

## BEYOND BUSINESS AS USUAL

# A PLAYBOOK FOR BETTER BUSINESS

Navigate the opportunities and best practices of Better Business and become a force for good.

Because good business is simply good for business.



**“There must be a better way to make the things we want,  
a way that doesn’t spoil the sky, or the rain or the land.”**

– Paul McCartney



## BETTER BUSINESS A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

**As business leaders we have a unique opportunity to make a difference. Not only for our companies and teams, but for the larger picture: our communities, and even our planet. We just need to know where to start, and then take one small step at a time. This Playbook is intended to help you do just that.**

About 20 years ago, I moved from market research positions at Unilever and GfK to become responsible for one of Sweden's pioneering sustainability brands, [Grumme](#). I stayed for a five year period and learned a lot. Still today, Grumme is considered one of the most environmentally friendly brands in the country. A country that is known as one of the [top ten environmentally sustainable countries](#) in the world. And [one of the most innovative](#).

The brand had less than a decade earlier pivoted from a traditional household cleaning brand with roots going back to 1882, to a brand with focus on environmental sustainability. Why? Because someone in the company had identified a business opportunity in the evolving Swedish values and beliefs, and saw an opportunity to do well by doing good. Grumme liquid detergents quickly became

a commercial success and grew to become a serious competitor to Unilever's and P&G's liquid detergents.

Today, sustainability is so much more than it was two decades ago, and many companies are already capitalizing on this moment to become a force for good. However, many more need to start considering the opportunity because good business is simply good for business! So where might you start? How might your company evolve into a Better Business?

This Playbook is designed to inspire you, as a business leader, to go beyond business as usual – and consider the vast strategic opportunities connected to Better Business. Starting with the opportunities that reside in environmental sustainability and climate change. While these issues contain imminent threats that need to be urgently addressed, they also offer the kind of hairy, wicked, thorny challenges that business is particularly well-equipped to figure out and able to do good in the process.

Let's take a first step by taking a look at why you might want – and urgently need – to consider it. And then learn from those currently in the frontline.

Warmly,

Elisabet Lagerstedt  
Founder & Principal

**“We must stop considering nature as something separate from society because people and nature are truly intertwined... Development can no longer be done without an increased understanding of nature’s role for our own survival and well-being.”**

– Stockholm Resilience Center

# PLAYBOOK CONTENT

- **DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD**
- **KEYS TO UNLOCK BETTER BUSINESS**
- **FIVE VERY SWEDISH CASES**
- **CONTINUE THE JOURNEY**



**BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK**

# **DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD**

**FUTURE  
NAVIGATORS**

**“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs.”**

– Gro Harlem Bruntland



## BETTER BUSINESS DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD

**We live in a world of [accelerating change](#) where industrialization and globalization has helped us leap forward and transform the world in ways that were previously unimaginable. Today, our lifespans are longer, we are better educated, millions have been lifted out of poverty, and our way of living is more comfortable than ever before.**

This comfort has, however, also come at a great cost for our planet, with unwanted consequences such as biodiversity loss and climate change. Over the years, it has also become increasingly clear that business as usual will not save the planet. Neither will the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) if we do not act on them. But are things moving?

A [Harvard Business Review](#) study found that most corporations seem to be addressing the SDGs on a superficial level. Most simply connect what they are already doing to one or a selected set of these goals. Consequently, very few companies are actually doing something beyond business as usual.

We believe that this is because the world's wicked problems are still seen as something to be solved by governments, universities, and other actors rather than seen as the business opportunities that they really are.

Why? Possibly because sustainability in the business world is still viewed as risk reduction and a dry topic reserved for experts, rather than as real opportunities that can enable companies to do really well by doing good, and integrating that thinking into their business plans and operating models.

As business leaders, the time has come for us to step up and make a difference. Because there are indications that the world is at a tipping point where our involvement is urgently needed.

### AT A TIPPING POINT

A tipping point can be described as the moment at which a series of small changes or incidents becomes significant enough to cause a larger, even more important change. Such a tipping point may be here now. Largely due to a united global community, a persistent Swedish girl, and a global pandemic.

Let's examine this statement.

2015 was the year of the [2020 Agenda and the 17 SDGs](#). The SDGs are an urgent call for action by all countries and organizations to act on a number of critical issues for the global good. It was not until 2019, however, that a young Swedish girl named [Greta Thunberg](#) opened the eyes of world leaders about the urgent need to address the climate crisis.

2020 now seems to be the year of the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). This virus outbreak across virtually the entire globe – in combination with the climate crisis – could actually be the turning point that is already transforming the world as we know it.

Treating the COVID-19 pandemic as unrelated to climate change and ecosystem destruction would be a potentially fatal mistake. Since the first publication of the [Club of Rome](#) (1972), scientists have warned that infectious diseases are directly linked to climate change and the destructive impact of humans on nature. The public health crisis and the climate crisis are similar; they both pose a threat to human health and economic well-being. However, climate change and the destruction of eco-systems is a threat to all life on planet Earth. These are wicked problems indeed.

## WICKED PROBLEMS

A [wicked problem](#) is a difficult or impossible problem to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and/or changing requirements that are often challenging to recognize. The world's unprecedented environmental and social challenges are tremendously wicked. Seeing that climate change is striking harder and more rapidly than expected, the [Global Risk Report](#) has stressed the urgent need to take action by 2030.

That gives us less than a decade to face the threats of climate change. And we cannot afford to fail. Climate change is, of course, not the only wicked problem on the horizon. Wicked problems are in plentiful supply. They also offer interesting business opportunities for those who dare to go the extra mile. Elon Musk and Tesla is a great example of a visionary leader seeing a business opportunity in a wicked problem.

In the years to come, we believe that Better Business will emerge from appreciating and understanding the wicked problems that are already upon us, and developing solutions and business models that address customer needs while also helping to solve important dilemmas.

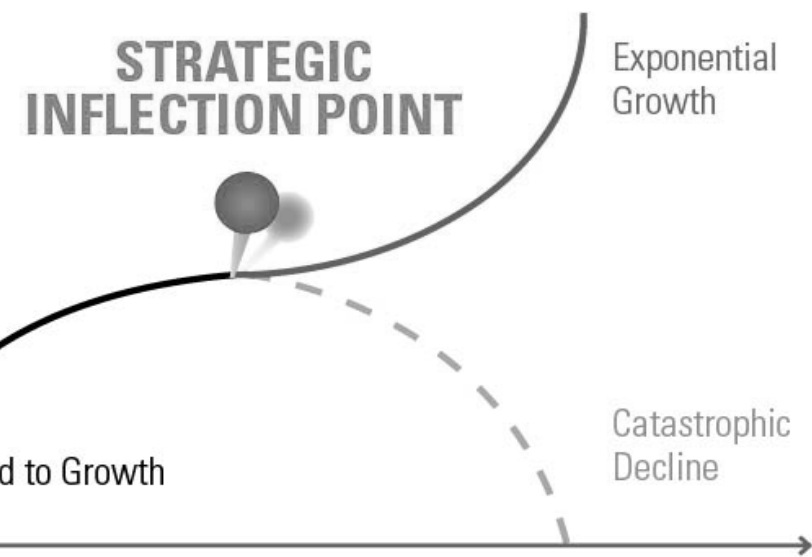
How? Understanding the [SDGs](#) is a first step for you as a business leader to navigate the global challenges. This is especially pertinent when it comes to realizing which challenges your company can contribute to solving, as well as where you could focus your efforts.

In business lingo, wicked problems, such as climate change and the related changes in consumer values, politics, and regulations could also be viewed as *inflection points*. As such, they have a potentially vast impact on businesses across the globe.

## A STRATEGIC INFLECTION POINT

An [inflection point](#) is a moment where a certain change in your business environment will mean dramatic change to your business. Used strategically, this turning point can poise your business for bigger things. It can create new spaces – blue oceans – and destroy outdated technologies and business models. As such, it represents both opportunities and threats. An inflection point even has the power to bring about exponential change. Even though it feels like this change is sudden, it has quite possibly been gestating for some time. It normally develops gradually – out of scope for many – and then it suddenly seems evident. Hence, it can be spotted early and in time to react for those who scan the horizon and can pre-emptively make sense of what is happening.

As such, inflection points may mean that you need to change the very assumptions on which your company was founded in the first place. In this light, strategic renewal is vital for any business to survive inflection points long-term. Without strategic renewal, a company is destined for decline as it fails to remain relevant and value-adding. The most important question that you need to answer right now is whether you are at an inflection point or not. And if so, what are you going to do about it?



Source: Andy Grove and Rita McGrath

**“We’ve watched the COVID-19 situation unfold at incredible speed...  
The climate crisis is playing out on a much slower timeframe.  
We know roughly what to expect and when to expect it,  
and we should be preparing with the same level of urgency.”**

– Dr. de Menocal

## MOVING BEYOND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

*Sustainability* can be defined as the ability to meet current needs without compromising the future generation's ability to meet their needs. Traditionally, [Corporate Social Responsibility](#) (CSR), i.e. the corporate answer to sustainability, has three pillars: environmental, social, and economic.

*Environmental Sustainability* implies that the Earth's ecological systems are maintained. *Economic Sustainability* ensures that reliable sources of livelihood and economic activity are available to all.

*Social Sustainability* means that basic human rights and necessities are available in order to maintain healthy communities. These three pillars cover principles of equality, diversity, quality of life democracy and governance, and imply a high degree of inter-connectedness.

Environmental and economic sustainability are the most quantifiable and currently figure in the awareness of corporate leaders. Moving to the level of being a socially sustainable company involves recognizing impact on local communities, employees, workers in the value chain, and employees.

The potential of business as a driver of change and mobilizing to reach sustainability goals is significant and pertinent since industry markedly contributes to the emissions linked to climate change.

Countless companies worldwide are already riding the wave of sustainable transformation. Many are rethinking their business-as-usual approach and consequently taking drastic measures to deal with the climate emergency. CEOs and business leaders around the world are realizing the crucial need to accelerate sustainability. Many are aware that a failure to do so will lead to serious consequences for the survival of business: from reduced competitiveness and lost reputation, to affecting financial performance and access to capital. Not to mention the dire consequences for humanity and life on Earth.

We simply have an urgent need for Better Business. Or as [IMD's president Dr. Jean-Francois Manzoni](#) puts it: "In the new decade, it will not only be possible to do well by doing good; it will **only** be possible to do well by doing good."



**“Thousands of firms have committed themselves to a purpose larger than profitability, and nearly a third of the world’s financial assets are managed with some kind of sustainability criterion. Even those at the very top of the heap are beginning to insist that things have to change.”**

– Harvard Business School Professor Rebecca Henderson



**BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK**

# **KEYS TO UNLOCK BETTER BUSINESS**

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# KEYS TO UNLOCK BETTER BUSINESS

[www.future-navigators.com](http://www.future-navigators.com)

- IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITY
- EMBRACE CUSTOMER POWER
- LIVE A HIGHER PURPOSE
- BUILD AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY
- BE AN ACTIVIST
- PURSUE MEANINGFUL INNOVATION
- CREATE CIRCULAR BUSINESS MODELS
- BUILD SUSTAINABILITY BRANDS
- DEVELOP UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS
- TURN CLIMATE POSITIVE
- BE TRANSPARENT IN REPORTING
- BECOME A CERTIFIED B CORPORATION



1 NO  
POVERTY



2 ZERO  
HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY  
EDUCATION



5 GENDER  
EQUALITY



6 CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND  
CLEAN ENERGY



8 DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



10 REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES



BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK

# IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITY

The SDGs offer a roadmap and a blueprint to the world's wicked problems. Best-in-class organizations have understood the SDGs, the opportunities and business case, defined priorities, and set relevant ambitions and goals for their enterprises.

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## BETTER BUSINESS IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITY

**A business opportunity is generally considered an opening in the business environment that – when exploited – can create economic value.**

Good business opportunities normally align with an organization's competences and skills, are relevant for the current and future business environment, are possible to finance, and are verifiable.

But if you do not understand the wicked problems in the first place, how could you go about seizing the related opportunities?

There is help. The [Agenda 2030](#) was adopted in 2015 by all United Nations' Member States. It provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) and their 169 targets. The SDGs themselves actually provide a mapping of the world's wicked problems.

Many organizations, for-profits as well as non-profits, are already working ambitiously and proactively with the 2030 Agenda goals. Looking to the [SDG Compass](#), best-in-class organizations have understood the SDGs, and they seen the opportunities as well as the business case.

They have defined priorities, and set relevant ambitions and goals for their organizations. They have then anchored the sustainability goals within their enterprises and embedded sustainability across all functions. Finally, they have implemented effective follow-up and reporting, and are actively communicating about their SDG performance.

So far, overall progress on the SDGs is limited, and we are still [far from reaching the goals](#). However, as UN Secretary General António Guterres observes: *"It is abundantly clear that a much deeper, faster and more ambitious response is needed to unleash the social and economic transformation needed to achieve our 2030 goals."*

The fact that the progress so far has been relatively limited of course poses a large opportunity for those who choose to move decisively. Which SDGs could provide the largest opportunities for your business? And how could that help to build a better future?





# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>



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# **EMBRACE CUSTOMER POWER**

**A shift in power has occurred where consumers are pushing businesses to re-evaluate their purpose, find alternative business models, and develop sustainable products.**

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## BETTER BUSINESS

# EMBRACE CUSTOMER POWER

**A significant contributor to sustainable business comes from consumers themselves, especially with their increasing environmental awareness, change in mindsets, and the adoption of sustainable lifestyles.**

Once considered a niche market, [Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability \(LOHAS\)](#) consumers today make up more than 25% of shoppers in the United States, 20% in the European Union, and an astonishing [40% in Sweden](#), which is the highest share in the world. LOHAS customers are driven by their values and beliefs, and can be found across demography. They are known to be active, demanding, creative, well informed and influential. They are not extremist or militant.

Customer mindset seems to be changing from ‘kudos for choosing eco!’ to ‘why are you not choosing eco?’

This includes new values driving change in consumer behaviour, including social shame, such as “*flygskam*”. Lifestyle trends such as minimalism and zero-waste mindsets are gaining in popularity.

Globally, consumers are demanding companies to provide information. There has been rapid rise in calls for higher transparency and ethical production in the [clothing industry](#). [Fridays for Future](#) and [Extinction Rebellion](#) are other climate activist movements that are gaining momentum and extensive attention.

A [Trend Watcher Report](#) refers to these as ‘Green Pressure Intervention Seekers’: “*in 2020, millions of consumers will seek out products, services, and experiences that help them alleviate rising eco-shame.*”

With changes in the consumer’s behavioural landscape, many businesses are already realizing the pertinence of focusing on evolving consumer values and needs in order to stay relevant in the market.

Are you embracing customer power and capturing the opportunity? Or is this opportunity slipping through your fingers, as you have left the field open to a competitor or new entrant?





# PURPOSE

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## LIVE A HIGHER PURPOSE

*A higher purpose* involves striving for something that is bigger than you and your company. It gives both direction and meaning. It often includes an important societal issue, where the company takes a stand.

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## BETTER BUSINESS LIVE A HIGHER PURPOSE

**A *purpose* is the reason for why something is done, created, or exists. A *higher purpose* is something to strive for that is bigger than you and your company. It often includes an important societal issue, where the company takes a stand.**

We all want to matter and to make a difference in the world, at work, or in someone else's life. A "higher purpose" is how we find deep meaning and fulfilment in our lives by contributing to someone or something that is bigger than ourselves.

Companies that are driven by a higher purpose align their business with societal well-being, rather than a single minded shareholder-centred approach that focuses on profit maximization and growth.

Increased awareness about global challenges is changing the mindset of leaders. This aids companies in defining a higher purpose. Acting upon a higher purpose creates value for all stakeholders in a more sustainable way.

Creating, communicating, and bringing a higher purpose to life through pronounced values generates higher commitment and engagement and mobilises people. Who does not want to contribute to a higher purpose? Especially when it creates meaning and matches your own beliefs and values.

The [Purpose Power Index](#) shows that the strongest purpose-driven companies and brands act in deliberate ways. They:

- Get the underlying purpose right and have a purpose that is clear, meaningful, motivating, and differentiating.
- Operate nobly and responsibly through offering products and services that really makes the world better, while treating employees and the community in an honourable manner.
- Take a stand on an important societal issue.
- Act boldly and courageously on their purpose without being afraid of controversy.
- Speak about their purpose in a genuine and authentic way.



**BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK**

# **BUILD AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY**

**We believe the era of traditional corporations merely integrating sustainable practices on a shallow level is being surpassed by a new era of corporate behaviour.**



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## BETTER BUSINESS BUILD AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY

**Sustainability strategy and reporting are still often seen as functional responsibilities, rather than something that is well-integrated in the overall business strategy and business model. However, this is changing.**

The notion of sustainable business is slowly shifting from the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility, to one that is deeply embedded into the core business.

[Patagonia](#) and [Unilever](#) offer examples of companies that have integrated sustainability into their cores. For them, sustainability is no longer seen as a 'separate entity', something that is just the responsibility of the CSR manager, or as something that has to be included in yearly reporting. Instead, sustainability is deeply integrated into the organisation's purpose, strategy, business and operating model, and it helps to create strategic competitive advantages.

We believe the era of traditional corporations merely integrating sustainable practices on a shallow level is being overtaken by a new generation of corporations: ones that are actively

transforming their markets to make them more sustainable. Instead of waiting for a shift in the market, these companies are creating the shifts to enable new forms of business sustainability. [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#) calls this approach "market integration".

Market integration implies that companies directly address the causes of climate change and *create sustainability*, for instance, rather than only *reducing unsustainability*.

A market integration approach also entails looking beyond traditional metrics of measuring business success, such as financial performance, to ones that measure social impact, human well-being, and responsibility towards the environment. Furthermore, it involves the optimization of supply chains. And it is also opts for innovative and alternative business models and the integration of sustainable solutions.

If you are still stuck in outdated ideas and in the old ways of Corporate Social Responsibility, it is time to get moving. The world is changing!





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# **BE AN ACTIVIST**

**CEOs and executives are increasingly looking outside the scope of their own business and speaking up for social, environmental, and political issues.**

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## BETTER BUSINESS BE AN ACTIVIST

**With a purpose that transcends profit maximization, the phenomenon of CEO activism has become visible and significant in recent years. There is a [growing trend](#) of executives looking outside the scope of their own business and speaking up for social, environmental, and political issues.**

Executives who are aware of societal issues are increasingly taking active roles as morally responsible leaders, using purpose-driven leadership as a force for good. As activists, CEOs take powerful stands on issues that are not directly related to their companies. For example, [Patagonia's](#) CEO Rose Marcoria frequently speaks up and pledges to do good for the planet. And the chairman and CEO of [Black Rock](#), Larry Fink, has taken activism within investment management to a new level. Not only is Fink letting his voice be heard on social issues, he is also pushing for environmental concerns as part of Black Rock's corporate agenda: *"Society is demanding that companies, both public and private, serve a social purpose."*

[Paul Polman](#), former CEO of Unilever and the Chair of the United Nations' Global Compact, insists that business must be in the driver's seat to help speed up the agenda for climate change and sustainability, and that CEOs must take up their responsibilities.

And his track record is impressive:

with Polman at the helm, Unilever's sustainable business model generated a shareholder return that doubled that of the market. In 2017, Unilever's sustainable brands generated 70% of its growth.

[Activist CEOs](#) can be a major driving force that push companies to create a positive impact. Such an approach has even demonstrated the creation of [first-mover advantages](#).

Moreover, research shows that CEOs and executives who speak up on societal issues and engage in activism creates a better reputation for themselves and their companies, increased profitability, and fuels the willingness of people to buy and work for it.

It is a win-win for all !



A grid of light bulbs is visible in the background, with some bulbs appearing to glow slightly more than others. The bulbs are arranged in a pattern that covers the entire frame, with some partially cut off by the edges.

**BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK**

# **PURSUE MEANINGFUL INNOVATION**

Meaningful innovation is found in the intersection between technology, business models, human needs and the world's wicked problems. It is not easy. But it can be done.

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## BETTER BUSINESS

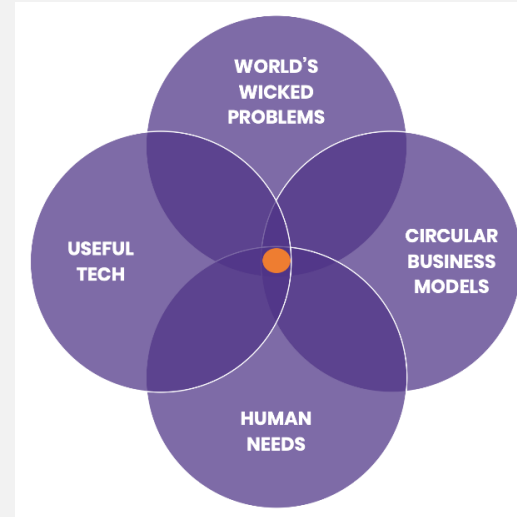
# MEANINGFUL INNOVATION

**Many new products or services may be perceived as innovative, but in reality, bring little or no real value to anyone. The world is actually full of meaningless innovations and failed innovation efforts.**

Ideally, innovation helps remove problems and simplify the life of its users in a meaningful way. It reduces complexity and makes things easier. That's why customer insight is key.

Truly meaningful innovation, however, requires more than understanding human needs in the context of the design challenge. Truly meaningful innovation transpires as solutions to problems found in the intersection between the world's wicked problems, human needs, useful technology, and new business models.

Going forward, we believe that meaningful innovation needs to start within the junction between human needs and wicked problems, and it will emerge through identifying new potential ways to address these dilemmas. Then, useful technology will need to be put to use in a sustainable way. And finally, circular business

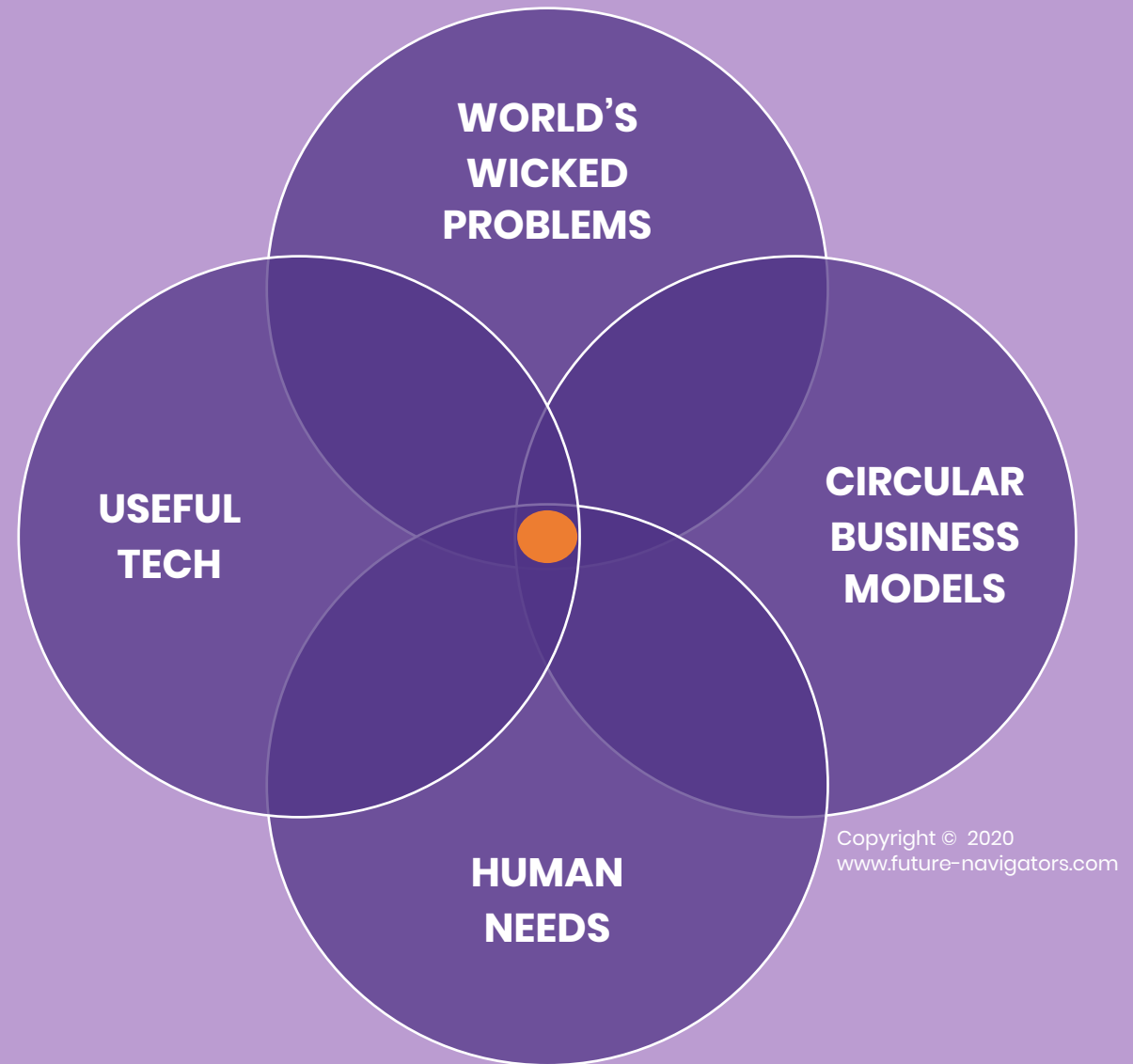


models and sustainable value-chains, designed to also create shared value for all stakeholders, will need to be developed, tested, deployed, and continuously challenged and improved. Due to its complexity, meaningful innovation demands both

knowledge and insight into all four dimensions: the world's wicked problems, human needs, useful technology, and circular business models. This implies that a traditional innovation team will not be able to achieve this on its own.

Instead, truly meaningful innovation can be most effectively pursued in cross-functional teams with diverse backgrounds and competences spanning across the relevant areas, working in open innovation efforts or in different types of unconventional strategic partnerships. On top of this, meaningful innovation needs to reflect your higher purpose. It is not easy. But we believe it can be done.

Going forward, we believe meaningful innovation will need to start specifically in the intersection between human needs and wicked problems, and in identifying new potential ways to address them. Then, useful technology will need to be put to use in a sustainable way. And finally, circular business models and sustainable value-chains, designed to also create shared value for all stakeholders, will need to be developed, tested, deployed, and continuously challenged and improved.



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# **CREATE CIRCULAR BUSINESS MODELS**

**Business models supporting a circular economy can reduce the environmental footprint of both production and consumption. This approach is being increasingly adopted.**

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## BETTER BUSINESS CIRCULAR BUSINESS MODELS

**Business models that support a [circular economy](#) can reduce the environmental footprint of both production and consumption. This approach is being increasingly pursued by established companies and new ventures alike.**

The opportunities underlying circular business models are not new. Recycling, reuse, and repair have existed for millennia. What is new is the increasing sophistication and diversity of these business models, the extent to which companies are integrating larger parts of the value chain, as well as the sheer number of industries in which these models have been adopted.

The [OECD Report Business Models for a Circular Economy](#) describes five key business models that support a more circular economy:

- Circular supply models that reduce the demand for virgin resources by replacing traditional material inputs with bio-based, renewable, or recovered materials
- Resource recovery models that recycle waste into secondary raw materials

- Product life models that extend the period of use of existing products, which helps reduce both resource extraction and waste generation over time
- Sharing models, e.g. car sharing, which support the sharing of under-utilised products, while reducing the demand for new products.
- Product service system models, which put a higher focus on services rather than products

These business model typologies are, in reality, often found in different combinations. The underlying principles, however, mirror the need for less use of natural resources, increased circularity, and a decrease in meaningless consumption.

Some may consider this as a threat to their current business models. We consider it a business opportunity !

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# BUILD SUSTAINABILITY BRANDS

A sustainability brand has sustainability benefits which are noticeable, credible and relevant to the targeted customer segment. It is also well-differentiated from the competition.

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## BETTER BUSINESS

# BUILD SUSTAINABILITY BRANDS

**A sustainability brand can be understood as products, services, or solutions that are branded to signal an added value with respect to environmental and social benefits to its targeted customer segments.**

A brand will only be perceived as being sustainable if it can deliver sustainability benefits that are noticeable, credible, and relevant to the targeted customer. To represent value to your business, it will also need to be differentiated from your competition.

Sustainable products and services should offer an enhanced social and ecological performance during the whole lifecycle. Today, they also need to perform as well as less sustainable options in the market.

Taking this into consideration when introducing a sustainability brand, you can still start out small. You can even acquire a sustainability brand – as [Unilever](#) did with [Ben & Jerry](#) in 2001 and [Seventh Generation](#) in 2016. Or as [Paulig Group](#) did with [Gold & Green](#) in 2016. Also, [Unilever has warned](#) it will sell off brands that do not contribute positively to society.

Remember that not all brands need to become sustainable overnight. Unilever's sustainability brand portfolio, for instance, still only represents approximately half of its annual sales. However, this portfolio delivers [75% of the company's growth](#) and has been growing 69% faster than the rest of the business.

With the ambition of being a force for good, sustainability brands ultimately need to be genuine, trustworthy, and authentic – from the inside out. They need to demonstrate care for both humans and nature, e.g. through originality in design, producing less CO2 emissions, using local and natural ingredients, not using anything perceived as artificial or synthetic, and not involving any abused animals or an exploited workforce.

Sustainability brands also have a role in educating consumers, providing a feeling of belonging and meaningful connections, promoting social harmony and can help heal the challenged bonds of our shared humanity.



**BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK**

# **DEVELOP UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

**Some of the world's largest corporations have chosen unconventional partnerships to tackle environmental challenges.**

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## BETTER BUSINESS UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

**Some of the world's largest corporations have chosen to partner with NGOs or other types of organizations to tackle wicked problems and environmental challenges.**

NGOs and the private sector are increasingly working together to solve critical challenges facing the world today. For instance, McDonald's and Coca Cola have partnered with [World Wildlife Foundation](#) (WWF).

Why would that be interesting for such an organisation? In short, WWF believes that successfully solving today's problems is more likely to be achieved through collaboration than in isolation.

Another example is [IKEA](#), which recently partnered with [Ellen McArthur Foundation](#), a global leader on the circular economy, to reach its goal to become a circular business by 2030: *"To become circular is one of our big ambitions and challenges for the future. It is a transformational shift for our entire business"*, according to IKEA's recent press release.

However, such partnerships do not come without challenges, as the mission and culture of an NGO are very different from those of a corporate actor.

In [The Guardian](#), an article about partnerships points out that individuals can not create the needed level of social change on their own, and conveys these key points:

First, partnerships between NGOs and businesses are one of the most effective ways for advancing social change and addressing the world's wicked problems.

Secondly, partners must choose each other carefully, be honest about their real motivations for engaging in that partnership, and use their expertise to the best effect.

Finally, CEOs and boards of companies that are committed to partnership is essential, but a committed workforce is the key to enable a particular project's success.

Unconventional partnerships are, by nature, unexpected and out of the ordinary. Which unconventional partnerships might be waiting for you and your company?





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# **TURN CLIMATE POSITIVE**

**Many companies have increased their ambitions and now pledge to become climate positive based on the realization that reaching zero emissions is not enough to tackle the climate crisis.**

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## BETTER BUSINESS TURN CLIMATE POSITIVE

**In a recent survey, sustainability experts asserted that businesses need to reach carbon neutrality by 2030 in order to remain successful and achieve the SDGs. Many companies are now increasing their level of ambition and have pledged to take it a step further – to become climate positive, having realized that reaching zero emissions is simply not enough to tackle the climate crisis.**

To achieve such a transformation, companies set ambitious targets that go beyond the traditional ways of integrating sustainability into business.

[Climate positive](#) companies address a larger footprint than the company's actual value chain by committing to reduce their climate footprint and remove more greenhouse gases than their whole value chain emits. This entails a drastic reduction of carbon emissions from all parts of the value chain, combined with removing carbon from the atmosphere through nature-based solutions, and ultimately adopting new carbon removal technologies.

[Collaboration with suppliers and partners](#) is a crucial aspect for companies to become climate positive. Furthermore, these companies empower customers to engage in more sustainable practices and take the lead in making a positive impact locally, as well as following best practices for accounting and reporting.

Some global companies have already reached climate positivity. One of these pioneers is the Swedish restaurant chain Max Burgers. Many other companies are following their lead and are committing to becoming [climate positive by 2030](#), including Microsoft, Amazon, and IKEA. Microsoft has further pledged to remove – by 2050 – all of the direct emissions that it has produced since its founding in 1975.

It may be added that planting trees is a great way to decrease carbon in the atmosphere, but companies striving to become climate positive need to go beyond that to make a real and sustainable difference.



An elephant is standing in a dining room, which is a metaphor for the idiom 'the elephant in the room'. The elephant is positioned in the center of the frame, facing left. It is surrounded by dining tables, chairs, and hanging lamps. The room has a rustic feel with a brick wall and wooden beams. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter.

**BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK**

# BE TRANSPARENT IN REPORTING

‘What gets measured gets done’ is an old adage in business. Also, what gets measured reveals what is valued in your organization. Being transparent about your results also helps to bring out the elephant in the room. It is a critical step to become a better business.

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## BETTER BUSINESS

# TRANSPARENT REPORTING

**‘What gets measured gets done’ is an old adage in business. Also, what gets measured brutally reveals what is valued within an organization. Measuring the right things and being transparent about the results are therefore critical elements for becoming a better business.**

Today, stakeholders including consumers and investors are placing higher demands on businesses for transparency and to disclose information on how they operate. This makes it harder for gaps to linger between what companies say they are doing and what they actually are doing.

Reporting has a central role in meeting transparency demands. In the European context, the [EU Commission’s Finance Action Plan](#) has put forward more stringent guidelines on reporting, which now extend to including how companies are impacting the climate, and how the climate is impacting their business. The Swedish government has even established legal requirements for companies to include mandatory sustainability reporting.

As part of the transformational integration of sustainable business, the traditional role of reporting is under tremendous challenge. New metrics and reporting standards are constantly being developed. Some examples include the [Global Reporting Initiative](#) (GRI), [Sustainability Accounting Standards Board](#) (SASB), [Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures](#) (TCFD), and [International Integrated Reporting Council](#) (IIRC). On top of that, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) metrics are being increasingly used by investors around the globe to better value firms that invest in addressing the world’s big problems.

Much focus is being put on value conveyance. In layman’s terms, this means showing through your reporting how the company makes a positive impact. What this really means is that companies need to show a close connection with the narrative and the reported numbers as a way of communicating the value being created by the business.

Finally, sustainability should be communicated effectively; if the link between social impact and economic performance is not shown, no one will know about this impact, no matter how much good your company is actually delivering.



A BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK

# BECOME A CERTIFIED B CORPORATION

B-Corps provides a global certification for for-profit companies that meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability.

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## BETTER BUSINESS CERTIFIED B CORPORATION

**B-Corps provides a global certification for for-profit companies that meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability.**

The certification only encompasses companies that use business as a force for good by balancing purpose and profit. It helps mission-driven companies advocate for authentic stakeholder benefits, and better communicate values and responsibility towards society. The certification also supports companies to stand out from the greenwashing crowd, and aids in attracting investors by showing the company's stability and quality. Furthermore, it helps customers use B-certification as a tool to make better consumption choices that "invest in a healthier planet, better jobs, and a kinder world".

In short, the B-Corp certification evaluates the overall positive impact of companies in a way that creates value

for "all stakeholders, not just shareholders", including employees, customers, the local community, and the environment:

*–"Society's most challenging problems cannot be solved by government and non-profits alone. [The B-Corp community](#) works toward reduced inequality, lower levels of poverty, a healthier environment, stronger communities, and the creation of more high quality jobs with dignity and purpose."*

So far, more than 3300 companies, including Patagonia, Danone and Ben&Jerry's, have been certified, whereof which 500 have pledged to reach net-zero emissions by 2030. [Danone](#) recently also [announced its intent](#) to become the world's largest Certified B Corporation by 2025.

Your company can become a Certified B Corporation too! [Read more about the requirements of the certification and about how to become a Certified B Corporation here.](#)



**BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK**

# **FIVE VERY SWEDISH CASES**

**FUTURE  
NAVIGATORS**

# FIVE VERY SWEDISH CASES

- OATLY
- MAX BURGERS
- NUDIE JEANS
- H&M
- IKEA

## A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE OATLY

Oatly wholeheartedly believes in being a good company. That means balancing its massive business growth with long-term sustainability goals. But can growth ever be considered sustainable, even though this company provides a sustainable alternative to cow's milk?

When Oatly first began to take shape as a company and brand in the 1990s, its vision was to offer nutrient-rich, oat-based products to the whole world. The company's patented enzyme technology copies nature's own process and turns fibre-rich oats into nutritional liquid food that is perfectly designed for humans. It also has the huge advantage of producing far less carbon dioxide than the equivalent amount of cow's milk. This is an aspect on which the company has increasingly focused, following a strategic repositioning. Naturally, this has provoked the dairy industry.

Today, Oatly's purpose is to make it easy for people to turn what they eat and drink into personal moments of healthy joy without recklessly taxing the planet's resources in the process.

In the wake of climate change, the Oatly brand has quickly grown in popularity across the globe, and its exponential growth has put a real strain on the company resources. As each litre of oat drink that replaces a litre of cow's milk contributes to lower resource use and less climate impact, it makes this a little easier to bear, even though some sustainability targets have consequently moved in the wrong direction.

As an example, in 2018, Oatly sold 71,482,745 litres of oat drink worldwide. If the same amount would otherwise have been consumed as cow's milk, switching to Oatly resulted in a 56,471 ton reduction in greenhouse gases (as much as would be generated by traveling around the world in a car 11,478 times).

In 2019, Oatly doubled its sales and from that perspective helped reduce climate impact even further, even though their actual emissions increased, partly driven by the increasing use of traditional co-packers around the globe. A challenge they are being very transparent about and working to address.

In promising to be a good company, we firmly believe that Oatly will continue to challenge the dairy industry, ultimately to inspire societal change, climate action, and a better food system.



## CLIMATE POSITIVE BURGERS MAX BURGERS

**In the backdrop of the tremendous carbon footprint of the livestock sector, [Max Burgers](#) has taken extensive measures to lower its environmental impacts. In 2019, it was recognized as one of the world's most innovative companies and received the [UN's "Global Climate Action Award"](#).**

Max Burgers is one of Sweden's first and most popular burger chains. It was established in the very north of Sweden in 1968 as Curt Bergfors and Britta Andersson opened their first restaurant in Gällivare. Today, the company encompasses 120 restaurants in several markets and is still fully family-owned.

However, livestock is one of the world's most polluting industries, generating 14% of total global greenhouse gas emissions. Max Burgers wanted to be part of the solution rather than the problem and decided to introduce the world's first ["climate positive" menu](#).

Their menu takes into account all emissions in its value chain, from farm to table. It puts CO2 labels on each menu item to

provide customers with insight into the climate impact of their food. The menu includes a wide range of plant-based meals, including the self-developed plant-based protein burger that looks and tastes like meat: the [Delifresh](#) Plant Beef.

The approach has proven to be a great success. In 2019, its sales of beef-free meals increased to 41%, putting the company perceptibly closer to reaching its target of 50% by 2022. This fast-food restaurant chain also uses 92% renewable packaging for its food.

Max Burgers truly believes in the integral need to reduce emissions and has been encouraging other companies to be climate positive. For instance, the company recently established the platform [CLIPOP](#), aiming to establish a global standard for climate positive and showcasing other companies' climate positive commitments.

## CHALLENGING THE FASHION INDUSTRY NUDIE JEANS

**With repair, recycling, and resale as core aspects of its business model, [Nudie Jeans](#) is taking circularity to the next level.**

Since its launch in 2001, Nudie Jeans has wanted to do things differently. The brand consciously choose to *not* be part of the fast fashion industry with the tremendous associated environmental and social costs. Instead, Nudie Jeans manufactures its clothing as sustainably as possible by focusing on quality and durability and by using organic cotton to the largest extent possible.

The company has opted for local production by establishing long-term relationships with its suppliers and offshores its production to neighboring countries, including Italy and Portugal. This allows them to have better control over the production process and be transparent with their customers – which has always been a top priority for the company.

Not only does the textile industry produce emissions and harmful chemicals, but fashion also results in huge amounts of waste.

For Nudie Jeans' co-founder, Joakim Levin, this did not make sense. He wanted to prolong the life of garments and prevent them from ending up in landfills. From this, the idea of a repair shop was born, and Nudie Jeans took its environmental awareness to a new level. The brand renamed stores to “Nudie Jeans Repair Shop” and today offers its customers free repair of Nudie Jeans by putting a sewing machine right in the middle of all of their stores. Alternatively, customers can drop off their old jeans to either be re-sold or recycled and receive a discount coupon in return.

Nudie Jeans has grown extensively since it opened its first small shop in Gothenburg, Sweden. Today, it has an annual revenue of 50 million euros, and 33 repair shops in Sweden, England, Germany, Spain, Australia, Japan, and the USA. Way to go!



## SET TO TRANSFORM FAST FASHION H&M

**The fast-fashion giant [H&M](#) is pushing for a more sustainable fashion industry and aims to use 100% recycled and sustainably-sourced materials in their production by 2030.**

As one of the world's largest fashion retailers, H&M has been widely [criticized](#) for operating under an unsustainable fast fashion business model with unfair labor conditions and huge environmental impact. However, this fashion giant has been setting ambitious targets for more sustainable practices and is pressing for a more sustainable fashion industry at large.

H&M aims to use 100% recycled and sustainably sourced materials in its production by 2030. It has pledged to become [climate positive](#) by 2040. Its eco-line "Conscious Collection" produces garments from sustainable materials, and the company has implemented a clothing recycling program. It has also committed to phasing out hazardous chemicals used in its clothing production as part of Greenpeace's [Detox campaign](#).

On the social level, the company has made improvements in its labor policies and has an audit team that constantly monitors suppliers' compliance with the H&M code of conduct. The brand highly values transparency: it has published a list of all its manufacturers as part of its sustainability reporting and on the company's website. Amongst other achievements, this put H&M as the highest-ranking fashion brand on the [Fashion Transparency Index 2020](#).

In January 2020, H&M appointed its former Head of Sustainability, Helena Helmersson, as the company's new CEO. This was acclaimed by [activists](#) and experts as a significant step towards accelerating the company's sustainability work, given the depth of her understanding of the challenges and on-the-ground experience with this topic. We have now listened to her speaking at the UN Global Compact Summit 2020.

The question remains as to whether fast-fashion can become sustainable. Let's see how this plays out. We are hopeful.

## A RESPONSIBLE PRACTICES PIONEER IKEA

**As one of the world's biggest furniture retailers, Sweden's [IKEA](#) has a purpose to create a better everyday life for ordinary people and has been widely recognized for its responsible practices. The company also [aspires to become a circular business by 2030](#).**

Owned by a foundation, first and foremost, the company has the outlook of generations rather than quarterly earnings. And today, sustainability is deeply-rooted in the company's business model and overall goals. IKEA has, for instance, pledged to reach climate positivity by 2030, by reducing more greenhouse gases than it emits throughout its whole value chain.

During the [United Nations' Climate Conference of the Parties](#) in (COP25) in 2019, IKEA showcased its strategies for becoming climate positive with the use of science-based targets. This includes plans to only use renewable and recycled material in its products by 2030 and to speed up the pace of technological innovations that deal with climate change.

The company further announced that it will invest 200 million euros to accelerate the adoption of renewable energy by its suppliers, in addition to engaging in reforestation and better forest management practices.

Consumers have also recognized IKEA's work in creating a positive impact and the company is perceived as one of the most sustainable companies in the world. According to the [Sustainable Brand Index 2020](#), IKEA ranked first on the list of the most sustainable Swedish brands for the second year in the row.

Aligned with its purpose of "creating a better everyday life for many people", IKEA is living up to its social responsibility. For instance, as a response to the coronavirus outbreak, it joined the [COVID-19 Response Alliance for Social Entrepreneurs](#). This collaboration of 40 global organizations support social entrepreneurs to overcome significant impacts of the outbreak and alleviate suffering for the most vulnerable.



**BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK**

**CONTINUE THE  
JOURNEY**

**FUTURE  
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## BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK CONTINUE THE JOURNEY

**This Playbook for Better Business was compiled with the intention of sharing practices within the frontlines of business sustainability, with a particular interest in environmental sustainability, given the imminent challenges of climate change.**

The practices that have been profiled herein have been picked up through our own experiences, studies and research, as well as through consulting projects and client discussions.

More great examples of sustainable products, services, and business models from around the world can be found on the [Global Opportunity Explorer](#).

The formal research that is conducted to generate this Playbook is based mainly on sources published within the past two years (2018-2020). This includes a large number of reports and articles published predominantly by global institutions and organizations, including the United Nations, European Union, World Economic Forum, Harvard Business Review, and others.

We hope that this report will reach and inspire business leaders across the world to go beyond business as usual, and consider the vast strategic opportunities connected to Better Business – and get excited and engaged in doing well by doing good.

[This report can be shared and downloaded in full via our homepage](#), where you also can find other interesting resources.

By the way, we are Future Navigators. In a world of accelerating change, our mission is to guide leaders, teams, and organizations beyond business as usual. We help our clients explore opportunities, envision the future, and to transform into better businesses. Ultimately to co-create a better future.

Please get in contact via our website: [www.future-navigators.com](http://www.future-navigators.com)  
We would love to hear from you!

Warmly,



Elisabet Lagerstedt  
Founder & Principal



**OUR PROMISE**

**WE HELP YOU TRANSFORM INTO A BETTER BUSINESS**

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Ultimately to co-create a better future.



**“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”**

– African proverb



**A BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK**

# **RESEARCH, WRITING AND SOURCES**

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## BETTER BUSINESS PLAYBOOK

# RESEARCH, WRITING & CONTRIBUTION



### **Najla Vallander**

Najla holds a Degree in Business, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation Management from Lund University in Sweden. She is particularly interested in the topics of environmental psychology and sustainable consumption choices, circular business models, and the role of innovation and grassroots solutions in tackling global challenges. Najla also [blogs about her zero-waste lifestyle](#) to promote sustainable living with a minimal negative impact on the environment.



### **Carl-Henrik Sundström**

Carl-Henrik holds two Masters Degrees: in Entrepreneurship and Innovation, as well as in Environmental Science from Lund University and a Bachelor Degree in Business Management from HEC Lausanne in Switzerland. He holds several certifications: as a Coach from the International Coaching Federation (ICF), in Agile Leadership and as a Scrum Master from the Scrum organization. Carl-Henrik is an entrepreneur, project manager and a coach. His life's mission is to unleash human potential to accelerate human progress, focusing on human well-being, economic and environmental prosperity.



### **Elisabet Lagerstedt**

Elisabet is an expert on the CoCreation of Strategy, Innovation, and Transformation. She is on a mission to guide leaders, teams, and organizations beyond business as usual: to build better businesses, and ultimately a better future. She holds a Masters of Social Sciences from Lund University and executive education certificates from Harvard Business School, IMD Business School, Oxford, INSEAD and Singularity University, and more. She is an Executive Consultant and Coach, author and speaker with 25+ years business experience. She is also the founder of the boutique consulting firm Inquentia and of Future Navigators. Elisabet is the author of [Navigera in i framtiden](#) (in Swedish), runs [the Better Business blog](#), is a former guest writer for INSEAD Knowledge, mentor and guest lecturer at Lund University and KTH Executive School, and an Executive Coach and Learning Manager at IMD Business School.



### **Joyce Miller**

Joyce is an expert on Innovation, Sustainable Development Policy, Organisational Learning and Capacity Building in the Green Economy. She is an Executive Coach and Learning Manager at IMD. She designs and facilitates strategy, team-building, and leadership programmes for corporate clients. She trains entrepreneurs and consultants in developing and emerging countries (often in international supply chains) to reduce costs and environmental impact and improve working conditions. She regularly consults for international development programmes of the United Nations, other global agencies, and corporate foundations/philanthropy. She has a Bachelor Degree in Political Science and an MBA from two Canadian universities and a PhD from the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. She has also studied environmental impact assessment at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

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