



## The journey to 2030: Choosing the human agenda

Seven shifts reshaping organizations in a disruptive decade

# Introduction

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“One of the major keys to success is to keep moving forward on the journey, making the best of the detours and repercussions, turning adversity into advantage.”

– **John C. Maxwell**



# Introduction

The decade that began in 2020 is not the one people expected and planned for in 2019. Not only are things happening faster; different things are happening. Starting with two years of the worst global pandemic in a century that are being followed by a level of political/military tension we haven't seen for 80 years, the world has been plunged into an age of instability and profound discontinuity that holds both extraordinary opportunities and unprecedented challenges while reshaping the business landscape in ways that are deep, structural, and enduring.

Deloitte's recent paper, [Leading Through an Age of Discontinuity](#), examines several critical discontinuities that are likely to reframe perspectives and inform actions in the coming decade; among them:

- Unprecedented levels and novel types of **scientific discovery** that will turbocharge the convergence of digital technology, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and materials science, and drive new technological breakthroughs.
- **Reinvented globalization** and more active government intervention that will likely require business leaders to address changes in their economic strategies and their interfaces with governments.
- The declining role of individual organizations in favor of collaborating with multiple other entities to create evolved, shared, **ecosystem-wide strategies**.

- Blending of traditional, hierarchical models of power with **networked power**.
- The growing importance of **stakeholder capitalism**, which includes the needs and interests of customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and our shared natural environment.<sup>1</sup>

Leaders' ability to draft their organization's human agenda and navigate their people through the coming decade's instability and discontinuity will be a priority; one made more difficult for two reasons: Changes are happening faster than ever before, and many of these changes are different than we expected. This combination will likely challenge leaders to adopt new ways of thinking to succeed, advance the human agenda, and position their organization to thrive in the decade ahead.

## It's time for new thinking, new energy

In his bestselling book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, world-famous psychologist and Nobel Prize-winning economist Daniel Kahneman explains that there are two systems that drive the way we think, shaping our judgments and decisions in business and our personal lives: "System 1" is fast, instinctive, and emotional; "System 2" is slower, more deliberative, and more logical.<sup>2</sup>

Much of what we do as organizations is System 1 thinking—it's automatic, based on memory, common experiences, and regular routines and processes. As human beings we typically feel comfortable operating in System 1 mode



because it's the least energy-consuming approach. However, situational decision making in this decade's unstable environment may require more intense analysis and problem-solving; System 2 thinking is better suited for this—even though it takes concentration and is more mentally draining to process the thoughts. The two systems are constantly fighting over control of our actions and may make us prone to errors and false decisions.<sup>3</sup>

Shifting between System 1 and System 2 thinking demands considerable effort and training. As an individual, it may be taxing to try to find the pattern among different changes and challenges; to determine how to

move forward. Scaled to organization size, the decision-making process is further complicated by the noise of individuals coming together.

According to System 1, the world should be predictable, straightforward, and easy to navigate. But we are seeing first-hand that is not the case—what's next is fundamentally different than what we were preparing for. Still, many organizations continue reaching into an old toolkit of leadership and talent models to try to solve new, unprecedented challenges. It is time for new thinking, a new toolkit, and new energy and commitment—minus the exhaustion risk of too much System 2 thinking—to shape a human agenda for the coming decade.

# The path to 2030: Seven shifts and their human agenda implications

The pandemic-driven Great Disruption and Great Resignation have been creating and/or accelerating seven business and societal shifts that are altering the trajectory of organizations' human agendas in the run up to 2030 (figure 1). Some shifts already in progress have accelerated and we may clearly see the "from-to." Other shifts are emerging, and we may anticipate their progression. In all cases, their impacts on the future of work, workforce, and workplace are likely to be disruptive and profound. How business leaders respond to challenges and opportunities in this unstable environment may either immobilize or propel their organization forward.

The decade ending in 2030 starts in 2022. It is time for HR and business leaders to apply learnings from the past two years to these seven shifts and choose a human agenda to generate organizational resiliency and thrive in a disrupted and disruptive marketplace. And although appearing counterintuitive, the way to maintain stability is by being dynamic—don't avoid the rapids; navigate them.

Figure 1. Shifts altering the human agenda, 2022-2030



Worker expectations and agency



Longer lives, more opportunities



Human-technology collaboration



Digital/virtual/metaverse lives



Data and privacy: Battle royale



Trust and corporate governance



Stakeholder capitalism in a volatile world

# Worker expectations and agency



As power and agency shift from employer to employees, reverting to previous work, workforce, and workplace models is unlikely to occur. Employees want more from their employer: more meaningful work, more time and place flexibility, more personalized employment models and career paths. In today's skills- and capabilities-based economy, employees have choices and are willing to act on them. We have experienced this during the pandemic and expect it will be at a markedly more advanced place at the decade's end.

The ongoing Great Resignation shows worker expectations and agency in action. Job resignations are up 23% above pre-pandemic levels,<sup>4</sup> and 40% of the global workforce is considering leaving their employer this year.<sup>5</sup> According to US Bureau of Labor Statistics data, nearly 4.5 million Americans quit or changed positions in March 2022, matching

previous highs, and employers posted a record 11.5 million job openings,<sup>6</sup> well above the pre-pandemic average of about 7 million.<sup>7</sup> Low-wage roles in the service sector—leisure and hospitality, retail—continued to be the hardest to fill, even as wages grew and hiring remained strong,<sup>8</sup> indicating that workers weren't leaving the workforce but rather switching into new roles. Another contributor to rising resignations: people are seeing more job listings,<sup>9</sup> indicating a shift in worker opportunities.

The latest international figures show that worker exits have increased in the United Kingdom and Australia, while in France, the number of resignations during third quarter 2021 (the most recent data available), was the highest dating back to 2007. And while the wave hasn't yet hit countries like Germany and Singapore, surveys indicate workers there are also contemplating departures.<sup>10</sup>



This shift is playing out in other ways; for example, in workers' expectations for better work-life balance—the biggest reason people like to work from home.<sup>11</sup> Eighty-eight percent (88%) of companies encouraged their staff to work remotely during the pandemic; a lot of them made it mandatory.<sup>12</sup> Ninety-nine percent (99%) of people working remotely say that they would like to keep doing so; many are reluctant to return to the office full time after enjoying the flexibility, improved productivity, and time-and-cost savings of working from home.<sup>13</sup> Consider:

- 77% of remote employees say they are more productive when they work from home.
- 80% of remote workers say that remote work is less stressful.
- 53% of American remote workers consider the flexible schedule as the biggest benefit.

- 30% of people working from home save upwards of US\$5,000 per year on commuting, eating out, and other expenses.<sup>14</sup>

Companies appear to recognize that having remote workers may be the new normal in an era of increasing employee expectations and agency: 74% of businesses plan to transfer some of their workers to remote work permanently,<sup>15</sup> with hybrid models that blend in-office and remote arrangements a common approach. The good news is that remote work may benefit employers as well as workers: Companies that permit remote work see, on average, a US\$2,000 increase in profit per worker,<sup>16</sup> and 64% of recruiters believe that being able to offer remote work enables them to find high-quality talent.<sup>17</sup>

“I talk to hundreds of companies about remote work, and 95% of them now say they’re going hybrid, while the other 5% are going full remote. The number of person-days in the office is never going back to pre-pandemic average, ever...After two years of working from home, employees don’t just prefer it. They also feel like they’re getting better at it.”<sup>18</sup>

**Nick Bloom, Stanford University economics professor**

The shift in worker expectations and agency also shows potential to upend a longtime workplace norm: the five-day work week. A hundred years ago, we moved from working six days a week to five; many employees feel we’re overdue for an update. According to new research, nearly all US employees (92%) say they want a four-day work week—even as they acknowledge the associated tradeoff of working longer hours to do so—citing improved mental health and increased productivity as the perceived benefits.<sup>19</sup> Flexibility around when they work is among employees’ most common requests. More than a third (37%) of those surveyed said they would be willing to take a 5% pay cut or more in exchange for recurring three-day weekends.<sup>20</sup>

Companies and countries around the globe have been experimenting with the four-day work week as a part of the future of work, and results to date have been positive:

- As the pandemic disrupted existing work practices, Unilever New Zealand conducted a year-long trial of a four-day working week, giving employees a chance to reduce their hours by 20% without hurting their pay. Executive management said the goal of the pilot was to “measure performance on output not time,” with plans to share the trial’s outcomes with other New Zealand companies.<sup>21</sup>
- Microsoft trialed a four-day week with no loss of pay in its Japan office and claimed productivity went up by just under 40%.<sup>22</sup> Microsoft Japan also found that electricity costs fell by 23%, and when workers took Fridays off, they printed almost 60% less.<sup>23</sup>
- Trials of a four-day week in Iceland between 2015 and 2019—in which workers were paid the same amount for shorter hours—were a major success with both managers and staff.<sup>24</sup> Perceived stress and burnout went down, while health and work-life balance went up.<sup>25</sup> Importantly, productivity remained the same or improved in the majority of workplaces.<sup>26</sup> The trials led unions to renegotiate working patterns; now 86% of Iceland’s workforce have either moved to shorter hours for the same pay, or will shortly gain the right to.<sup>27</sup>
- Not-for-profit group 4Day Week Global is currently running pilot programs with numerous companies in collaboration with university researchers in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand.<sup>28</sup>

## Implications & considerations for the human agenda

- To adapt to a world of changing worker expectations and agency, organizations need to move away from traditional work and workplace operating models of the past to a more fluid, human, and digital future in which speed, agility, and innovation rule the day, and in which people expect more meaning, choice, growth, and autonomy at work.<sup>29</sup>
- The nature of work needs to change to keep pace with the workforce. Unboxing people from jobs and deconstructing them into their full range of skills, experience, and interests should enable them to be seen as unique individuals beyond their job descriptions, with significant positive implications for inclusion.<sup>30</sup>
- Twenty percent (20%) of jobs today are entirely remote without plans to return to the office,<sup>31</sup> and jobs specified as “remote” are receiving 300% more applicants than jobs not listed as remote.<sup>32</sup> While not all work can be performed completely remotely, company leaders, HR staff, and employees can co-create an enterprise that incorporates a hybrid work strategy that resonates with the workforce.
- Productivity as use of time is an easy measure, yet a company’s CTO, CFO, and CHRO should rethink output from a trifold perspective—finance, technology, and people—as every dollar in one of the three may have different returns. The mix needs to be managed in measuring combined returns, outputs, and outcomes.

# Longer lives, more opportunities



The way individuals are and will be experiencing the workplace is changing. Longer lives bring more opportunities and heightened expectations around potential career paths for workers. In addition, the growing prevalence of multi-generational work teams poses challenges through new reporting relationships (e.g., working for bosses younger/different than the employee). More years in the workplace may also encourage older workers to pursue “second-act” careers via entrepreneurship.

The original US Social Security Act (SSA) of 1935 set the minimum age for receiving full retirement benefits at 65.<sup>33</sup> At that time, though, life expectancy at birth was 58 years for men and 62 for women.<sup>34</sup> In 2020, combined US life expectancy at birth was 77.3 years—74.5 years for men and for 80.2 for women.<sup>35,36</sup> (SSA full retirement age currently varies from 65 to 67 years, depending on an individual’s year of

birth.<sup>37</sup>) Around the world, dozens of countries have average life expectancies of 80-85 years, including Hong Kong, Switzerland, Singapore, Italy, Spain, Australia, Iceland, South Korea, Israel, Sweden, France, Canada, and others.<sup>38</sup> A child born in Japan in 2007 will have a more than 50% chance of living past the age of 107.<sup>39</sup> When that child, now 15 years old, starts thinking about the work/life combination, what might she envision as her future choices?

Longer lives provide opportunities for longer careers. Lynda Gratton and Andrew Scott, authors of *The 100-Year Life: Living and Working in an Age of Longevity*, say there is growing awareness that increasing longevity will have major implications for how people manage their work lives and careers.<sup>40</sup> From a financial perspective alone, many people currently in their 20s to 40s may have to work well into their 70s to provide a reasonable retirement

income.<sup>41</sup> According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the labor force participation rate for workers age 65 to 74 is projected to be 30.2% in 2026; for workers age 75 and older, the participation rate is projected to be 10.8%.<sup>42</sup> Gratton and Scott’s research suggests that employers are generally unprepared for the opportunities and challenges arising from greater workforce longevity.<sup>43</sup> For those companies that have been relying on outdated, age-related guideposts to shape their talent development and retention policies, it may be time for a new narrative; one that values people at different stages of life.<sup>44</sup>

- Many older workers want and/or need to engage in some type of work beyond traditional retirement age. The Pew Research Center states that 20% of gig workers in the United States—from freelance consultants to ride-share drivers—are over the age of 50,

and nearly a third of those are over the age of 65.<sup>45</sup>

- Despite the hype surrounding start-up “wunderkinds,” a 2019 research study shows that the most successful US entrepreneurs are in their 40s<sup>46</sup> and that a 50-year-old company founder is 1.8x more likely to achieve upper-tail growth than a 30-something founder. An advantage of older entrepreneurs? They bring the benefit of experience to the founder’s table.<sup>47</sup>
- Employing older workers offers considerable benefits. An age-inclusive workplace that includes older workers improves organization performance and outcomes: A 2013 study of 147 German companies found higher employee productivity and retention rates, as well as higher profits and growth projections among businesses with a mix of employees of various ages.<sup>48</sup>

- According to CareerBuilder, over the course of their working lives, baby boomers spend 1.5 times longer in a job than Gen X, and around three times longer than millennials.<sup>49</sup>
- Research from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that countries which give older people greater opportunities to work could raise their GDP by as much as 19% over the next three decades.<sup>50</sup>

Will we see employers in 2030 taking advantage of this huge labor pool? They may have to overcome an embedded ageism problem to do so. A report by The Economist Intelligence Unit (now Economist Impact) found that nearly eight out of 10 older workers believed they witnessed or were a victim of this bias at work. This is also evidenced by long-term employment data that shows it takes older unemployed people nearly twice as long as their younger counterparts to find work.<sup>51</sup> With lifetime employment no longer an enterprise construct, is there an opening for career managers (similar to sports managers) to guide and advocate for clients throughout their working life?

“The speed, strength, and zest for discovery common in younger people, combined with the emotional intelligence and wisdom prevalent among older people, create possibilities for families, communities, and workplaces that haven’t existed before. Rather than dwelling so anxiously on the costs incurred by an ‘aging’ society, we can measure and reap the remarkable dividends of a society that is, in fact, age-diverse.”<sup>52</sup>

**Stanford Center on Longevity**

Longer lives, more opportunities

## Implications & considerations for the human agenda

- Today’s inflexible, all-consuming workplace models may no longer be fit for purpose when, according to the Stanford Center on Longevity, “Over the course of 100-year lives, we can expect to work 60 years or more.”<sup>53</sup> How do people want to consume that time, providing they can choose? Organizations might need to build more flexibility into their work redesign; for example, allowing workers to scale their hours up or down throughout their careers, based on their responsibilities outside of paid work during life’s “peak periods.”<sup>54</sup>
- To fully realize the benefits of generational diversity, companies may need to compete for talent of all ages with better salaries and age-appropriate benefits, augment their workforce with technologies, support employees’ lives outside of the workplace, and focus on extending the working lives of all employees through ergonomics and inclusive design.<sup>55</sup>
- Longer lifespans could allow people to move in and out of a varied mix of professional and personal roles, spawning active long-term community building of workers, clients, consumers, users, alumni, advocates, talent scouts, and more.
- Variation in worker contributions over the span of a 60-year career may likely contribute to flexing in and out of the workforce in an ecosystem.

# Human-technology collaboration



Companies seeking scale efficiencies have been mechanizing work for a hundred years. The prevailing view is that machines/technology doing work is a substitute for humans doing work. However, attitudes are shifting from a substitution framework to an augmentation framework, and from a mechanized view of how people, teams, and technology work to an organic, human-centered view. By 2030, automation may be viewed as a route to greater opportunity; machines doing work allows humans to perform higher-level functions. The new emphasis may be on the way people in teams and technology work together in the latest version of a Mission Economy, which applies human-technology collaboration across public and private sectors to society's biggest issues of the time.<sup>56</sup>

Deloitte's [2021 Global Human Capital Trends](#) report highlighted that humans and technology are more powerful together than either can be on their own.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, research involving 1,500 organizations in a range of industries revealed that greater performance improvements occur when humans and smart machines work together, enhancing each other's strengths.<sup>58</sup> As the decade unfolds,

organization leaders should progress ideas and actions that use technology in innovative ways to augment and support human efforts to accelerate work outputs and achieve new outcomes.<sup>59</sup>

*"We have spent way too much time thinking about people versus computers, and not nearly enough time thinking about people and computers. Way too much time thinking about what jobs computers are going to take away from people, and not nearly enough time thinking about what people and computers can do together that could never be done before."*

**Thomas Malone, director, MIT Center for Collective Intelligence<sup>60</sup>**



A collaborative human-technology relationship is affected by six influencers, which work in tandem to drive the work, workforce, and workplace experience:

- **Collaboration and communication**—Promotion of teaming and knowledge-sharing through technology
- **Design**—How technology is designed in a human-centric way, resulting in intuitive, simple tools with minimal training
- **Work enablement**—Ability to leverage the right technology to accomplish work efficiently
- **Personalization**—Level of personalization that enables technology to accommodate worker needs and preferences
- **Data**—Workers' ability to access real-time information, dashboards, and applications to drive decision-making and complete work

• **Consistency**—Use of technology to enable a consistent work experience, regardless of where or when work is done.<sup>61</sup>

Technology, when designed with the human agenda in mind, can improve workplace coordination, cooperation, and communication; allow individuals to access necessary resources with ease; and enable workers to improve service delivery and operate more efficiently.<sup>62</sup> As we advance toward 2030, how do we build the necessary organization skills and proficiency needed to take advantage of humans and machines working together to achieve amazing outcomes and enable meaning?

Digital technologies and interoperable data may help break down silos and arm workers with the information and insights they need to make smarter decisions. A unified

engagement platform may help make future worker-technology collaboration a simpler, more seamless experience than it is today. And as technology increasingly automates routine tasks, workers might be freed-up to apply their capabilities to creative problem-solving and more substantive, fulfilling work. Also, creating “[superteams](#)” that use technology such as AI, cloud, and collaboration tools can create a positive workforce experience and deliver value to the ecosystem.<sup>63</sup> For example, AI agents can facilitate communications between or on behalf of people, such as transcribing a meeting and distributing a voice-searchable version to those unable to attend.<sup>64</sup>

A large retail company empowers its workers by providing them with devices that allow them to access inventory data and training applications and also communicate with their team. These kinds of devices and technologies enhance productivity, enable growth, and encourage collaboration.<sup>65</sup>

Both humans and machines play an essential role in an increasingly digital society; however, flexibility and adaptability will likely be key to move beyond augmentation to collaboration and enable both to achieve their full potential. According to Prof. Dr. Henning Kagermann and Dr. Youichi Nonaka, editors of *Revitalizing Human-Machine Interaction for the Advancement of Society: Perspectives from Germany and Japan*:

“In order to establish a sustainable society, it’s necessary for humans to be able to continuously create high-value-added work, and to be able to shift from non-high-value-added work to high-value-added work at any time. It’s also necessary for machines to not only carry out non-high-value-added work, but to also be a mechanism to create high-value-added work by constant interaction with humans.

According to these requirements, the digital transformation can enable a novel, human-centered manufacturing system in which humans concentrate on lifelong skill improvement and continuously create high-value-added work. Essentially, this system revitalizes human-machine interaction, allowing both humans and machines to play a role in digital society.”<sup>66</sup>

## Implications & considerations for the human agenda

- Effective worker-technology collaboration might require organizations to reimagine the workplace experience and better leverage technology to drive social collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and personalization to improve productivity and drive community.<sup>67</sup> Redesigning work with humans at the center—elevating what they do and focusing on outcomes—can help bring tech and humans together in new ways, with a possible result being the creation of better and more satisfying work.<sup>68</sup>
- To thrive in an increasingly virtual workplace, leaders should create a teaming environment that fosters a culture of collaboration and set clear expectations for communicating and getting work done. In addition, leaders need to provide accessible tools to enable workers to work anytime and anywhere with minimal disruptions.<sup>69</sup> This means assessing the organization’s current technology ecosystem, identifying gaps, defining a build, buy, or partner strategy, and integrating systems to enable workers’ desired experience, regardless of location.
- Workers expect their workplace technology to mirror the digital experiences they enjoy in their personal life. Providing a high-impact technology experience requires a delicate balance between identifying the tools and technologies that will help increase productivity and efficiency while also maintaining a focus on the human experience.<sup>70</sup>
- Does burgeoning human-technology collaboration raise new equity and/or ethics considerations? Does the ‘moral case’ of what an enterprise’s purpose is and how it takes a stand (or not) on societal issues become increasingly important?

# Digital/virtual/ metaverse lives



Digital and virtual technology advances and the emerging role of the metaverse are increasing interconnectedness and driving a shift from global business models, standards, and homogeneity to highly targeted interactions to and among heterogeneous communities comprised of individuals with common interests, irrespective of location. This shift creates new business opportunities but also requires investments in customer engagement capabilities and workforce development to engage effectively with these micro-communities.

The metaverse is a next-generation internet, where content has evolved from text, to graphics, to video—and now, to immersive digital interactions. It is a form of digital interaction where connected, virtual

experiences such as banking, shopping, working, and socializing, simulate those of the physical world.<sup>71</sup> The metaverse is not a single technology or device, and it's not a service of any one company. It's the convergence of a cluster of maturing technologies—extended reality (AR/VR/MR),<sup>72</sup> computation and storage (cloud and edge computing; AI/machine learning), and networks (5/6G, fiber optics). Together, these technologies may create the experience of a three-dimensional environment in which users interact with their surroundings and engage in online communities as if they are in a shared space,<sup>73</sup> enabled by digital currencies, nonfungible tokens, and devices such as virtual reality (VR) headsets, artificial reality (AR) glasses, smartphone apps.

Use cases for the metaverse cross industries



and categories and range from the immediate to the long term. Gartner expects that by 2026, 25% of people will spend at least one hour a day in the metaverse for work, shopping, education, socializing, and/or entertainment.<sup>74</sup> Many have predicted that virtual meetings will move to the metaverse, and that workers will increasingly rely on VR headsets and avatars at work.<sup>75</sup>

Retailers looking to recreate in-store experiences for online shoppers are embracing immersive technologies, with 64% of leading consumer brands investing in AR to help consumers visualize how products will look on them or in their home.<sup>76</sup> Nike, for example, has filed trademarks for virtual gear, shoes and accessories.<sup>77</sup> Consumers appear to be on board with a move to virtual retail: According to

a recent report, 68% of consumers intentionally seek out retailers that offer omnichannel experiences, with convenience (and a shopping path that requires the least effort) being the main driver of channel choice.<sup>78</sup> However, while the building blocks of the metaverse are already in place, many of the necessary technologies still have a long way to go before their full potential is available at truly mass scale. Future evolution also will likely depend on consumer response and the outcome of at least four key unknowns:

- **Standardization.** To what degree do standards and protocols converge? What is the level of interoperability among different platforms?
- **User interface.** To what degree does the user interface become intuitive and seamless?

- **Market fragmentation.** How many market leaders emerge and what consumer and commercial use cases do they serve?
- **Governance.** How effectively and consistently are content and conduct regulated? Are intellectual property (IP) and digital assets reliably protected?<sup>79</sup>

As more and more companies hire digitally adept professionals focused on the metaverse, which leadership function will manage and develop them? Some envision the rise of a new role, the Chief Metaverse Technology Officer (CMTO).<sup>80</sup> Filling this position may prove challenging: An ideal CMTO may likely possess technology industry experience and deep knowledge about video games and the Web 3.0 ecosystem. They also could be well-versed with the creative side of the market, including knowing and recruiting individuals with a background in development

platforms and a vision of the unfolding metaverse environment. Finally, they would need experience in cryptocurrency, cloud computing, blockchain, and gaming engines.<sup>81</sup>

The global metaverse market is expected to witness a CAGR of 39.4% to reach US\$678.8 billion by 2030.<sup>82</sup> The tech industry is solidly behind the metaverse's future, expecting it will hit US\$800 billion by 2024 and reach one billion people by 2030.<sup>83</sup>



## Implications & considerations for the human agenda

- The metaverse may become a paradigm shift for consumer, enterprise, and workforce behavior, requiring companies to make substantial investments in customer engagement capabilities and employee development tools, while adopting a flexible, "test and learn" approach for both consumer-facing and enterprise functions.<sup>84</sup> A major bank recently announced that it is launching a series of VR training models that will enable 50,000+ employees to practice skills such as simulating client interactions, navigating difficult conversations, and listening and responding with empathy.<sup>85</sup>
- Given that the mainstream metaverse and corresponding revenue generation are likely several years out, companies should take a long-term view on investments and consider KPIs around consumer and employee engagement in addition to ROI. Consider investments in the context of broader digital transformation agendas.<sup>86</sup>
- The struggle to find highly skilled tech talent to create the metaverse architecture and myriad applications will be a challenge, exacerbating the recruiting battle for companies across virtually all industries. Already, a major international social media powerhouse has announced plans to hire 10,000 high-skilled workers in Europe over the next five years.<sup>87</sup>
- Organizations may need to manage a range of complexities and risks in the metaverse (e.g., privacy/security, accessibility, sustainable energy consumption) and help ensure they are proactively building a "responsible metaverse" and effectively maintaining consumer and employee trust.
- Is the metaverse the manifestation of next-level cloud computing, and could it require organizations to develop an enterprise cloud agenda? The cloud and its scalability provide extensive opportunities for business model reinvention; however, this may put pressure on humans, who are, by nature, less able than machines to adeptly handle exponential degrees of scalability.

# Data and privacy: battle royale



A battle over data ownership and control is taking place among individuals, technology giants, and governments. By the end of the decade, we may see a dramatic shift from prescriptive and centralized ownership of data and IP to individual customers/employees owning and controlling their data and actions/contributions around it. Advocates of this shift are gaining ground; however, tech companies might not willingly relinquish control, even as they are engaged in disputes about data use and privacy issues.

Data privacy is a critical matter. Results of a recent study show consumers have a strong interest in protecting their privacy: 86% of consumers "care about data privacy" and

want more control, and 79% are willing to invest time or money to better protect their privacy.<sup>88</sup> In other findings, consumers want transparency and control with respect to business data practices: 76% said that it's too difficult to understand what's going on and how their information is being used. In response, more individuals are taking action to protect themselves and their data.<sup>89</sup> Consumers also are very concerned about the use of their personal information in AI and automated decision-making, and abuse of that has eroded trust. Nearly three-fourths (72%) of respondents believe that organizations have a responsibility to only use AI responsibly and ethically.<sup>90</sup>

"The idea of 'surveillance capitalism,' which its author Shoshana Zuboff describes as 'an economic system built on the secret extraction and manipulation of human data,' has become common coinage, capturing consumers' increasing awareness that their data is bought, sold, and used without their consent — and their growing reluctance to put up with it."<sup>91</sup>

Certain consumer technology providers are listening to and acting on users' data ownership and privacy concerns. Last year, the Apple iPhone® operating system allowed users to shut down data harvesters' ability to track them across their many apps,<sup>92</sup> providing customers with more power and agency over their data. Apple™ has made privacy protection a market differentiator: device manufacturers and app developers now use privacy features to draw new users.<sup>93</sup>

Data control issues extend to the workplace, specifically those relating to worker-company ownership of IP (e.g., original ideas and concepts). The general rule regarding worker-developed IP is that the company owns it, but the IP must be created during and within the scope of employment.<sup>94</sup> There are exceptions, however, and determining IP ownership may be further complicated by the rapid rise of remote

working environments<sup>95</sup> and associated shifts in worker agency and responsibility. How is the scope of employment defined? Is it determined by the individual's job description when they were hired? By what they do now? Where they perform the work?<sup>96</sup> Evolving IP ownership complexities are elevating organizational and regulatory attention.

In addition to IP ownership issues, regulatory agencies are paying increased attention to businesses' data practices, making it essential for leaders to raise awareness of compliance requirements and how evolving laws or data breaches may affect operations.<sup>97</sup> Violations may result in substantial financial penalties, as has been seen over the years with many major brands and well-known organizations.

Governments at various levels are wrestling with data-related regulatory oversight, mindful that sentiment may change (and change back) based on global region and current events. (For example, centralizing health data during the COVID-19 pandemic was acceptable because it was in the interest of all.) Europe has approved a number of laws, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which stipulates that EU citizens have the right to protection of their personal data.<sup>98</sup> China introduced a GDPR-like data privacy law in August 2021.<sup>99</sup> Meanwhile, US federal privacy bills, security legislation, and antitrust laws have stalled in Congress.<sup>100</sup> US

state legislatures have fared better; in 2021 they proposed or passed at least 27 online privacy bills, regulating data markets and protecting personal digital rights.<sup>101</sup> Finally, safeguarding data against cyber threats is a growing concern for individuals, businesses, and governments. Today, up to 90% of data transmitted across the internet is captured and processed by third parties, making it vulnerable to criminals who steal website visitors' credit card numbers, birthdates, email addresses, and other personal information; redirect visitors to other competitor sites; and take control of their devices.<sup>102</sup> According to the Identity Theft Resource Center's 2021 Data Breach Report, the number of reported data breaches for the year jumped 68%, to the highest-ever total.<sup>103</sup>

The black market for stolen data is flourishing, with increased financial motive in developing nations. Consumers, businesses and their workers, and governments understand that they are being targeted, and they want more control over data use, privacy, and security.<sup>104</sup> As threat actors and their tools increase in sophistication, reach, and impact, protection is likely to require more stringent regulations and investments in powerful data security solutions. In fact, the global security and vulnerability management market is expected to grow from US\$6.7 billion in 2020 to US\$15.86 billion by 2030.<sup>105</sup>

## Implications & considerations for the human agenda

- To build and maintain consumer and worker trust, companies should ensure responsible collection and storage of consumer/worker data; be transparent about how they use that data; offer individuals the choice to opt-in/-out of sharing portions or all of their personal information; and make the opt-in/-out process easy and immediate.
- To protect IP, digital assets, and consumer/worker data privacy, companies should institute a range of safeguards that anticipate and effectively block cybercrimes such as phishing and data hacking. AI and other digital tools can act a force multiplier, detecting and responding to threats automatically and easing the burden on cybersecurity workers.<sup>106</sup>
- Amid increased attention on data ownership issues, specifically those relating to worker-company ownership of IP, organizations' HR and Legal functions should review and update employment agreements to include provisions about company ownership of IP in remote working situations. In addition, companies should consider new forms of joint enterprise/individual IP generation that enable shared ownership.
- Companies should support online platforms and communities that are safe for all users and establish specific policies on harassment and bullying. Actions include considering how content and behavioral norms are set and enforced and enacting measures to manage disinformation, deception, and harm to people and property.

# Trust and corporate governance



Trust is a critical currency a company needs to succeed with internal and external stakeholders. Many organizations today use a siloed, departmental/functional approach (e.g., the ethics of AI) to build trust and oversee corporate governance. By 2030 they will require an enterprise-level governance model backed by C-level ownership, verifiable data, and an ethical lens applied to all the choices the organization makes.

According to the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer, business, at 61%, is the most trusted institution, ahead of non-government organizations (NGOs), government, and media. 77% of respondents trust "My Employer," making the relationship between employer and employee incredibly important. This does not mean, however, that organizations are doing everything they should to engender trust with

key audiences, and that the way forward will be without challenges.<sup>107</sup>

- Nearly 6 in 10 respondents to Edelman's annual trust and credibility survey say their default tendency is to distrust something until they see evidence it is trustworthy. Another 64% say it's gotten to a point where people are incapable of having constructive and civil debates about issues they disagree on.<sup>108</sup>
- Respondents believe business is not doing enough to address societal problems, including climate change, economic inequality, workforce reskilling, and trustworthy information. Across every issue, by a large margin, people want more business engagement, not less. On climate change, for example, 52% say business is not doing enough; only 9% say it is overstepping.<sup>109</sup>



Survey findings make clear that business must lead in breaking the cycle of distrust. Demonstrating authenticity—being intentional about the values the organization espouses<sup>110</sup>—and providing trustworthy, consistent, and fact-based information are critical.<sup>111</sup> As mentioned previously, safeguarding consumer and worker data, and improving transparency around data use and ownership, are important building blocks to establish and maintain trust between organizations and consumers. Similarly, increasing management focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) can help strengthen employer-employee trust; however, considerable work remains to be done. According to a recent US survey, 79% of

companies plan to raise their DEI budget<sup>112</sup> and 59% of DEI leaders said their CEO/executive management team are involved in decisions to endorse and advance DEI.<sup>113</sup> Yet, only 13% of those senior leaders are proactive and visible in demonstrating their support,<sup>114</sup> and 41% of CEOs feel their organizations lack stakeholder trust on DEI.<sup>115</sup>

Strengthening customer and employee relationships is (or should be) an essential focus of businesses' human agenda, but in today's climate of deep distrust of public and private institutions, organization leaders will have to work much harder to build that trust.<sup>116</sup>



## Implications & considerations for the human agenda

- When performed with a high degree of competence and the right intent, an organization's actions can build trust with key external and internal stakeholders, who then validate that trust. Assessing the organization's performance across domains and comparing the score against leading practices can illuminate priority focus areas and accelerate solution ideation and implementation.<sup>117</sup>
- Employees expect senior executives to lead by example—to make trust an essential part of the organization's human agenda—particularly when it concerns societal issues. When considering a job, 60% of employees surveyed by Edelman said they want their CEO to speak out on issues they care about; 80% of the general population want CEOs to be personally visible when discussing public policy with external stakeholders or work their company has done to benefit society.
- According to Deloitte research, 79% of employees who highly trust their employer feel motivated to work; only 29% of those who did not trust their employer are motivated to work.<sup>118</sup> Company leaders and HR professionals should explore new ways to build trust by empowering workers and reducing traditional areas of friction. Actions to consider include adjusting workplace strategy to balance workforce desires, organizational needs, and cost; rethinking autonomy and decision-making authority; and establishing input and feedback loops between workers and leadership.
- Finding common areas to connect employers and workers may help topple hierarchical barriers to building trust. Where to start? 62% of employees identified employee well-being support as a top priority when considering their next role<sup>119</sup> and 77% of employers feel employee mental health and well-being is now a top priority for their company.<sup>120</sup>

# Stakeholder capitalism in a volatile world



The shift from shareholder capitalism to stakeholder capitalism, in which companies seek long-term value creation by focusing on not just financial performance, but a broader set of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues, is accelerating. According to a recent survey of 200 C-suite executives, 90% say a shift from stockholder to stakeholder capitalism is underway, and 80% say it's affecting their firm.<sup>121</sup> Highlighting this shift, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink stated that "Stakeholder capitalism is not about politics. It is not a social or ideological agenda. It is not 'woke.'" And, Fink added, companies setting climate change targets is "critical to the long-term economic interests of your shareholders."<sup>122</sup>

Deloitte's paper, [Leading Through an Age of Discontinuity](#), examined this shift from the perspective of senior executives and noted that: "more and more business leaders are publicly disavowing shareholder supremacy and embracing a more balanced model of 'stakeholder capitalism' that includes the needs and interests of customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and our shared natural environment."<sup>123</sup> When we add the perspective of the shift's impact on an organization's broader human agenda, the two amplify each other and drive significant change.

In the coming decade, we expect to see the alignment of personal, corporate, and societal values as the framework for how business and talent decisions are made; we just don't yet know how—and how fast—this complicated shift might play out. However, examples of stakeholder capitalism (aka social entrepreneurship) are proliferating:

- BBVA has trained 75,000+ employees in sustainability education to support its sustainability-driven climate action and inclusive growth strategy. The learning ecosystem assigns specific curriculum based on employees' role, location, and necessary skills.<sup>124</sup>
- Unilever's purpose-led Sustainable Living Brands grew 69% faster than the rest of the

business and delivered 75% of the company's growth in 2018. Seven of Unilever's top 10 brands are Sustainable Living Brands.<sup>125</sup>

- M&T Bank is the first US bank to collaborate with MagnusCards, a free app that increases banking accessibility for individuals with cognitive and intellectual disabilities. The initiative will provide visual cues and step-by-step guidance for ATM transactions, debit card purchases, and other tasks.<sup>126</sup>
- Jobs aimed at reducing or eliminating carbon dioxide from energy sources are projected to increase from 20% to 65% of offshore energy jobs in the UK by 2030. To meet this demand, 90% of the UK's oil and gas workforce has medium-to-high skills transferability and is prepared to work in clean energy.<sup>127</sup>

Workers are demanding that their employers act responsibly to earn their service and loyalty,<sup>128</sup> and flocking to organizations that infuse stakeholder capitalism into their corporate DNA. Outdoor apparel brand Patagonia—with its purpose-driven mission and reputation for environmental responsibility—is attracting top talent, especially among value and principle-led younger workers. The company receives upwards of 9,000 applications for every open internship and full-time position.<sup>129</sup> Patagonia also invests in its employees' social well-being—for example, offering onsite childcare at its offices for 36 years—making it among the most desirable places to work.<sup>130</sup>

Meanwhile, global investors are mobilizing around stakeholder capitalism: In a survey of 200 institutional investors managing around US\$18 trillion, 73% planned to increase ESG investments in 2021. In a separate 2021 survey of 800 individual US investors, 79% indicated that they were focused on sustainable investing.<sup>131</sup> And businesses with value propositions that advance stakeholder capitalism are being acknowledged for the good that they do. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the US population aged 18-64 say they are aware of social entrepreneurs, and 64% of American consumers say they are more willing to pay higher prices for sustainable products.<sup>132</sup>



## Implications & considerations for the human agenda

- CEOs and boards are focusing more on their organization's impact on the long-term welfare of multiple stakeholders, including employees, customers, and communities—not just their stockholders.<sup>133</sup> Leaders likely will need to respond in both proactive and reactive terms.
- Over the coming decade, the growing importance of stakeholder capitalism will likely demand a change in the way businesses account for and innovate to reduce negative externalities—the unpriced impacts of commercial transactions that are carried by communities and physical environments not directly involved in them. Doing so will likely require the adoption of new tools and practices, including continuous scanning and identification of a business's broader societal and environmental impacts, and the development of fair and accurate methodologies to quantify them.<sup>134</sup>
- Large corporations may gain substantially by creating an environment in which social entrepreneurs can develop ideas that later may be adopted by the broader business community. Both Unilever and IKEA operate accelerator programs that provide innovators with the tools, experience, and guidance they need to experiment, test, and iterate new market offerings.<sup>135</sup>
- Purpose and impact increasingly will be key to motivating the workforce.<sup>136</sup> Over the past two years, 44% of millennials and 49% of Gen Zs said they have made choices over the type of work they are prepared to do and the organizations for which they are willing to work based on their personal ethics.<sup>137</sup> And purpose is important to worker engagement, too: A recent Gartner survey found that when an organization acted on today's social issues, the proportion of workers who were considered highly engaged increased from 40% to 60%.<sup>138</sup>

# The path to 2030 is a reframing moment for all



This is a reframing moment; an opportunity for leaders to observe, study, and leverage accelerating and emerging shifts in a hyperconnected world and set a human agenda for the rest of the decade that enables and empowers us to live and thrive in a new, sustainable way versus going back to what we did before.

Were the last two years a detour or are they are new path to a different future? It's tempting to think that what is happening is a detour and not a change in direction. While we don't know and can't predict precisely how the decade will play out, many different shifts are swirling and swelling. We have highlighted seven we expect to dramatically reshape the landscape by 2030. They are inevitable, interconnected, and irreversible: Businesses will need to make fundamental work, workforce, and workplace changes to address the entire portfolio. Leaders will need to craft bold narratives—and be credible about their ability to fulfill them.

There is no autopilot for the remainder of this decade: We all need to be ready to respond to significant, unexpected events, whether the challenge is a global pandemic, economic turbulence, or rising political/military tensions. As we lean into these and other emerging shifts, creativity, culture, and choices will rule the day. Taking actions in the context of the human agenda will propel an organization forward; ignoring them will put it at risk of being leapfrogged by competitors.



“The future  
depends on  
what you  
do today.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

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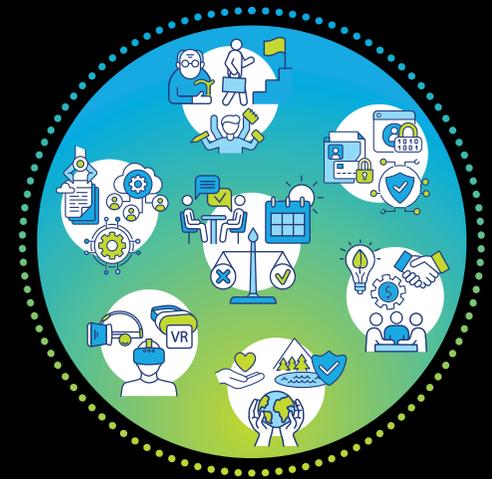
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