Welcome to Resilient. My name is Mike Kearney, the Risk & Financial Advisory CMO. As we continue on the journey in our Confronting the COVID-19 Crisis series, we recognize that the pandemic has challenged us in many ways. We've heard from leaders that the crisis is also challenging how we think and how we act. And it has also made us reflect—it certainly has for me—on what is important. It gives me reason to be optimistic as I consider the future and our path forward, but it also makes me think about both the future and where we are going in business and in society. What is the growing role of the business community in shaping a better future? And as we shape it, how can leaders future-proof their businesses? What fundamental shifts are required to make real and lasting change?

Today, I am joined by two Deloitte leaders, Eamonn Kelly, chief futurist and Office for the Future leader, Deloitte LLP, and Jason Girzadas, managing principal for Businesses, Global, and Strategic Services (BGS), Deloitte LLP.

Eamonn and Jason, welcome to the Resilient podcast. The two of you have been collaborating, as you shared, for years—Eamonn, as our chief futurist and the work that you do to anticipate the implications of trends for Deloitte and even our clients, and Jason, as a member of Deloitte's US executive team, you are responsible for driving integration across Deloitte's businesses and building capabilities to innovate toward a tech-driven future. So, I just want to start off with what sparked this collaboration between the two of you? And maybe, Eamonn, I'll start with you, and then, Jason, you can chime in.

Eamonn and Jason recently coauthored Recharting our course. You can find it on deloitte.com. So, let's get to it. Let's hear what Jason and Eamonn have to say.
Eamonn Kelly: Well, the collaboration started about five or six years ago when Jason and I in our respective roles in the consulting business in the US started to discover that Jason was essentially an extraordinary operational manager, running large chunks of the business, but really cared passionately about where the business was going and are we doing the things today that really need to be done for tomorrow and the day after as well. And I've always had a tremendous passion for the future and understanding how we can improve the future and be better prepared for it, but I also care passionately about what we do today. And it just became this very interesting collaboration between two very different roles, but with the same objective, which was, can we be clear about where we think we're headed and can we do the right things today to maximize our current business, but also to keep developing the optionality and the capabilities for the future business. And so, it came from that. And when we started looking at all the challenges that our clients were facing with so much dramatic change going on in the world, and obviously with the pandemic, we realized that we had a sort of theory about what was happening and where things were going and the ways things needed to change. And also, to connect these time horizons that we just thought it'd be interesting to try and share that with our friends in other organizations too.

Mike Kearney: Jason, what would you add?

Jason Girzadas: Well, it's the beauty of our firm, is we have a very large tent and to have the intellect and the collaboration of a colleague like Eamonn is a real privilege, and I think something that in my various roles, I have been committed to finding ways to leverage for the better. Really, as Eamonn probably doesn't maybe even appreciate this from my perspective is that I grew up as a strategy partner in the firm, provided strategy services to our clients, had been a client leader, and it's always been my instinct to want to help clients look around the corner. How do they get ahead of the issues that all of CXOs that we work with are struggling with? And they're constantly berated by the day-to-day pressures. I mean, it's a never-ending situation. And so, as Eamonn said, we've been working together in various capacities, always looking at what are the subset of issues that are really transcending the day to day. And I think that has been maybe one of the glue of our relationship. And then, in the current environment, it's never been more important to do that. And I think we realized that it was an opportunity to really lay out some clarity around what are those issues and what's important about this moment in time for business leaders in particular to address.

Mike Kearney: One of the things that I find at a lot of my clients is that there's oftentimes this tension between the executive leading kind of the day-to-day business and the executive looking into the future. And I know that you guys work with a lot of clients. Do you find that this is a typical partnership? Are you seeing more of it? Eamonn, I'll start with you and then, Jason, if you want to chime in, that would be great.

Eamonn Kelly: I don't think it's a typical relationship in my experience, and I think the reason is that Jason is, I think, an unusually strategic executive. And I think that the pressures on executives today are probably more intense than they were certainly when I started my career 30 some years ago. But I do think people get a little bit more time to step back and to reflect and to anticipate. And I think that the kind of driving forces of technological connectivity and immediacy and urgency, I think it, a lot of people experience it as a luxury. And I think that Jason is an unusual, but not a unique executive in that, of course, there are people in our clients and in businesses all over the world who share Jason's strategic interest with his executive capabilities. But I'm not as sure that we have a routine kind of tendency in most of our organizations for that relationship to be bolstered by somebody who's given the luxuries I've been given of spending most of their time really doing that forward thinking, and then having the time to share and socialize that and engage in direct conversations, the way that Jason and I have been able to do. I wish it on more people, and I suspect that more organizations will move in this direction because the challenges in our environment are getting so acute and so urgent.

Mike Kearney: Jason, what do you see at your clients?

Jason Girzadas: Well, I think my experience has been all clients are wrestling with this issue. I mean, this is amongst the most difficult aspects of senior leadership roles. My friend Eamonn’s highly complimentary of certainly how I've tried to work with these topics, but I mean, we don't always get it right. And ourselves always stretched to make time, space, devote resources, to issues that are transcending the immediate crisis of the day or week or month. So, I think all clients are wrestling with this. It is I think a differentiator for winning teams to create a balanced view of zooming in/zooming out or taking advantage of horizons, near term and longer term, however you might characterize it. So, this to me is, again, one of the impetuses for this paper is to give some hope and maybe some direction to and encouragement for teams to embrace this kind of collaboration.

Mike Kearney: Jason, I think you guys have been thinking about this, as we talked about, for years, but obviously COVID-19 has brought an extraordinary change. I mean, we're all probably sitting at our houses right now, and I'm curious, what are you seeing with businesses and how they're pivoting their strategies and business models in response to COVID-19, but also everything else that’s going on right now?

Jason Girzadas: Yeah, I mean, COVID-19 has been a global tragedy. I mean, to think about the infliction of pain and suffering and death on so many communities and families and organizations. I mean, we can't skip over that. I mean the business context has certainly been dramatic and difficult, but the human cost has been immense and continues to be immense. So, it has been truly remarkable global impact. And I think we're going to continue to feel the effects of it. The impact on businesses, though, has really been, and in Deloitte, we talk about how do you respond to the initial crisis. And I think, in many ways we are now five months into the crisis and the response phase is largely played out in the sense of immediate response. I think we are now entering into what we call recovery and trying to get back up to some sense of normalcy, but
fundamentally it's challenged everyone to virtualize their businesses in every regard. And many businesses were ready for that and able to accommodate that and many were not. And I think that the challenge now is where do you go from here? I mean, so businesses that haven't been prepared are really having to rapidly accelerate or not, or failing altogether. And there are those who have been able to make accommodations to hopefully get to some better stage of recovery. So, I think we're seeing a wide range, and we'll probably continue to see that the longer this persists.

**Mike Kearney:** Eamonn, I want to pivot to you. I know that you give a lot of thought about the future, as we talked about, but why do you think it's important for leaders to embrace building a better future as a central part of their strategy, their short-term and long-term strategy?

**Eamonn Kelly:** Let me start with what Jason said, which is, this has been a period of incredible human suffering and pain. And I think it's actually reminded us—a lot of people—of the fact that we are here to serve humanity. We are all human beings, human beings matter. And a lot of us are suffering. And I think understanding that that affects all of us, and I think a growth in empathy and a growing understanding of codependence is an important consequence of what we're living through. And I think it's also a stark reminder of something that's always been true, but I think may be more vividly highlighted, which is you need a healthy society to have a healthy business environment. And the world of businesses is not disassociated from the overall society and the broader economy that we live in. It's a huge shaper and driver of it. And if the society isn't doing well, how can businesses be expected to do well? So, I think there is a definite awareness rising that we may over the last 20 years or so have somewhat lost sight of the human dimension and the critical role that businesses play. And if you actually look at the world today and you say, how did we get from the industrial revolution a few hundred years ago to where we are today, the agency, the role that businesses have played in shaping the present has been profound. If you take a look, even before the tragedies of the pandemic, there were real challenges in the world. There's dramatic change going on, and there are extraordinarily great things that could happen. There are ways in which we can definitely forge a more inclusive, sustainable, resilient, prosperous, just economy and society. These things are possible, but there are real challenges of transition pain. Inequality is growing. There are going to be pressures on work as we've known it with automation, we have climate change challenges, sustainability challenges. There are social challenges right now of polarization and declining trust. These are very, very important, and rising to the opportunities and tackling the challenges, businesses are going to be key agents and key players in determining that future and being conscientious and deliberate about how we do that to optimize the opportunities and reduce the pain and the friction caused by the challenges. I think that is something that we have to take very, very, very seriously, and I think many, many businesses are doing so, and I think will become even more committed to doing so as we hopefully move beyond the pandemic in the months and years ahead.

**Jason Girzadas:** The beliefs that Eamonn just talked about underpins our perspectives that we've shared here, which is business leaders do in fact care about these topics. We need to say that as business leaders ourselves, and we're encouraging our fellow business leaders to do the same. So that's point one. These are not someone else's problem. In fact, businesses, to Eamonn's comment, can play a role in, we believe, impacting for the positive these types of issues. And we think businesses need to engage on these societal issues and work to address them. Because for the reasons that Eamonn said, that a healthy, productive workforce, a healthy, productive society lead to the business conditions that all businesses want, which is to be able to sell and grow and develop people, and flourish. So, there is a mutually reinforcing benefit here. And all of the future-driven topics that Eamonn talks so eloquently about, the rise of digital technology, the changing nature of work, the changing power structures in society. All of those things are very true today. But the current circumstances, I think, lay them even more bare and we think cause an even greater call to action for businesses.

**Mike Kearney:** Jason and Eamonn, I want to build on that. Do you think COVID-19 was a catalytic event? Because quite frankly, we've been talking about these societal and environmental issues, all of these things that you're laying out, but why now? Do you think COVID-19 is bringing it to the forefront?

**Eamonn Kelly:** I think it is a catalytic event, and I think it's going into an existing situation where if you look at what the World Economic Forum participants have been seeing at Davos for a number of years now, if you look at what CEOs have been putting in their newsletters and their communications is the need for business to change. If you look at the business roundtables, CEOs are talking about inclusive capitalism and the need for us to take this more seriously. I think the level of commitment expressed has been increasing very steadily. I think the level of commitment manifested, as opposed to expressed, will increase significantly when we're through the worst of the pandemic. And I think the reason is that we've had a wakeup call. We've seen what happens when you can't depend on the infrastructure, when the norms and the resources and assets of society are not as available as we are accustomed to them being; we are aware of the fragility, and aware of how much it hurts when other people hurt. When we see each other hurting, it's painful. And human beings are empathic animals. And I think that we've already persuaded ourselves, I think largely at the level of theory. And we've been doing that for a number of years. I think the pivot we'll see in the months and years ahead, and that we'd love to be a part of, is we're going to move from theory to the practice, and it's not going to be easy. But I personally believe the level of commitment to move from expression to manifestation of a societal over business is deep and will occur.

**Mike Kearney:** Jason, let me go back to you, and I want to talk about trust. And I think one of the things that you explore in the paper that we've referenced is that leaders really need to focus on elevating trust.
In your opinion, what do you think leaders can do to enhance trust with all of their different stakeholders?

**Jason Girzadas:** We do talk about several calls to action. And one of them is rebuilding of trust between individuals and civic organizations and business organizations. I think there’s a number of things. I mean, first off, it’s identifying this as an issue and as something of a source of differentiation. I think leading brands, leading organizations of all types have long identified and sought to have higher degrees of loyalty, higher degrees of stickiness and relationships, so to speak, those sorts of things. But when events like the global pandemic occur and those bonds get challenged or, in cases, broken, I think we’re also seeing the immense price that one pays when that occurs. So things that need to occur are we talk about in our piece is around looking at the resilience of organizations and processes.

I mean, one way you build trust is that if things work when they’re under duress, if things work when there’s immense surge and the scale of need, that they work in all kinds of conditions. And so I think the resilience of organizations and processes and products is one way to address trust that you can actually demonstrate that you can invest in not just something being low cost or having a certain feature, but that it’s actually can weather the thick and the thin, as they say. The other area we talked about around trust is business is really looking at, and Eamonn and I’ve had a lot of good discussions about the use of words and communications and how do they impact trust? Do we invent jargon and terminology that people don’t know what to make of it? Are you clear about what you’re trying to say and the commitments you’re making about your company, your mission, your purpose? And so, in simple terms, words matter, we believe. And I think Eamonn alluded to this as ready is that, how do you act on some of these commitments? You know, we can sign proclamations, we can issue press releases, but there is an action orientation that has to increase as well, we believe, to impact trust. So, how do management teams and organizations really take stock of, have we followed through on what we said we would, are we fulfilling our obligations with respect to commitments we’ve made, those sorts of things. So, it is a range of strategies, I think, that have to be applied but very much directly related to the tangible and intangible aspects of trust. Now, Eamonn, what would you say?

**Eamonn Kelly:** I would completely underscore everything you’ve said there, Jason, and I think that it is about, in a funny way, you’ve said this a lot in our private conversations, Jason, and also in this one, this core point, the business leaders really do care. And I think one of the things that has gotten away a little bit as we get better at PR and owning our narrative and training people not to make stupid mistakes in public, all of which are very important. We’ve also kind of lost our authentic voice and the ability to manifest and demonstrate that passion, that caring, that we’re doing this because we believe that what our businesses provide to society is good for society and good for the people in society. And I think rediscovering some of that authenticity and actually demonstrating who we really are as opposed to this sort of notion of the fearless leaders that don’t question anything and are driven by immediate results and dispassionate, that’s actually not who we are. Let’s be authentic. Let’s be honest about our passions and our caring and some of our hopes and fears because we trust people when they make themselves vulnerable to us. And that’s a very complex thing to achieve because we know that there’s going to be pressures and criticisms and people don’t want to be attacked, but we have to have the courage to be more authentic about who we really are and why we’re doing the things we’re doing, and how much we care about the impact of those things.

**Mike Kearney:** You know what I liked about what you guys have just said, I wrote down two things. One it’s just straight talk and that’s important, being vulnerable, but it’s actually doing what you say you’re going to do. And, Eamonn, you actually addressed the first question I was going to have is, is how do you actually talk more straightforwardly, but how do you actually act, like, what do you think gets in the way of many leaders where they may say the right things, but then they don’t kind of follow through on actions? What do you think gets in the way? And either one of you guys can take it.

**Jason Girzadas:** Well, I mean, getting in the way of actions, we allude to this in the paper, but I think it is this notion of the urgency of the urgent. There are so many things that cloud the day-to-day decisioning and capacity of teams and the executives.

I think that’s certainly a contributor. I think more broadly, though, there is also the real, at times, I think, confusion or concern about balancing all the needs of all the different constituencies that organizations and companies are trying to serve. And I think it does require a clarity, a clarity of an organization’s purpose or clarity of an organization’s values, as well as a commitment to execution overall to prevent against what you just described, Michael.

**Mike Kearney:** Eamonn, let me go back to you. I want to talk about, you guys talk eloquently about the market dynamics and how they’re shifting. Can you talk about how the shifts are influencing which organizations will be markets in the future, and you talk about both incumbent businesses and disruptive businesses. So maybe if you could touch on that as well.

**Eamonn Kelly:** I think where we have to start when you think about this is technology is not the only thing that matters in the world, but let’s face it, the technological capabilities that we’re building, they’re incredibly powerful. Increasingly coherent digital technology system is quite transformative, and it is fundamentally reshaping the economy. And the capabilities that it creates actually enable you to serve human needs in different ways than you were able to do historically. And that is a very, very significant change. And so, what’s happening now is your markets are being digitized. Data is becoming not just a nice resource. Data is actually becoming a new, incredibly powerful factor of production in the economy. It allows for precision, it allows for new value to be created. It’s an incredibly powerful factor of production and it’s new, where it’s literally got exponential growth right now of digitized data. And then connectivity in that technology system is
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enabling, you know, you think about 5G, you think about VR and AR kept coming on stream, this is enabling collaboration, co-creation, the blurring of boundaries. It’s what you’re seeing is you can look at existing marketplaces and you can see ways to meet new markets in them, or you can continue to try and take old markets and the old ways, and just add a bit of technology to it. I think, to your point about disruptors and incumbents, I think what we’re seeing in most industries, or what we have been seeing, is disruptors coming in and they’re very good on digital, they’re very good on data. They’re very good in their full range deployment of connectivity. They’re very entrepreneurial and creative and sort of pretty smart about how to develop new value creation mechanisms, and they’ve been coming in and disrupting industries. And they’re definitely pretty well placed to continue to do so. There’s also businesses that are moving from one industry to another and stretching out to kind of cover more and more territory in the economy. We all know that phenomenon is occurring. And then there’s pretty powerful, pretty influential startups, well-resourced by venture capital that are coming in and disrupting and often being bought up by incumbents later. But they’re definitely playing a very significant role in reshaping the economy. And I think where we’re headed right now is increasingly the incumbent players are getting smarter and smarter, and the disruptors have got capabilities and well-funded war chests. And so, what we’ve been seeing is 10 years ago, five years ago even, incumbents would stay taking markets and adding bits of technology to it. Disruptors would be coming in and bringing in whole new capabilities to fundamentally change things. Now they’re not sticking to the corners in the same way, they’re blending together, they’re coming together. Incumbents are getting increasingly digitally smartened. The disruptors are having to sustain their own growth in new marketplaces where some of the incumbents might have better historic knowledge, customer relationships, understanding the fundamental economics. And so, I think where we’re headed right now, and you can see this in all the alliances that we created, is a move from these hitherto quite different actors, species, to blend together and move industries, as we’ve understood them, into ecosystems, which actually have actors from many sectors, from many parts of the economy, kind of refocusing on human needs and wants and addressing them in new ways. So, I think it’s a very, very fundamental switch up of the economy. I think 10 years from now, what we look at in terms of the standard industrial classification system invented at the same time as GDP in the 1930s at the end of the Great Depression, I think that system perfectly captured the industrial economy. I don’t think that structure any longer informs how the economy is reshaping. It’s blurring, the boundaries between these industries are blurring and they’re converging, and they’re focusing around human needs and wants being met in new smarter, more precise, more sustainable ways.

Mike Kearney: You know, what’s fascinating, I want to connect two things that both you and Jason have said, Eamonn, and that is the importance of data. And one of the things that I’ve found really contributes to an organization’s ability to be resilient is data. And I will tell you probably, if you were to ask me what the number one complaint that my clients had in March right when the coronavirus was coming in and when people were thinking of shutting down, was getting data. Data on their suppliers, data on their employees, and organization struggled with that. I think that’s one of the biggest areas that they’re going to need to invest in in the future to become more resilient. Not that they didn’t have the data, but they just couldn’t access it real time to make the right decisions. I don’t know if either of you guys have seen that, but that’s something I saw in spades.

Eamonn Kelly: I think generally, Mike, this has been a very interesting experience moving through the complexity and the uncertainty of the last few months and no doubt the next few months. I think it’s really highlighted for us just how powerful data are because we still don’t really understand this virus, we don’t fully understand the epidemiology. We don’t really understand the mortality rates because we don’t have data. And it’s a very interesting, revealing moment that without data, you’re kind of wandering around a little bit. With data, you can act with precision, and that’s the big change that’s happening is, basically, we did not have much data in the world until digitization, and we’ve now got a datafied economy, which can get more and more and more precise, better decisions, better value creation. And this is a completely vivid example of why data matters. If we had better data right now, and we will have tons better data, whatever happens six months from now, we will be able to act so much more intelligently and rapidly and precisely, and that, it’s a beautiful case study on why data matters and why data isn’t just a nice thing. It’s a factor of production. This is important as land, as capital. It’s hugely significant.

Jason Girzadas: We’ve talked about COVID, the pandemic, being a wakeup call. And there’s been lots of efforts around digitization and accelerating digitization, as well as a focus on data, to your question, Mike. But what Eamonn is describing I think is in our hope, and I think that what I see is that this will accelerate those investments, accelerate the commitment to have the access to data and not only the access, but how to deploy it in decisioning and as a management team. And there’s so many use cases that are possible with that, as you know, that I think that will be a differentiator for those coming successfully out of this situation.

Mike Kearney: And, Jason, let me follow up with another question. In the paper, you guys talk about the fact that now is a good time for businesses to think about their business models, maybe there’s new ways to operate in. And I think that makes a lot of sense, but why now? I mean, gosh, companies are just trying to stay alive and figure out what they’re going to do over the next year. Why are you guys recommending they focus on it now, kind of what’s the business case for that?

Jason Girzadas: Well, it’s an evolution of what has been occurring. I mean, we talk about the move, and Eamonn alluded to this human-centric economy. And I think...
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we’ve seen the evolution of businesses becoming more and more consumer or customer centric. And our point of view is that this is a trend that’s been playing out. But again, COVID has exposed and laid bare the fact that we have a whole range of human-centric needs that are unmet. And so it’s no longer good enough just to be customer or consumer centric, but we think that the winners, the true differentiators, will recognize these consumer-centric needs becoming much more about the human needs that are unmet, things like how do I secure safe and effective and efficient mobility as a consumer?

Or what about my health and well-being? How do I connect the dots between my retail experience and my health care experience and my financial services experience to solve my health and well-being needs or emotional needs associated with that? When you look at education, I mean, education now is not just about what occurs in the classroom or university. It’s about the underlying connection to health and well-being and the use of technology and how do we sustain learning in sort of an offline and an online environment in different ways, as well as make it accessible to those that are not fortunate enough to have access to technology. So it is an evolution of, and this is actually I think core to one of the key messages that we’re tapping into here, which is this has been playing out, but it’s now made even more, I think, urgent and necessary that companies that are the winners here moving forward will recognize these human-centric needs and put together solutions that cut across industry sector boundaries. So, some of the issues that I’ve just mentioned; they’re not unidimensional, they’re not solved by one type of player. They require a very different type of an approach.

Mike Kearney: Eamonn, do you have anything to add to the human-centric ecosystems? Because this is one part of the paper that I actually was fascinated about because we’ve always obviously been talking about being more customer centric, but I think you guys are taking it to the next level. Do you have anything to add?

Eamonn Kelly: No, I think Jason expressed it very eloquently. The only thing I would say is there’s a couple of changes in priority that I think are implied by this change, or are required or demanded, really, by this change. The first is I think we’ve gotten better within organizations, at teaming and collaboration, but I think there’s a lot of work to do and a lot of technology to support it, and a lot of new tools being developed to support collaboration outside of your organization and teaming across businesses, cross entities, and with governments. I think this isn’t just about business leaders and with governments. It’s about philanthropic foundations. It’s about nonprofit organizations. The ability to extend our teaming and collaboration beyond the old boundaries of our own organization, I think is going to have to become a very significant priority.

I also think that this is a topic Jason and I have both talked about as well. Jason and I are strategists and we’re very, very comfortable with the notion of strategy based on competitiveness, right? And you think of Michael Porter and the body of work there. We all know how to do that. We all know how to think about competitive strategy. What we actually need is cooperative strategy that collaborate and compete. And it’s a very, very different model. And it actually suggests that I could see quite easily within the next decade that when you’re, any business that does its strategy review and formulates its strategy, it’s actually going to be built—it is going to be first articulating its ecosystem strategy, which ecosystems is it playing in, who else is in there? How are they combining their capabilities to create things that none of them could alone? I think this notion of the co-creative strategy underpinning ecosystems is going to become every bit as important as the notion of getting your own competitive strategy. And I think that’s just an inevitable consequence of the shift that Jason’s describing.

Mike Kearney: Jason, I know that the societal challenges that we’re facing right now are critically important to the Deloitte executive and, quite frankly, to you personally, and I know you’ve given a lot of thought about this over the last several months. What actions would you suggest maybe leaders take over the next 12 to 18 months to begin to address them?

Jason Girzadas: Addressing them is not a trivial task. I think I want to be clear that the issues that we’re raising here are longstanding, very deep-seated, societal problems that whether it’s the definition of work and the equality of work or the access to work. Obviously societal inequalities around race and gender and other dimensions of our society. What happens with access to health care, etcetera. These are all longstanding, very complex issues. The bigger point, though, is that we think businesses have to lean in on these topics. And I think as Eamonn said very well at the beginning, we have a belief that these conditions need to be addressed for businesses to thrive. So, it’s not just altruism. It’s not just because we are sympathetic towards an issue. It is that, but it’s more importantly and related to this and the reason why there’s a business case here is that it’s imperative for growth and sustained business performance.

So, to your question, what do business executives do? Well, I think the first thing is, is that it’s acknowledging the problems. It’s acknowledging the relevance to their business’s long-term health, and it’s then beginning to think about, and this is something that we’ve done as a firm, is to begin the commitment to say, “If I’m going to be a responsible enterprise, then what issues am I going to care about lean in on?” And this requires a careful evaluation and discussion of those topics, and then a determination to actually lean in and decide what’s the most effective way to do that. So, this is I think a multifaceted set of steps required. It starts with a commitment to saying that you’re an organization of purpose and you’re clear about what your values are and understanding that you as a business and the business leader have agency, as we say, on these topics and then deciding where to lean in. So, I think every organization will have to go through an evaluation of what is most important to them, but those are some of the steps
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that we’ve gone through and are still going through, but we think are critical for all business leaders to engage.

Mike Kearney: So, we’re going to close it out. I’ve got a few questions, and I call this lightning round, and basically the way we’ll do this is I’m gonna ask Eamonn, you’re going to start, and then I’ll go to Jason, and then we’re going to go through the three questions. So, the first question, and when you answer 20 seconds or less is the best way to do it. So, the first question is just going back to the beginning, when I asked you about your unique partnership, what would the two of you recommend to other leaders who have futurists in leadership roles and bring in kind of this unique collaboration together? So, Eamonn, 20 seconds or less, what would you say?

Eamonn Kelly: I would say start from the outside and almost all of our internal dialogue about strategy planning, et cetera, we start with ourselves and we kick it out into the marketplace. Switch the order, begin a dialogue of what’s happening in the world and then bring it backwards to the present. The other thing I would suggest is a very interesting conversation would be a year from now, sit down with your colleagues and ask yourselves, “What have we learned and what has surprised us about what we were able to do really, really well during the pandemic and the strengths that we didn’t even know we had, and what surprised us about weaknesses and vulnerabilities and areas that we felt pretty infallible, but we discovered that we weren’t?” I think that would be two really powerful ways to frame the conversation.

Mike Kearney: Jason?

Jason Girzadas: I think management teams can start by asking themselves, “How much time are we spending on the forward-looking, multiyear horizon and are we comfortable that it is sufficient given the amount of risk and volatility and uncertainty that we face?” And I think that’s a very important management team discussion and determination about what the level of investment, time, and energy on the long-term horizon is. I think the second piece I would say is that a tactic that I think we find very useful is scenario planning. And scenario planning can be a very useful way to access the future and without the pressure of being exactly right, because there’s no way to be exactly right. And so, the discipline around scenario planning as a management team is key. And it actually, when I’ve seen it work best is when senior executives really sponsor that and embrace it. So that’s a key piece.

Mike Kearney: Next question is we titled this podcast four years ago—can’t believe it’s been that long, and a little over four years, Resilient. The reason we did is we’re really curious to go out and talk to resilient leaders. People who had kind of lived through what we talked about—crisis, risk, and disruption. And so, one of the questions I love to ask guests is just in your opinion, because you guys have been in the corporate world for many, many years, what makes a leader resilient? Eamonn, I’ll start with you.

Eamonn Kelly: I think there are many characteristics of resilient leadership, but one that I’ll emphasize is leaders who are able to expand their circle of empathy as wide as possible and care and pay attention to as many factors, as many constituencies, as many parts of the world, as many demographics as they possibly can, tend to build up a stronger capability to be aware of what’s happening in the world and bring their energies in a positive way.

Mike Kearney: Okay, Jason, what are your thoughts? What makes a leader resilient?

Jason Girzadas: I think the ingredients for me are around what I’ve seen resiliency or longevity and long-term success. I think there’s a genuineness to leaders that do encompass the empathy that Eamonn described to and increase the empathy, I like that notion. But I also think that they’re comfortable with the diversity of opinion and challenge and reflect that in their thinking and approach. I think that leads to resilience. I also think that there is something to be said for who you surround yourself with and teams that creates layers of support, layers of insight that lead to resiliency. And I’m not sure that there’s as much explicit thought about that as a real value to the individual or to the resilience of a team. But I’ve seen that be a very powerful ingredient.

Mike Kearney: Yeah, the one thing, since I’ve given this a lot of thought, I’ve asked this question probably 70 times over the last few years. And my answer has increasingly gotten to, every leader that is resilient has hope for the future. And I would actually say that’s a characteristic that both of you guys talked a lot about today. And I want to end our conversation on this final question. And that is, we are in a very unpredictable world right now. There’s a lot of challenges ahead of us. But what gives each of you hope for the future? Eamonn, I’ll start with you.

Eamonn Kelly: I believe that we are living through a pandemic and a social reaction that is really putting people in touch with the bigger issues and really their own kind of moral codes and values in a way that I’m not sure we’ve all been forced and encouraged to do with incredibly busy lives we lead. And so, for me, I actually think that there is a reconnection with each other. I think even though people are very isolated, I think staying home makes you more aware of your local community. And I think the notion of community is growing shared responsibility. And so, we face tremendous challenges obviously, but I think the spirit of collaboration, of empathy, the spirit of codependency, the desire to take care of each other, and I think this is the new wave of human connection, human empathy, the understanding we’re all in this together. I’m not saying this is the challenges of polarization are going away. But I actually think that we are all increasingly aware of the codependency or interdependency might be a better word that this is a social system that we live in and we have to take care of it. And I think that is, that gives me, I would go beyond hopeful and say I’m actually borderline optimistic that the future is potentially going to be a lot better than I might have guessed it would have been a year ago.
Mike Kearney: I love that. Jason, how about you? We'll close it out with your thoughts.

Jason Girzadas: I choose to be optimistic and hopeful as well. I think, for me, I see the global pandemic, there has to be a silver lining and that is the global awakening of our consciousness as individuals and as organizations around that these issues that we’re seeing can be addressed. And I do think in the goodness of individuals and organizations to rise up, to address them. So, we have short-term challenges, but I believe in the goodwill of individuals and organizations to address them. And there will be big economic opportunities, but it will also serve humanity now. So, I think this has been the ultimate wakeup call to expose the preexisting conditions of our society, if you will.

And I think that silver lining will bear out. It will be addressed. The organizations that I think recognize that and address it will be rewarded with loyalty and trust and ultimately growth.

Mike Kearney: Awesome. I wrote down two things that I'm going to take away. One is, Eamonn, you saying I'm borderline optimistic, which I love that. That makes me feel very good. And then, Jason, I love that it’s a global awakening. I mean, those two words are a great way to end this conversation. So, Eamonn and Jason, thank you very much. This has been an incredible conversation.

Thank you, Jason and Eamonn. While the future is uncertain, I think you have given us a lot to consider on how leaders approach the issues that the crisis has elevated. I heard some really inspiring perspectives on how we, as a business community, can cultivate a more secure, trustworthy, and resilient world. We have covered a lot of topics over the last couple of months. We have an incredible backlog of guests that we're going to continue to bring to you. If you have any that you think we should be talking about, or anybody that we should be speaking with, hit me up on LinkedIn or Twitter. I've been getting a lot of feedback, which is tremendously helpful as we prioritize which topics we should bring to you next.

For more insights across all aspects of COVID-19, just go to Deloitte.com on our COVID page. You can also listen to the Resilient podcast on Apple Podcasts, SoundCloud, Stitcher, Google Play, and even Spotify. Until next time, stay safe and remain resilient.