

Business Futures 2021

# Signals of Change

Six signals stand out as essential to the future success of organizations.

Out of global crisis comes a new world of opportunities. Organizations can reinvent their futures by embracing positive change.



## 01. Learning From the Future

Rather than focus on the past for insights, leading organizations use data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) to make decisions and define strategies that anticipate the future.

### 2x

The number of job listings seeking workers with predictive skills has grown twice as fast as overall job posts.

### 77%

of C-suite respondents to our survey have increased their use of internal and external real-time data over the last 12 months.

## 02. Pushed to the Edge

Leaders are responding to change and challenge by pushing decision-making authority to people at the "edges" of the organization, relying on highly networked teams to act with speed and agility.



### 88%

of survey respondents said that markets will become more segmented.

### 71%

of survey respondents said they have already decentralized decision-making or are planning to do so.

## 03. Sustainable Purpose

Responding to the call for businesses to serve stakeholders broadly, organizations are building sustainability into the fabric of their operations—and making social responsibility sustainable.

### 2.6x

Companies with consistently high ratings for environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance outperform lower ESG performers in terms of total shareholder returns.

### 43%

of 521 of the world's largest companies currently fall short in their ability to deliver multi-dimensional value when compared to their intent.

## 04. Supply Unbounded

To meet growing customer needs for fast, flexible, cost-effective, and sustainable order fulfillment, companies are restructuring their supply chains and moving production to the point of demand.



### 95%

of survey respondents said they are testing or scaling approaches that will help separate supply from ground infrastructure or bring production close to the point of demand.

### 9.2%

The additional trade volume that could be created in 2030 by technologies overcoming the physical limits of distance.

## 05. Real Virtualities

As virtual environments enhance our physical worlds and redefine our sense of place, innovative organizations create new ways for people to work, consume and socialize.



### 277%

Growth in the share of published patents that mention augmented or virtual reality over the past five years.

### 88%

of survey respondents said they are investing in technologies that enable the creation of virtual environments.

## 06. The New Scientific Method

As scientific disruption enables the creation of better, cheaper, and more sustainable products and services, leading companies will become scientific companies—and apply science to tackle the world's fundamental challenges.



### 85%

of survey respondents agreed that increased scientific capability is critical to the future competitiveness of organizations.

### US\$276bn

The additional economic growth that will be realized through accelerated testing and development in R&D by 2030.

#### Sources

Survey data is based on responses from 2,650 C-suite executives from 18 countries and 20 industries, collected in March-April 2021. Job listings seeking workers with predictive skills is based on analysis of data from Burning Glass. Relationship between ESG performance and total shareholder returns is based on analysis of Arabesque S-RAY® and S&P Capital IQ data. Estimates of impact of new technologies on trade growth, and economic impact of accelerated testing and development in R&D are based on economic modelling conducted in partnership with Frontier Economics. Growth in patents mentioning AR or VR is based on analysis of the Google Patents database. For further details see the 'About the Research' section in the full Business Futures 2021 report.

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