

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report explores the role futures can play in searching for and leading more transformative initiatives. When companies hold well-embedded sustainability ambitions, futures thinking can feed into strategic decision-making and start to push the boundaries of what we believe is possible.

Futures, explored in depth, for example through immersion activities, can disrupt current mind-sets and encourage more imaginative robust thinking that leads away from business as usual and into new territory. It forces us to consider our deeply entrenched assumptions, increasing our ability to make our organizations more flexible and resilient.

Futures provides a safe space to instigate unfamiliar conversations, develop decision-making capabilities and test future innovations and strategies. Futures can support experimentation mechanisms that assist the development of transformational offerings into commercially viable business solutions.

There is an urgent and pressing need to move beyond incremental change if we are to enable more sustainable lifestyles, if we are to move towards a world where 9 billion people can live well, within planetary boundaries. Many challenges and barriers remain: companies must be open to discussion, exploration and engagement – identifying opportunities, and addressing and overcoming systemic roadblocks.

This change requires all companies to be bolder in both their thoughts and actions, but the leaders are those that jump onto transformation early, defining the path as opposed to following the path. Leadership can be lonely, uncertain and unquestionably risky, but through exploring futures, experimentation and collaboration, these risks can be reduced, turning an unknown and uncertain future into one of sustainable business opportunities.



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RECOMMENDATIONS



- Companies should reconsider the role of futures beyond a traditional, largely business as usual, management tool, to explore its potential in driving their sustainability and business development agendas. Seeing beyond the macro-level view to explore more everyday perspectives, for example through role-playing, can stimulate new thinking and guide more radical innovation and strategic planning, as well as protect the company from increasing risks and uncertainty.
- Companies should consider producing normative, desired visions of the future, relevant to their own business offering and internal culture. They act as powerful tools to encourage and envision necessary changes and provide a story that can motivate new aspirations and behaviour across a society in which the company continues to play a positive role. Existing future visions (e.g. Vision 2050) can be used to provide a broad framework and a springboard for a more specific company vision that includes a diversity of ideas in a context appropriate to the business.

- Fostering a culture of longer-term thinking within the organization is important. In particular, senior executives and managers should be involved in futures exercises and must be a driving force behind the process.
- Futures work needs to be clearly communicated across the organization, ensuring that employees are educated in its role and use. Making it a more participatory and systematic process can develop understanding, build up a range of capabilities among employees and reduce potential breakdown in the implementation of initiatives. Making futures and sustainability more relevant to individuals' roles ensures that resulting actions are more successfully driven forward.
- Thinking-time and -space, both mental and physical, should be dedicated to futures work, to stimulate deeper exploration and ensure that the future of the organization receives adequate attention away from immediate everyday activities.

- Internal and external collaboration and engagement should be fostered to develop shared visions and new partnerships that can cross-fertilize ideas and scale up the rate of transformational change.
- Innovation processes need to support experimentation: patience in the demonstration of an economic business case enables newer territory to be explored. Failure must be seen as necessary and inevitable, and provides important learning opportunities in the quest for transformation.



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