Americans are thinking, hoping and experiencing amidst the pandemic. Topics of conversation include COVID-induced career changes, the role of brands in the vaccine rollout and the future of socializing post-pandemic.



Insights

PUT YOUR TRUE SELF TO WORK

In the face of a crisis like COVID-19, Salomon recommends that business leaders double down on the ways their companies bring value to society — and work to strengthen those elements even more. “If you can make something that can fill a void, you should,” she says. “If you can retool that strategy to engage in a new way, now is the time to do it.”

EMBRACE NEW PARTNERSHIPS

“It is deeply rewarding for me to see the bridges being built” across sectors — from manufacturing to healthcare, education to professional services, Salomon says. “Maybe you make things and I market things. Whatever the case may be, think of different partnerships you can create today that could really amplify your efforts for doing good.”

CENTER YOUR EMPLOYEES

“When you look at the yardstick the public uses to evaluate a company’s character, it’s largely based on how you treat your workers,” Salomon says. “Look at those worker policies — not just the letter, but the spirit of them. Make sure they encourage the behaviors you would want from your own family, and then make sure they’re well understood.”



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Interface®

Erin Meezan

Chief Sustainability Officer

INTERFACE

AT A GLANCE

Interface is a carpet tile manufacturer founded in 1973 by sustainability trailblazer Ray C. Anderson, who passed away in 2011 at the age of 77. The publicly-held company employs 3,700 people across four continents, with revenues exceeding \$1 billion.

PURPOSE

We are in the business of creating change

You might not expect a carpet brand to change the world, but that's exactly what **Interface is doing**. The Atlanta-based company famously transformed following founder Ray C. Anderson's epiphany about the legacy of his life's work. After reading *The Ecology of Commerce* by Paul Hawken, Anderson resolved to reimagine Interface as a company with zero environmental impact. His vision catalyzed the zero-waste program QUEST, and later, Mission Zero, the company's push to become carbon neutral. Interface reached carbon neutrality in 2019, declaring that it had delivered on Anderson's initial vision, but it didn't stop there. "Ray would want us to go beyond zero," Meezan says.

For its next step, Interface launched Climate Take Back with a goal of "reversing global warming," and analyzed the work of prominent researchers like Johan Rockström of the Stockholm Resilience Center to chart its way from carbon neutral to carbon negative. "We need to do three things: We need to deeply decarbonize, remove excess carbon from the atmosphere, and protect and enhance the planet's natural carbon sinks," Meezan explains. "Interface adopted that scientific pathway as our framework."

The company set a science-based target to halve value chain emissions by 2030 and become a carbon-negative business by 2040. Beyond reducing its own emissions, Interface is looking to make its products part of the global decarbonization solution. "We're innovating to turn our products into carbon sinks — to make our products store carbon," Meezan says.

All of Interface's products are carbon neutral, and a select few go one step further — storing more carbon than they emit throughout their lifecycle thanks to the use of cutting-edge recycled and bio-based materials. Complementing the company's moves to slash emissions and store carbon are efforts to restore the Earth's natural cooling systems — including through a pilot program called Factory As A Forest, a testing ground for new practices that allow Interface factories to “run like ecosystems.” The company is also looking to “lead an industrial re-revolution” by spearheading new sustainable business models with the potential to transform entire industries, such as the Net-Works initiative, which sources material for carpet tiles from discarded fishing nets.

“Ray delivered this vision of wanting to be a company that has zero environmental impact and ultimately be restorative,” Meezan says. “Everyone is thinking, ‘How the heck are we going to do that?’ But this is the power of ambitious goals.”

Insights

EMBED PURPOSE IN THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

“If you're going to be a company that leads with purpose and you're going to embrace a big vision, make the space to talk about it with employees,” Meezan advises. “Having conversations and allowing people to connect that big purpose to what they do every day is incredibly valuable for keeping them here.”

USE YOUR INFLUENCE

The Net-Works initiative, in partnership with Interface's yarn supplier Aquafil, the Zoological Society of London and coastal communities in the Philippines, mainstreamed a recycled nylon product that is now used across the carpet sector and beyond — including in fashion lines from labels like Gucci and Prada. “When you innovate to save the world, you suddenly have an innovation community that will put in their passion, money and time to help you scale it,” Meezan says.

CATEGORIES



Sustainability



Products with Purpose



Technology & Innovation

NOW IS THE TIME

“If you are interested in sustainability and are in a position of leadership in an organization, we need you to step up,” Meezan says. “The science is telling us this decade, from 2020 to 2030, is critical for action on climate, and if you are a person who breathes oxygen on this planet, you need to do more than you are right now. Get involved, and find your pathway to make a difference.”



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

jetBlue

Sophia Mendelsohn & Sara Bogdan

Former Chief Sustainability Officer & Director, Head of Sustainability and ESG

JETBLUE

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1999, JetBlue Airways flies more than 35 million customers annually to more than 100 cities on an average 925 daily flights. It has more than 22,000 employees, and its pre-pandemic revenues exceeded \$8 billion.

PURPOSE

Inspire humanity.

From the coronavirus pandemic to the climate crisis, it's fair to say the airline industry has a bumpy ride ahead. JetBlue, long considered a beloved brand in a beleaguered industry, is in a better position than most. When the pandemic brought the world to a standstill, JetBlue's driving purpose to "inspire humanity" helped the carrier survive and thrive.

Even as other airlines were forced to furlough tens of thousands of frontline workers amidst grounded flights and plunging revenues, JetBlue employed a combination of reduced executive pay and voluntary leave to keep crew members on staff. The airline transported and donated life-saving supplies, while the JetBlue Foundation — the first aviation foundation focused entirely on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education for underrepresented populations — helped students transition to remote learning and took its lauded Soar with Reading program virtual. The cult favorite carrier, based in Long Island City, New York, also sees the climate crisis as an opportunity — not a threat — and sustainability investments it made years ago are poised to pay dividends.

In 2020, JetBlue became the first major U.S. airline to achieve carbon neutrality for all domestic flights through the purchase of carbon offsets, but that's only the beginning. JetBlue plans to reach net zero by 2040 through drastic cuts in operational emissions, and it's setting clear targets along the way.

The carrier already boasts one of the newest and most efficient fleets in the friendly skies, cutting emissions by up to 40% per seat through fleet upgrades. It was also the world's first airline to retrofit its in-service fleet with fuel-saving Sharklets, wing tip devices that are expected to reduce emissions by up to 4% by improving the aerodynamics of aircraft. JetBlue has also adopted efficiency-boosting navigational upgrades and electric ground support equipment, and it's a leading purchaser of sustainable aviation fuel—inking major deals in 2021 to use non-fossil jet fuels for flights from New York and Los Angeles.

“Carbon offsets are the first step,” says Sophia Mendelsohn, who wrapped her seven-year tenure at JetBlue in 2020 and now serves as CSO of Cognizant. “Second has to be a fast follower with sustainable aviation fuel, followed by electric aircraft for our short-haul flights in the long term. Finally, and only lastly, are we waiting on technology to evolve. This can't be a case of sitting back and saying, ‘The tech isn't ready yet.’”

Insights

THINK OF SUSTAINABILITY AS A CUSTOMER SERVICE

“When you step onto an airplane, you bring your values and lifestyle with you,” Mendelsohn says. “If you value recycling and eating healthy on the ground, you'll want that on an airplane, and that's where the sustainability team comes in: We want to help customers live out their values on our aircraft.”

SHOW EMPATHY IN THE FACE OF RESISTANCE

“Ultimately we're asking people to change the way they do things, but it's important for sustainability professionals to understand that resistance to change is normal,” Sara Bogdan says. “I'm not a pilot or an engineer, so crew members should be skeptical — and they'll ask the right questions if you're open to it.”

OUTWORK THE DOUBTERS

“You can get past any negativity about corporate sustainability by being more prepared, having your statistics, looking up what your shareholders have said on the topic, and bringing those to a meeting, printed out,” Mendelsohn advises. “Once you've endured the inevitable joke about paper use, you can show them that their top five shareholders are demanding change.”

CATEGORIES



Sustainability



Change Management



Technology & Innovation



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Martin Whittaker

CEO

JUST CAPITAL

AT A GLANCE

JUST Capital was co-founded in 2013 by a who's-who of prominent business leaders, including billionaire hedge fund manager Paul Tudor Jones II, entrepreneur and author Arianna Huffington, and wellness guru Deepak Chopra. A registered nonprofit, JUST Capital measures and ranks companies on the issues Americans care most about via its annual JUST 100 list.

MISSION

Build a more just marketplace in America.

JUST Capital has surveyed more than 110,000 Americans since 2015 about what they believe makes an ethical company and what U.S. firms should prioritize most.

“We believe that markets have to serve more Americans, we believe that’s a win-win, and we want to shift the trajectory of capitalism onto a more just course,” Whittaker explains.

The annual JUST 100 ranks the largest 1,000 publicly-traded companies in the U.S. based on environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues that are top of mind for everyday Americans. The median of JUST 100 companies pay their workers 33% more, donate 3.8 times more to charitable causes, and emit 72% fewer greenhouse gases. They also deliver an average 8% higher return on equity. To the team at JUST Capital, this is “just plain smart business.”

In 2018, Goldman Sachs Asset Management launched the JUST U.S. Large Cap Equity ETF, which invests in top performers based on JUST Capital polling and is an effective proving ground for corporate purpose. Morningstar gives the fund high marks, predicting it will “provide better long-term risk-adjusted performance” compared to its peers. “It’s a great example of how just companies also generate better returns and a strong financial story,” Whittaker says.

Along with recognizing corporate leaders, the JUST 100 rankings reveal the issues Americans care most about — chief among them is how companies treat their workers. Many credit the rankings' emphasis on fair pay and benefits with helping to raise the minimum wage in the U.S. In the five years since the first JUST 100 ranking, major employers like Walmart, Target and Amazon have increased their starting pay rates. "I feel as though we've had an impact on the conversation around wages," Whittaker says. The public's focus on worker rights became even more pronounced amidst the coronavirus pandemic. More than 70% of Americans agree companies must not only safeguard their employees from contracting the virus, but also provide benefits like hazard pay and paid sick leave to ensure they're truly cared for, according to JUST Capital polling. The organization's COVID-19 Corporate Response Tracker quickly became the go-to resource for determining which companies were rising to meet public expectations, and which were falling short.

"When you look at capitalism trying to be more human, what we're really talking about is capitalism serving people better and being geared around more than maximizing short-term financial profit," Whittaker says. "If you do that, all of us would lead lives that are very different than they are today."

Insights

RECOGNIZE PURPOSE AS A DIFFERENTIATOR

"It's a myth that looking after more of your stakeholders and investing in your people, your communities, and the environment must come out of the pockets of shareholders," Whittaker asserts. "That doctrine is going the way of the dodo. Increasingly, companies are competing for talent based on their core purpose. They're having to meet the needs of more stakeholders because it makes them better companies and it makes them more competitive."

LOOK AROUND FOR INSPIRATION

"I can't read a newspaper, go on a blog or listen to a podcast without some element of what we're doing being relevant," Whittaker says. "Once you start to pay attention, you really see that these issues are not just important — they affect almost everything."

NEVER STOP IMPROVING

The work to build a more just and sustainable society is never done. As such, Whittaker describes JUST Capital's ranking methodology as a "work in progress," and the organization's attitude toward feedback is surely worth replicating. "We would love to hear from people who want to join the movement, want to help us be better, and have ideas on how to do that," Whittaker says. "We're open for business in that regard."

CATEGORIES



Culture, Behavior & Values



Employees



Social Issues



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Kelly McGinnis

Senior Vice President and Chief
Communications Officer

LEVI STRAUSS & CO.

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1853, Levi Strauss & Co. is an iconic brand with purpose at the core. It's now sold at over 50,000 retail locations in more than 110 countries around the world, with 15,000 employees and revenues closing in on \$6 billion pre-pandemic.

A relentless pursuit of purpose is part of what defines Levi & Strauss Co., and today it keeps the more than 150-year-old company fresh and relevant for a new generation.

Levi's has shared a portion of all profits with the communities it serves from the very beginning. Today, the company leverages those investments to take "bold stands on social issues that align with our values of empathy, courage, integrity and originality," largely in ways that harken back to its roots while meeting the current moment. For example, founder Levi Strauss was one of the first time-to-vote advocates during the Civil War, and over a century later, the company continues to advocate for paid time off on Election Day. In the early 1980s, at a time when many politicians wouldn't even say the word "AIDS" in public, Levi's launched support groups for HIV-positive employees and matched employee donations to clinics serving those affected by the epidemic. The company and its employees have since invested \$78 million in the fight against HIV/AIDS worldwide. Levi's ongoing investments in community groups and public stands on social issues from voting rights to gun violence prevention is a charge largely led by employees.

"When we look back on many of the issues we've taken a stand publicly on, it really does emanate from our employees first and foremost," Kelly McGinnis says. "We feel like we're stewards of something bigger than us. The heritage and the history of the tremendous work this company has done on behalf of social issues — in terms of building incredibly strong and iconic brands, connecting with generations after generations — it just feels like we're visitors and we need to hold up to and live up to what's possible and what has come before us."

That effort extends to leaving a healthy planet for our children and grandchildren: Though Levi's is known for creating the world's first blue jean back in 1873, today it makes some of the most sustainable jeans out there.

The brand uses sustainable cotton and other low-impact fabrics like recycled denim and hemp, sources 100% renewable energy, and has slashed supply chain emissions by 40% since 2016. It also continues to pioneer new manufacturing techniques like Water<Less, which has saved more than 3.5 billion liters of water over the past 10 years, and prides itself on a supply chain that respects workers and upholds human rights. "The more we commit to sustainability and find innovative ways to build it into our systems, the better it is for the business," McGinnis says.

CATEGORIES



Culture, Behavior & Values



Sustainability



Social Issues

Insights

CREATE SPACE FOR LISTENING

When CEO Chip Bergh joined the company in 2011, one of his first moves was to go on a listening tour. He continues to hold biweekly virtual meetings dubbed "Chips and Beer," where employees are encouraged to ask questions, raise concerns and, as often happens, sow the seeds for the company's next big idea. "The answer is always inside your organization — it's just a matter of giving people the opportunity to listen," McGinnis says.

STICK TO YOUR VALUES

Under Bergh's direction, Levi's went from a decade of stagnant revenues to issuing an IPO valued at \$8.7 billion, all while holding true to the company's values. Bergh often told would-be investors: "If you're concerned there may be consumers who don't agree with some of our advocacy positions, we're probably not the right company to invest in," McGinnis remembers. "Some things are not on the table, and that is compromising on our values and our principles."

KNOW YOUR ROOTS, BUT MAKE IT RELEVANT

One of the things we talk about most as a 167-year-old company is: How do we make sure that not only are we around for another 167 years, but that we're worthy of being around for 167 years — that we have the same impact in our industry and on our communities?" McGinnis says. "Again, it's about recognizing the heritage that comes before us, making that relevant, and refreshing it for each generation."



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Kate Behncken

Vice President, Lead of Microsoft
Philanthropies

MICROSOFT

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1975, Microsoft pioneered personal-computer software and remains one of the world's most esteemed technology companies, with 160,000 employees worldwide. It serves 75 million customers across 190 countries, with 2020 revenues exceeding \$140 billion.

PURPOSE

Empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.

Since it first put a computer on everyone's desk, Microsoft has been an advocate for how technology can benefit the world. Under the leadership of CEO Satya Nadella, the company translated this ambition into bold goals and detailed plans — including a trajectory to become carbon negative by 2030 and extend affordable broadband access to millions of people by 2022. Microsoft Philanthropies brings this vision to life by helping empower communities and nonprofits to realize the potential of technology. Typically, Microsoft Philanthropies focuses on digital skilling initiatives, nonprofit capacity-building and economic empowerment in underserved communities, and the coronavirus pandemic kicked these efforts into overdrive. In the early days of the pandemic, Microsoft committed to paying its more than 4,500 hourly employees in full, whether or not their services were needed, while Microsoft Philanthropies went to work converting programmatic grants into emergency funding for nonprofits and helping these organizations move their operations online.

"Nonprofits were under an incredible amount of pressure, often functioning around the world as first responders helping to address the health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic," Kate Behncken explains. "It was clear we had an opportunity to do more to help build the capacity of nonprofits."

As unemployment skyrocketed around the world, Microsoft, LinkedIn and GitHub launched a global skills initiative that brought in-demand digital skills to more than 25 million people worldwide by the end of 2020. The company also supported COVID-19 research, tracking, treatment and community outreach through AI for Health, a five-year, \$60 million philanthropic program created to empower global health nonprofits, researchers and organizations. Additionally, Microsoft responded swiftly to the calls for action on racial justice following the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. “As a company, we need to look inside, examine our organization, and do better,” Nadella wrote in an email to Microsoft employees shortly after Floyd was killed in May 2020. “For us to have the permission to ask the world to change, we must change first.” The company developed a plan to better address racial justice — including \$150 million in new diversity and inclusion investments. For its part, Microsoft Philanthropies is expanding its beloved Technology Education And Literacy in Schools (TEALS) initiative to get computer science into 620 more high schools with a high percentage of Black and African American students over the next five years. It will also invest \$5 million in local nonprofits run by and serving Black communities and work to build the capacity of Black-led nonprofits.



Insights

SIMPLIFY YOUR MISSION TO MAKE IT MATTER

“Satya did a great job distilling what could be a super complicated mission into something very succinct and very powerful,” Behncken says. “Wherever you sit in the company, you can see how your role can contribute to that mission and how you can be an agent of change.”

FOSTER A CULTURE OF GIVING

With a 1:1 match up to \$25,000 as of April 2020, Microsoft may have the most generous corporate gift-matching program out there — and employees put this opportunity to good use. They donated \$221 million to nonprofits in 2020 (inclusive of company match) and over \$2 billion to date. “We often say giving is in our DNA, and it really is,” Behncken says. “Our culture of giving is stronger than it’s ever been.”

SEE THE BIG PICTURE

“Remain focused on the outcomes and benefits your programs can have on communities around the world,” Behncken advises. “So much of the work we do in philanthropy is around digital inclusion, but people don’t want or need digital inclusion. They want an education so they can get the skills they need to have a livelihood that can provide a good life for them and their family.”



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Elliot Kotek

Founder and CEO

THE NATION OF ARTISTS

AT A GLANCE

The Nation of Artists is a team of writers, directors, editors, photographers, engineers and scientists who “believe in solving the real issues of our day, one story at a time.”

PURPOSE

We believe that Ideas + Empathy = Impact

If you're looking to find the essence of your story and tell it in an extraordinary way, Elliot Kotek is the man to ask. Using documentaries, films and photographs as his canvas, Kotek is a storyteller whose boundless creativity is matched only by his humility.

At the Nation of Artists, he leads a team of creatives and innovators who craft aspirational content, technology, and campaigns that make a difference in people's lives and have a real impact on audiences. Their work has amassed more than 1.5 billion media impressions and earned an astonishing list of accolades including multiple One Show, Maggie and Telly awards, not to mention the coveted Titanium Award at Cannes Lions. Kotek, who also founded Beyond Cinema Magazine and co-founded Not Impossible, draws his strength from collaboration and believes in surrounding himself with great people and resourcing them well. “Collaboration is key to creativity,” Kotek says. “Without having various contributors to the conversation, and listening to those contributors, your project will never truly represent what you set out to do.” Take for example the 2014 Titanium Lion-winning *Project Daniel*, which tells the story of Daniel Omar, a teenager who lost both his arms to a bomb in South Sudan, where fighting has left thousands without limbs and with little hope of an independent future. Supported by Intel and Precipart Technologies, Kotek and his team brought the world's first 3D-printing prosthetic lab and training facility to Sudan's Nuba Mountains. The first prosthetic arm they created was for Daniel, allowing him to feed himself for the first time in two years, and they trained locals to continue printing limbs after they left.

Kotek's follow-up project, *Don's Voice*, created in partnership with HP, looks at the life-changing potential of technology through the eyes of Don Moir, a Canadian farmer with ALS who was able to speak for the first time in over a decade thanks to an eye-gaze tracking interface on an HP computer. "He used it most notably to tell his wife Lorraine he loved her, audibly and independently, for the first time in 15 years," Kotek says. These two stunning examples — and the dozens that followed— demonstrate Kotek's knack for looking beyond what a product is and seeing what it means. "How can this change someone's life? What meaning does this object have, or what could it do?" Kotek explains. "Sometimes a client just needs to get their numbers up. But other times they want to create something different, something special, and that's what we do." As the coronavirus pandemic sent everyone indoors, Kotek's team kept creating great content while shooting entirely remotely, with zero human interaction and little more than a ring light and an iPhone Pro. Nearly two years into the pandemic, Kotek has no plans to slow down. "My motto is more and bigger and with good people," he says. "I love what I do. I just want to do it more and keep having bigger impact."

Insights

LET GO

"Don't go into a project with a precious mentality about where and how your brand appears. Trust the storyteller to get creative with how they reflect not only your brand, but also what your brand means and how you want people to feel about it," Kotek advises. "It's a collaborative effort, but sometimes a brand can undo good work by wanting their name in as many places as possible."

IDENTIFY YOUR CORE AUDIENCE

"Your first question is always: Who is the audience for this piece?" Kotek explains. "Who's the first person you want to reach, and how specific can you be? A lot of people want to put content out that reaches everyone. Maybe that's not the right move."

TELL THE REAL STORY

"With branded content, you have an opportunity to get into the real stories of anyone and everyone — whether it's your employees, your C-suite or your customers," Kotek says. "Look at your stakeholders to find the stories you're trying to tell."

CATEGORIES



Brand & Marketing



Products with Purpose



Technology & Innovation



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

The
New York
Times

Amy Weisenbach

Senior Vice President of Marketing

THE NEW YORK TIMES

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1851, the *New York Times* is one of the most widely read and highly regarded newspapers in the world, reaching 150 million readers every month. Its team of journalists has won 133 Pulitzer Prizes over the paper's 170-year history and today includes 1,700 reporters and editors across 160 countries.

PURPOSE

We seek the truth to help people understand the world.

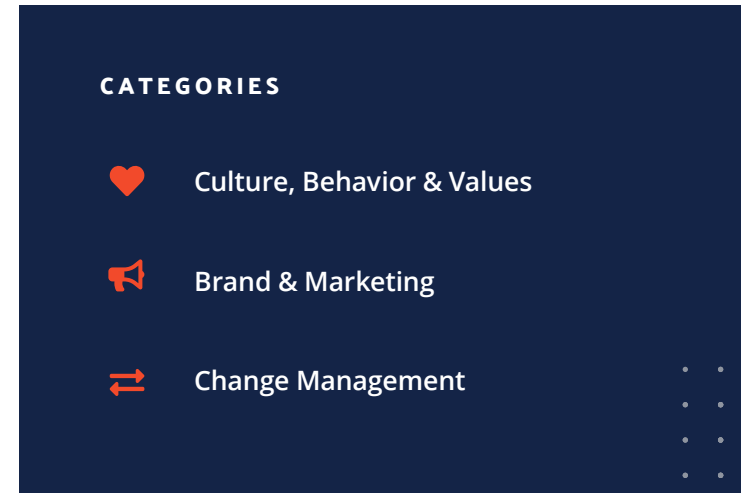
The news media is often referred to as the Fourth Estate, speaking truth to power, giving the unrepresented a platform to share their stories and telling people what's happening in places they may never visit. But what does that mean in an era of misinformation, fake news and alternative facts? In 2017, the *New York Times* gave readers a definitive answer with its powerful and award-winning purpose campaign "The Truth Is Worth It."

"The week we launched the campaign was the first time the phrase 'enemy of the people' was used and our reporters were banned from a White House briefing," Amy Weisenbach remembers. "We were right at the intersection of journalism and an assault on the truth, and we felt we had something to say." Created with Droga5, the campaign looks behind the scenes of some of the *Times'* most important coverage, including Caitlin Dickerson's reporting on family separation at the U.S.-Mexico border; Russ Buettner, Susanne Craig and Mike McIntire's investigation into former President Donald Trump's taxes; and Jodi Kantor and Megan Twohey's work to expose Harvey Weinstein. Those hard-hitting packages took months, sometimes years, to produce, often under threat of physical harm or legal action. "We find that many of our readers, and even some of our subscribers, just don't understand everything that goes into producing the 250 stories our newsroom puts out in a day," Weisenbach says.

The initial Truth campaign won two Cannes Lions Grand Prix Awards and a Gold Effie, among other accolades. The most recent iteration, “The Truth Is Essential,” launched in 2021, featuring coverage of the coronavirus pandemic and lifestyle pieces that entertained readers during lockdown.

The *Times* is also invested in reinforcing the value of journalism among the next generation, from journalists helping students sort fact from fiction online through the News Literacy Project, to a campaign with Everlane aimed at raising awareness of climate journalism and getting the *Times* in the hands of public school students.

“In a world of digital journalism, people don’t understand the different between on-the-ground, originally-reported journalism and any other piece of content they might find online,” Weisenbach says. “It’s important for us to tell that story.”



Insights

TAP INTO THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

“Be clear on why you exist, and put that at the center of your storytelling,” Weisenbach advises. “And be really ambitious.” When David Rubin joined as chief marketing officer of the *Times* in 2018, he asked his team: “What if our marketing were to be as compelling and ambitious as our journalism? That’s been our North Star ever since,” she says.

KNOW YOUR CONSUMER

“We’re passionate about this brand, but the way we think about it is not necessarily how our consumers think about it,” Weisenbach says. “We invest a lot of time, effort and money into understanding our consumers and digging deep for insight in a way that’s not unlike the process of journalism itself.”

EMBRACE TRANSPARENCY

“People expect transparency. They want to know how things get done behind the scenes,” Weisenbach observes. “In a world where information is so available, I can’t see us going backward. It’s even more incumbent upon us in an industry like ours, where trust is so important, to be as transparent as we can be.”



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

nextdoor

Maryam Banikarim

Head of Marketing, Global and Community

NEXTDOOR

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 2011, Nextdoor is an online community hub where neighbors connect to exchange information, goods and services. The platform includes 270,000 unique neighborhoods and more than 50 million local business recommendations across 11 countries, and it now reaches a quarter of all U.S. households. The company went public on the NYSE in November 2021, under the ticker KIND.

PURPOSE

Cultivate a kinder world where everyone has a neighborhood they can rely on.

Most people know Nextdoor as a message board to trade recommendations for the best slice of pizza, a good contractor or a soon-to-be-hyped local band, but when crisis strikes it becomes something else altogether. Nextdoor saw an 80% increase in daily active users at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, following similar spikes around affected areas during natural disasters like Hurricane Harvey. Because it verifies that all users are real people at real addresses, Nextdoor serves as a valuable platform for public agencies to reach residents at a neighborhood level. During Harvey in 2017, local agencies including the Houston Office of Emergency Management turned to Nextdoor to share critical information and emergency updates with residents.

When the pandemic hit, agencies including state and regional health departments, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.K.'s National Health Service used Nextdoor to communicate with communities in real time. Beyond its role in information-sharing, Nextdoor rapidly implemented functionality to help communities respond to the pandemic. It accelerated the launch of Nextdoor Groups so neighbors could offer support and connect while stuck inside. It also expanded features for small businesses and created the Nextdoor Help Map based on a framework previously used for trick-or-treating.

Neighbors used the new tools to help one another with daily tasks like filling prescriptions or picking up groceries, and later to gain access to vaccines. “In times of crisis, the first responders are your neighbors,” Maryam Banikarim says. Nextdoor also joined other brands to better serve communities — including a partnership with Walmart to make it easier for neighbors to pick up necessities for each other and another with H&R Block to fund community-improvement projects. At the core of this work is a push against loneliness and a vision of neighborhoods as powerful units of change. In a global loneliness study released in 2020, Nextdoor found that connecting with just six neighbors makes a big difference, and in response it launched the Kind Challenge, calling on people around the world to get to know six of their neighbors and connect through acts of kindness. “Out of despair comes purpose, and we’ve seen that through the pandemic,” Banikarim says. “We come together, we help and we unite.”

CATEGORIES



Community Engagement



Technology & Innovation



Social Issues

Insights

MAKE YOUR PURPOSE SOLVE A PROBLEM

In 2010, 28% of Americans said they didn’t know any of their neighbors. This shocking data point from the Pew Research Center inspired Nextdoor cofounders Sarah Leary and Nirav Tolia to bring neighbors together. “They thought, ‘How can we leverage technology to enable connectivity, not just online, but in real life?’” Banikarim explains. “It’s about connecting with those closest to you.”

GET ADVICE

Nextdoor doesn’t have just one advisory board. It has five, including its board of directors as well as boards focused on public agencies, small businesses, clients and neighborhood vitality. “Sometimes you need somebody else to push back on your idea and remind you, ‘Don’t just go toward utility. It’s about your purpose,’” Banikarim says. “If you make time and space for that, it’s really a gift.”

THINK IN TERMS OF ‘WE,’ NOT ‘ME’

“If you care about purpose, you have to come to the table as we and not me,” Banikarim advises. “Come together with other people. We all feel better when we get to lean in and do something that’s not just for us.”



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



Jennifer Brunelle

Head of Charitable Giving

NRG

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1992, NRG is a publicly-held U.S. energy company with nearly 5,000 employees and 20 locations across the country. Serving 3.7 million commercial and residential customers, NRG's 2019 revenues totaled almost \$10 billion.

PURPOSE

We bring the power of energy to people and organizations.

In December 2018, some Philadelphians noticed a roving hot cocoa truck as they did their holiday shopping and visited friends and family for the season. The vendor offered two options: Get a plain cup of cocoa right away, or wait in line to customize the order. Unsurprisingly, most people were willing to wait for the chance to add the flavors and toppings of their choice. What is surprising is that the cart wasn't owned by a local entrepreneur or even a large restaurant chain. It was the brainchild of energy company NRG, and the point was to start a conversation about choice. Even our most mundane choices, like turning off a faucet or flipping a light switch, have an impact on the environment and our neighbors. NRG is all about reminding customers they have a choice about their role in a decarbonized future, whether those reminders come by way of free cocoa or awareness campaigns with publications like *The Guardian*.

"If we want a green energy future, if we want to get there, people need to execute on their choice. They need to be educated," Jennifer Brunelle says. This focus on customers and their power to choose extends to NRG's best-in-class social impact platform, positiveNRG, which engages employees, communities and nonprofits to drive impact. The platform not only allows employees to donate money, skills and time to the nonprofits of their choice, but it also engages those nonprofits directly in work in the community. Most recently, NRG linked up with EarthShare for a grants program focused on equitable access to renewable energy in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

“We’re starting with nonprofits in the environmental space,” Brunelle says. “At times, we might be at odds, but if we don’t have the conversation together, we’re not going to get anywhere.”

The company is looking to reduce its carbon footprint by 50% by 2030 and 90% by 2050, using a 2014 baseline. Only three years removed from a major transformation — in which it shed billions in assets, including most of its renewable energy portfolio, under pressure from activist investors — NRG views philanthropy and customer engagement as a way to lay the groundwork for those goals.

“We’re not there today if you were to look at what our assets are on our balance sheet,” Brunelle says, referring to the company’s energy mix. “However, from the philanthropic lens with positiveNRG, as we look at purpose and our mission, we know where we want to go.”

CATEGORIES



Culture, Behavior & Values



Signature Programs



Sustainability

Insights

PHILANTHROPY SHOULD REFLECT YOUR BRAND

“When I first started at NRG in 2009, philanthropy was doing good to do good. It didn’t necessarily align with the business case,” Brunelle explains. “It’s really changed in terms of being laser focused on aligning with your business, your brand and your identity. If you’re not aligned, if you don’t have a clearly defined purpose, it’s not only difficult for you to understand what your objectives are, but your customers, the public, your stakeholders don’t know who you are either.”

LISTEN TO PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOU

“I don’t live solely in the philanthropic world. I try to digest media and perspectives from all different lenses — ones that I agree with, and particularly ones that I don’t agree with,” Brunelle says. “You don’t need to like them, but you can bring it to neutral. If you can bring it to neutral, maybe you can create a discourse. And if you can create a discourse, you can really move things forward.”

EMBRACE BOLD THINKING

“In order to push the envelope, in order to really advance your organization’s dollars in a way that truly impacts the most people in the most meaningful way, you have to swing up,” Brunelle says. “This is not being in a comfortable space. This is not playing it safe. You have to think big.”



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

patagonia

Corley Kenna

Head of Communications and Policy

PATAGONIA

AT A GLANCE

Patagonia is an outdoor apparel and equipment company with 37 retail stores, more than 2,200 employees and revenues exceeding \$1 billion. Founded in 1972 by environmentalist and outdoor enthusiast Yvon Chouinard, Patagonia continues to support environmental causes and embrace activism as a cornerstone of doing business.

PURPOSE

We're in business to save our home planet.

You could say Patagonia is an activist organization that happens to sell outdoor gear. It seeks out and hires activist employees, trains them in nonviolent civil disobedience through the Ruckus Society, and even bails them out of jail if they're arrested during a demonstration. What's more, the company's marketing is often a statement against conventional capitalism and in favor of conscious consumption — from its lauded 2013 “Don't Buy This Jacket” campaign to the donation of \$10 million in Black Friday sales to environmental groups. And this is a company that walks the talk: It offers more Fair Trade Certified clothing than any apparel brand, supports a living wage for more than 72,000 supply chain workers and repairs more than 100,000 pieces of clothing every year through its Worn Wear program.

Patagonia has pledged 1% of sales to grassroots environmental groups since 1985 and has awarded more than \$140 million in cash and in-kind donations to date. You likely know this model as 1% for the Planet, and yes, that was Patagonia's idea. Founder Yvon Chouinard, together with Craig Mathews of Blue Ribbon Flies, launched the 1% for the Planet alliance in 2002, and since then more than 3,000 members have followed Patagonia's lead in pledging 1% of their own profits to support environmental causes. In 2019, the company took its commitment to activism even further with the launch of Patagonia Action Works, a platform to connect fans of the brand with opportunities to take direct action in support of the environment.

“Action Works typifies how our philanthropy is quite different than any other company. It is not just about writing checks,” Corley Kenna says. “We want to create a connection point for our community and dig in deep so we can all be a part of the solution.” Patagonia continues to speak out on social and environmental issues, from voting rights and climate action to protecting public lands.

It also invests in startups that offer solutions to the environmental crisis through its venture capital fund, Tin Shed Ventures. That’s not to say the sustainability darling is perfect. When Black Lives Matter demonstrations spread across the U.S. and around the world in 2020, the company released a statement saying, “Recent months have revealed how much more we need to do to live up to our values as an activist company.” In the months since, the company has expanded its sustainability messaging to focus specifically on environmental justice, a trend Kenna says will continue. “What that movement has done for us, in addition to bringing to the floor that we were not good anti-racists, was highlight how overlapping all of these crises are,” Kenna says. “If you’re trying to solve for one, that’s just not the world we’re living in anymore.”

Insights

MAKE YOUR MISSION MATTER

Patagonia changed its mission statement in 2018, a move that wasn’t easy for everyone on the team. “We loved our old mission statement, but we had outgrown it,” Kenna says. “Mission statements are important, but it’s even more important to make sure your mission statement actually captures your mission. Our mission statement truly drives every decision we make: We’re in business to save our home planet.”

INVITE YOUR STAKEHOLDERS ALONG

“It is incredibly rare for us to put something out there and not offer a way for our community to act on it,” Kenna says. “If we’re going to put something out there, we want people to do something about it.”

STAY TRUE TO WHO YOU ARE

Kenna describes Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard as humble, soft spoken and deliberate. “He’s also incredibly consistent,” she says. “I recently came across a profile on him that was written in 1991, and it could have been written yesterday. It’s amazing how consistent he has been in what he believes in, and I think that is what provides the foundation of authenticity that’s so important to the work we do.”

CATEGORIES



Culture, Behavior, & Values



Change Management



Sustainability



P.J. Marshall

Founder and Executive Director

RESTORE THE EARTH FOUNDATION

AT A GLANCE

Restore the Earth Foundation's pioneering model leverages corporate investments to restore natural ecosystems in the Mississippi River Basin, known as the North American Amazon.

The Mississippi River Basin is the third largest watershed on Earth. It encompasses 40% of the continental U.S., stretching across 31 states and two Canadian provinces from the river's source at Lake Itasca in northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico.

Sadly, like its more famous cousin to the south, North America's Amazon is increasingly under threat. The southernmost part of the Basin is the most ecologically degraded region on the continent — of the original 24 million acres of forest, only 5 million acres remain.

Already hurting, the area was ravaged by Hurricane Katrina, which destroyed an estimated 521 million trees across Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana in 2005. "Most people don't realize that Katrina was the largest forestry disaster in the United States," P.J. Marshall says. "The human disaster was so humongous that it was difficult for us to wrap our heads around the fact that it was a major ecological disaster as well."

The human and environmental tragedy of Katrina inspired Marshall and her husband, Marvin, to take action. Reaching the end of their corporate careers, P.J., a strategic marketing consultant, and Marvin, a real estate development executive, ultimately decided not to retire and founded Restore the Earth Foundation instead.

Harnessing the power of multibillion-dollar corporations, the group is on a mission to restore 1 million acres of forest in the southern Mississippi River Basin.

"For these communities along the Gulf Coast, the natural systems are their livelihood, their legacy and their culture," Marshall says. "It was very important for them to begin to restore those forests, and they felt like they were overwhelmed and helpless to do so."

The couple started with zero nonprofit experience, but leaned on their decades of business acumen to develop a pioneering model for restoration. Restore the Earth's Revolving Fund leverages private capital to unlock public funding, and its trademarked EcoMetrics Model captures the full monetary value created by restoration to return \$9 in integrated value for every \$1 of private investment. It's a hyper-local initiative with global impact: When completed, the restoration project will reduce the U.S. carbon footprint by 2% and start to reverse the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, while improving lives and livelihoods for millions of people in underserved communities across the region.

Restore the Earth has already raised \$40 million in public and private funding to restore 50,000 acres of forest, engaging government partners like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and USDA Natural Resources Conservation services. Employees from brands like Seventh Generation, Eileen Fisher and Clif Bar have rolled up their sleeves to plant trees with Restore the Earth, and others like Lyft and Coca-Cola support its work through the purchase of carbon offsets.

Insights

PICK THE RIGHT PARTNERSHIPS

"Look for great projects that have major impact from an environmental, social and economic standpoint — all three," Marshall advises. "Look for projects that are of scale and can have the kind of impact we need to see." And how to find these dream projects? "You need to be a sleuth," she says. "Sometimes these projects aren't highly visible, and it's not as easy as Googling something."

MAKE YOUR INTENTIONS CLEAR AND FOLLOW THROUGH

"Some partnership lessons are the simple things we learned in grade school: Do what you say you're going to do," Marshall says. "The first part of that is building trust with our partners, and vice versa, in that our intentions are clearly stated and out on the table. Every project and initiative we've been involved in has been clearly defined in the expectation of each partner."

DON'T ASK FOR A HANDOUT; OFFER A HAND

"When we pull our collaborative partnerships together, we always make sure we're bringing something of value to the table," Marshall says. "If it's not our experience and awareness — which sometimes, depending on the project, isn't even there — we bring money in-hand to start the process. Our hand isn't out for a handout."

CATEGORIES



Sustainability



Change Management



Signature Programs



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

TOMS

Amy Smith

Chief Strategy & Impact Officer

TOMS SHOES

AT A GLANCE

TOMS, short for Tomorrow's Shoes, created the one-for-one giving model when it launched in 2006: For every pair of shoes it sold, it gave a pair away to a child in need. The company, which employs 500 people, has since expanded into other products such as eyewear, coffee and apparel, and it's developing a new purpose-driven business model for a new era.

PURPOSE

We're in business to improve lives.

Most know TOMS as the pioneer of the one-for-one giving model. It has donated nearly 100 million pairs of shoes since 2006 and, by some accounts, inspired more than 1,800 other one-for-one businesses. Fast forward to today, and TOMS is moving away from the one-for-one model to a broader focus on "building a tomorrow where everyone thrives."

"After 13 years, it is time for us to evolve," Amy Smith says. Initially, the company expanded into new products, each supporting a related social issue: eyewear that helps restore sight to one person for every purchase, coffee expanding access to clean water, handbags supporting healthy births, and on and on. "For a while, the aspiration was to add a new product and a new give on an annualized basis. It was a great idea, but it was difficult to manage and navigate," Smith says. Today, rather than leaning on a one-for-one model, the company donates a third of all profits across the board to grassroots organizations driving change at the local level. "We'll continue to give shoes, but we're expanding the way we give, and that provides us with focus and flexibility to address some new issue areas," she explains. One of those new issues is gun violence. After donating \$5 million to community organizations fighting gun violence in 2018 — at the time the largest corporate contribution to the cause ever recorded in the U.S. — founder Blake Mycoskie and the TOMS team set off on a cross-country tour. Almost a million people signed the postcards they distributed advocating for universal background checks.

“We felt it was the right thing to do,” Smith says. “When a hundred people every day in the United States are being killed by guns, no matter your background or political leaning, that shouldn’t be okay with any of us.”

Gun violence remains one of three focus areas for TOMS’ investments, along with mental health and economic opportunity. In 2019 and 2020, the company gave nearly \$4.5 million in grants to community organizations, including \$2 million for global COVID-19 relief efforts.

“We believe we’re giving at an unprecedented level across the organization and across the marketplace,” Smith says. “The world around us is changing, and we know we want to change with it.”

CATEGORIES



Change Management



Signature Programs



Social Issues

Insights

BE A REBEL OPTIMIST

Smith often refers to herself and her colleagues as “rebel optimists,” and she wants you to be one, too. “I feel really tired when I’m seeing all the challenges of the world in a negative way,” she shares. “My natural stance is to be optimistic and see possibility even in the toughest of times. But I’m also not afraid to push — push myself, push ideas and push my thinking a little bit.”

KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN

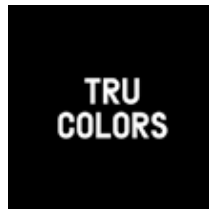
TOMS focuses on rooting out unintended consequences in its giving model, such as providing a last-mile contribution to giving partners. Still, the company is no stranger to criticism, with many questioning whether the one-for-one model is even helpful. “Our goal has always been to listen to any and all feedback and criticism,” Smith says. “We commissioned a study which found that, at the volume we’re giving, in the way that we’re giving, we do not have a negative impact on local economies and local shoe makers. That was a relief for us, but we chose not to shout it from the mountaintops. We are always in the spirit of learning and doing better.”

INVITE YOUR CUSTOMER ALONG

“Our consumer still knows us for one-for-one, so it’s our job now to educate, inspire and excite our customers about the evolution we are embarking upon,” Smith says. “We want to make them a part of it, have them feel connected to it, and make sure they know none of this happens without them.”



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE



George Taylor

CEO

TRU COLORS

AT A GLANCE

Upstart brewery TRU Colors was founded by and employs active gang members who come together to advance a shared mission to end gun violence. It stands for unity across communities — starting by breaking down racial barriers, stopping street violence and bringing people together (often over a good beer).

PURPOSE

We spark others to break barriers, igniting unity, prosperity and peace.

In December 2015, 16-year-old Shane was killed in a drive-by shooting related to a gang dispute in Wilmington, North Carolina. When George Taylor heard what had happened only a few blocks from his office, he was stunned.

“I didn’t even know we had gangs in my city,” he admits. “I wanted to understand why.” He reached out to the District Attorney, a personal friend, and asked for an introduction to the “top gangster” in the city. “It started with one person, and he introduced me to others,” Taylor says. “I spent three years hanging out with the gangs, learning about what was driving the violence, and trying to build trust and understanding.”

At first, it was slow goings — “Everyone thought I was police,” Taylor remembers — but a shared vision to end violence through economic opportunity emerged. Taylor traveled across the country with gang leaders to find out what other cities were doing to stem gun violence. Rival gang members came together for the same meetings, often after shooting at each other the night before, to discuss a different way forward. From these conversations, TRU Colors was born. TRU, which stands for truth, responsibility and unity, sends active gang members through a two-month paid training before welcoming them as employees. The upstart brewery was on a path to open in August 2020, but in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, it had to pivot quickly.

“The reason TRU Colors exists is to drive peace and unity. Well, it’s difficult to drive peace over Zoom,” Taylor says. Unable to do business in person, Taylor and his team shifted the bulk of TRU Colors’ employees over to its fledgling creative arm, TRU Studios, which produces music, shows and multimedia with anti-violence messages for streaming on services like Apple TV and Roku. They also launched the TRU Colors Football League, an e-sports tournament, to continue bringing team members together even as they sheltered at home.

Now, over five years into its work in the community, TRU Colors finally served its first brews in Summer 2021. The brand will distribute in North Carolina and Virginia first, with plans to expand nationally in about two years. It has already inked a distribution partnership with Molson Coors, bringing those dreams closer to reality. “People think we’re more of a traditional microbrewery. We’re not. We need to sell a lot of beer to support the mission we’re trying to build,” Taylor says. “We’re not trying to stop violence in our city or brew beer in our city. We’re trying to build a blueprint and a brand that moves across the country at a very, very fast pace.”

Insights

BUILDING TRUST TAKES WORK

Taylor’s advice for developing trust among rival gang members applies to any and all relationships — professional or otherwise: “Trust comes, over time, from doing things that are dependable,” Taylor says. “If I say I’m going to do something or they say they’re going to do something and we do it, over time, that builds trust.”

CREATIVITY IS ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA

TRU Studios didn’t just help team members keep their jobs amidst coronavirus lockdowns. It also inspires bright ideas for sharing TRU Colors’ mission — including Shooting Grounds, a cooking show co-hosted by Grip, a gang member and foodie, and Carolyn, who runs TRU Colors’ Disrupt You training curriculum. “They’re doing the recipe, but the whole time they’re [talking about] being grounded and focused in your career and in your personal life,” Taylor says.

IT’S NOT ‘US’ AND ‘THEM,’ IT’S ‘WE’

“We never sat in a room and said, ‘Let’s cross this racial and economic divide,’” Taylor says. “I never treated anyone like they were any different than me, and we still don’t.”

CATEGORIES



Culture, Behavior & Values



Community Engagement



Social Issues



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

**un
reasonable**

Daniel Epstein

CEO and Founder

UNREASONABLE GROUP

AT A GLANCE

The Unreasonable Group is a multimedia company, private global network and investment firm that supports growth-stage entrepreneurs offering solutions to seemingly intractable challenges.

PURPOSE

Our world cannot wait. We create trusted partnerships and move capital to ensure a just future. Now.

The Unreasonable Group supports entrepreneurs tackling the world's biggest f**kin' problems (or, as Unreasonable calls them, BFPs). They don't mince words, they don't shy away from unlikely partnerships and they're about scaling what works. So, what made founder Daniel Epstein so unreasonable? "I think I was born with a bit of a screw loose," he says. He entered university as a business school student with an aspiration to become an entrepreneur, and he left with a philosophy degree and a resolve to spend his career working to solve hard problems.

"That catapulted me down a path that eventually led to Unreasonable," he remembers. After three years investing in early-stage entrepreneurs as a nonprofit, Epstein pivoted his organization to a for-profit model focused on growth-stage startups that are ready to make real impact. "When it comes to trying to solve these tough problems, impatience is a virtue. We can't do it fast enough," he says. "The question was: How might we put a dent on these global issues more quickly? And the realization was scale."

The 277 companies in the Unreasonable Fellowship have so far generated a collective \$5.4 billion in revenue, raised \$6.5 billion in financing and are positively impacting the lives of more than 720 million people in more than 180 countries. They're solving for some of the largest BFPs out there — from sustainably feeding a growing population, to expanding access to healthcare, water and clean energy.

Unreasonable's pioneering model engages some of the world's largest companies to help its entrepreneurs succeed. One of its latest ventures, Unreasonable Impact, in partnership with Barclays, seeks to scale impact startups that are positioned to create at least 500 green jobs within five years. Another effort, Unreasonable Future, supported by Fossil, Accenture and Pearson, is all about creating a more just workforce in a digitized world. Another, The Girl Effect Accelerator, supported by Nike, is scaling startups positioned to benefit the 250 million adolescent girls currently living in poverty.

As these partnerships move forward, they not only help startups grow, but also open the door for learning. "At the same time we're helping social entrepreneurs, we're also seeing a magnificent shift in our partners," Epstein says. "Barclays launched the first new coverage group in their investment bank in 70 years, and it's focused specifically on green companies. We're seeing real change happen between our organizations."

Insights

BALANCE ARROGANCE AND CONFIDENCE

"Culture is much more powerful than strategy," Epstein says. "What we're looking for in entrepreneurs is a paradoxical mix of confidence and humility. You need insane confidence to think you can feed 200 million people or reverse climate change. But the humility is an acknowledgement that you can't do it on your own, that there's no single panacea solution for any of these issues, and that the greatness of what you achieve will be through the greatness of your teams and the strength of your relationships."

COME TOGETHER

"People talk about competitive advantage, but what about collaborative advantage? That's our core belief," Epstein says. "In our fellowship, we have companies that are head to head, as direct of competitors as you could possibly be, yet they're collaborating. And it's not a thing, because as Muhammad Yunus said, there's enough poverty in the world for all of us. There are still 2 billion people who don't have access to electricity. These are bigger than just one company."

CATEGORIES

 Change Management

 Social Issues

 Sustainability

THINK PARTNERSHIP, NOT SPONSORSHIP

"I remember sitting with the leadership at Barclays and basically telling them, 'Look, if this is just sponsorship, we're not going touch it, because sponsorship is AstroTurf.' Everybody knows that's not real," Epstein recalls.



LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

usbank

Reba Dominski

EVP, Chief Social Responsibility Officer and
President, US Bank Foundation

US BANK

AT A GLANCE

Founded in 1968, U.S. Bancorp employs 74,000 people with 2020 revenues exceeding \$23 billion. The company donated \$67 million to nonprofits and NGOs in 2020, while employees volunteered a cumulative 614 hours per day.

“As bankers, we are servant leaders,” Reba Dominski says. “For us, that starts with fair and responsible products and services.”

U.S. Bank offers a host of products with purpose at the core. Its Simple Loan product, for example, provides quick, low-interest loans of up to \$1,000 for emergency expenses, created in response to data from the Federal Reserve which shows that 40% of Americans cannot cover a \$400 emergency. Its Safe Debit account, designed to bring the underbanked into the banking system, offers users a debit card, online banking and free credit score access with no overdraft fees.

The company also has a history of fast-tracking new products in response to extraordinary circumstances. In 2019, it released a low-rate, quick loan for federal employees during the U.S. government shutdown. “That was created in just two days,” Dominski says.

In March of 2020, as communities shut down to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus, U.S. Bank took immediate action to make its consumer and small-business products more affordable. It went on to provide a \$20 million premium pay program for employees, relief assistance and 108,000 Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans for customers, and \$30 million in expedited charitable contributions for communities. By June, U.S. Bank was named the most essential bank amid COVID-19 by The Harris Poll.

Before and during the pandemic, U.S. Bank leveraged its signature grant program, Community Possible, to maximize impact in communities.

Launched in 2016, Community Possible focuses on three pillars: work, home and play, referring to programs that enable stable jobs, housing, and communities connected by the arts and recreation. Through Community Possible, U.S. Bank has funded workforce education programs, neighborhood revitalization initiatives, and efforts to provide play spaces and arts and culture programs in low-income communities, totaling \$37 million in 2020 alone.

The program is also best in class when it comes to engaging U.S. Bank's more than 70,000 employees to share their skills and knowledge to better their communities. Employees volunteered a collective 614 hours per day to nonprofits in 2020, thanks in part to 16 hours of paid time off for volunteering per employee, per year.

"Our employees understand Community Possible, they live Community Possible, and they make Community Possible in their own communities," Dominski says.

CATEGORIES



Community Engagement



Products with Purpose



Signature Programs

Insights

FIND FUN WAYS TO KEEP MESSAGING UP

U.S. Bank's Community Possible program launched with a 25-state volunteerism "relay," in which U.S. Bank employees traveled over 13,000 miles in an old executive coach bus to pass the volunteering "baton" from one city to another. "Every year since then, we've had these amazing activations," Dominski says. "We have so much fun trying to figure out how to engage our employees, customers and communities in the platform."

BRING BUSINESS AND PHILANTHROPY TOGETHER

Over the past decade, U.S. Bank has invested more than \$113 million in Pullman, a neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago, combining business investments with philanthropic investments through Community Possible. The community saw a 10% increase in college graduation rates and a 52% decrease in crime rates in that same timeframe. "Pullman is really about the difference we can make when the whole bank — not just philanthropy, but also our business — invests in a community," Dominski says.

FIND YOUR JOY WHEN TIMES GET DIFFICULT

"When the work gets hard or the days get long, remember the joy that is truly this work," Dominski says. "Surround yourself with a great team. Be patient with people. Meet them where they are. Help them move forward. And finally, be gentle with yourself, because when there are bumps in the road, you need to be able to be resilient, recover, and get back at this very important work that has so much impact on people and communities."



purpose360podcast.com