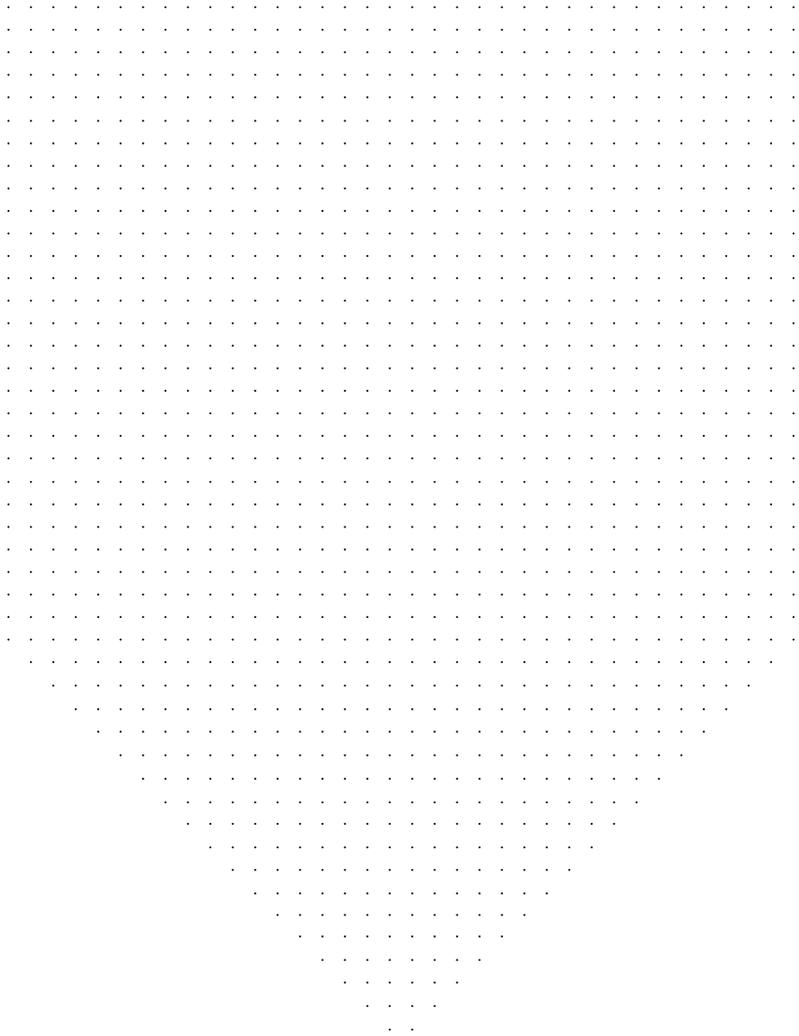


Navigating
change in 2025:
Key questions for
purposeful
leaders

THE DO
SUMMIT
REPORT



FOREWORD

With over 70% of business transformations failing, how can we ensure change delivers real impact across companies, economies, and societies? This question brought together 250 diverse industry leaders, entrepreneurs, investors and experts at the end of 2024 for our annual DO Summit Week.

We identified 15 urgent challenges to shape the week’s discussions. And we also asked all participants to share the key questions that emerged and which we need to address in 2025 to ensure success for ourselves and others. The results are captured in this report.

As we navigate our complex, fast-changing world in 2025, we know that we are not lacking great ideas or strategies. Rather, the challenge is implementing them. At The DO, we’re committed to working with our partners to advance the skills we need to take action and create tangible impact. And to fostering a community where people from all backgrounds can exchange on what’s working – and what isn’t – as we work towards a better future.

Best wishes
Florian, Katherin and The DO Team

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Message from the editor of The DO *Newsroom*

The questions raised by DO Summit participants honed in on several key themes this year, which we explore in detail in this report. From how to build the ecosystems we need for change, to harnessing the power of technology and strengthening our democratic institutions, we've gathered the key questions revealing the concerns and priorities of leaders across industries.

More broadly, the summit was a reflection on the dual nature of change today: transformation that is both fast and slow. On one hand, we are witnessing rapid advancements in technology and shifting societal expectations. On the other, we're contending with deeply entrenched structures and habits. This awareness led to rich discussions on the

pace of change and the critical need to identify which areas require urgent action and which need time to evolve.

There was also recognition that leaders today are increasingly expected to bridge divides—whether they be generational, ideological, or organizational. Many at the summit highlighted how intuition has become an indispensable tool for leadership. And, that leaders also need support in acquiring the skills they need to foster connections and create organizations that can address the complexities of our world.

And, the summit sparked discussion on the power of influence, both as leaders and citizens. While it's important to acknowledge the challenges that shape our world, we control whether we are driven by fear or fueled by optimism. Because while change is often difficult, it also brings opportunity, energy, and even joy when we see ourselves as active participants in shaping the future, and creating positive impact.

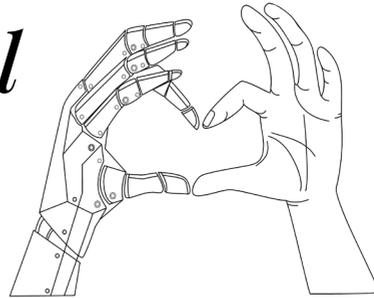
Deanne Corbett
Storyteller at The DO

Key
questions
for
purposeful
leaders



Embracing *technological* change

3 Key Questions



• QUESTION 1

With AI and automation rapidly reshaping industries, one of the biggest questions for business leaders is how to upskill employees effectively, enabling them to leverage these new tools in ways that drive sustainability. Studies show that companies are falling behind when it comes to preparing their workforce for the digital transformation¹.

- ▶ *How can we rapidly equip our workforce with the AI skills needed to not only keep pace with the digital shift but also harness the power of technology to accelerate the transition to net zero?*

¹ Microsoft and LinkedIn's "Future of Work" Report (2022), World Economic Forum's "Upskilling for Shared Prosperity" (2021)

² Deloitte's "State of AI in the Enterprise" Report (2023)

• QUESTION 2

The AI revolution also brings unique ethical and operational challenges, sparking necessary conversations around its impact on working conditions and how to maintain the "human element" in our increasingly data-driven world. However nearly 60 percent of business leaders report significant knowledge gaps in responsible AI use, and feel ill-equipped to address such issues².

- ▶ *How can we foster honest conversations about AI's impact on working conditions and ensure we retain the human element amid data-driven decisions?*

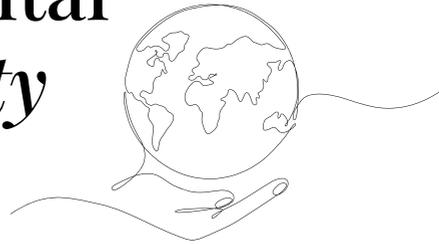
• QUESTION 3

Until now, businesses have mainly been adding gen AI onto existing processes. But as we move past the hype phase, business leaders need to think about how to fundamentally reshape their models to unlock new possibilities. From healthcare to manufacturing to education, the focus is shifting to AI as a core strategic asset. The challenge now is not just in adopting the technology, but leveraging it in ways that deliver true innovation and measurable returns.

- ▶ *How can we rethink our business models around the potential of generative AI so that it becomes a truly transformational asset and delivers return on investment?*

Sustainability & environmental responsibility

3 Key Questions



• QUESTION 1

Companies with strong sustainability commitments are seeing more investor interest and capital inflows, with over 80 percent³ of investors considering ESG factors in their investment strategies. And yet many companies are struggling to effectively transform their business models and accelerate their net-zero journeys.

- ▶ *How can we cut through political noise to identify key business opportunities in the green transformation, ensuring we are well-positioned to thrive in the net-zero economy?*

• QUESTION 2

In addition to striving for carbon neutrality, companies are increasingly under pressure to adopt broader impact KPIs to address the multifaceted nature of sustainability. Research shows consumers favor socially responsible companies, influencing purchasing decisions and brand loyalty⁴. And compliance with stricter ESG regulations can also unlock incentives such as tax benefits and subsidies.

- ▶ *How can we define and take action on new impact KPIs beyond carbon neutrality that will become the hallmarks of winning organizations?*

• QUESTION 3

As organizations strive to meet ESG commitments, they face increasing scrutiny over greenwashing – misleading claims about sustainability efforts – and green hushing, where fear of backlash leads to underreporting genuine progress. Navigating these challenges requires transparency, credible reporting frameworks, and effective communication strategies to build trust with stakeholders.

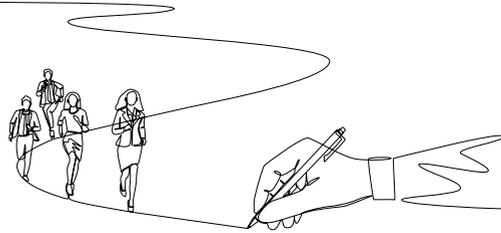
- ▶ *What practices can businesses adopt to steer clear of greenwashing and build trust, while confidently showcasing their sustainability progress in an era of growing scrutiny?*

³ PwC's Global Investor Survey 2023, Edelman Trust Barometer 2022

⁴ NielsenIQ & McKinsey "Consumers care about sustainability – and back it up with their wallets", February 2023

Leadership, culture & behavioral change

3 Key Questions



• QUESTION 1

The workplace is undergoing significant change from multiple angles. Younger generations, in particular, are seeking jobs that align with their values, putting pressure on companies to cultivate a purpose-driven culture⁵. This means leaders must move beyond traditional profit-driven goals and genuinely embed values like sustainability, inclusivity, and social responsibility into their organization's identity. Meanwhile, employee productivity is emerging as a critical focus and challenge, especially in Europe, where productivity levels lag significantly behind those in the U.S.

► *How might we combine purpose-driven leadership that inspires teams to work toward a sustainable future with a high-performance culture capable of competing in increasingly complex global markets?*

⁵ Deloitte's 2023 Global Human Capital Trends Report

• QUESTION 2

At the same time, companies are struggling to find and retain skilled employees who can keep up with the pace of technological change. Upskilling and reskilling current employees have become essential, as relying on external hires alone isn't enough to meet the demand⁶. Companies that want to be successful need to establish effective training and development programs to bridge the skills gap sustainably and build a workforce capable of driving innovation.

► *How can organizations upskill their existing workforce and better leverage non-traditional talent pools to drive transformation and future-proof their business?*

• QUESTION 3

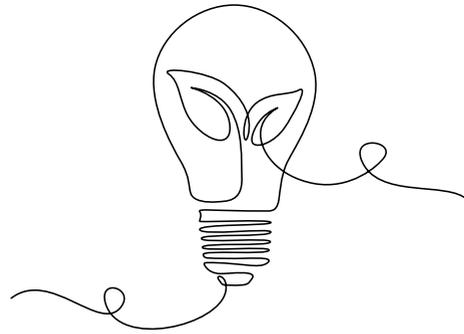
Companies also have a role to play in influencing consumer behavior and helping shift societal norms toward greener business models and products. But it's often an uphill battle, because it often means fighting the inherent human tendency towards short-term gratification, as well as challenging long-standing cultural beliefs.

► *How do we nudge consumer behavior toward more sustainable choices, eventually reaching the tipping point for transformative change at the societal level?*

⁶ World Economic Forum's „The Future of Jobs Report“ (2023)

Building ecosystems for change

3 Key Questions



• QUESTION 1

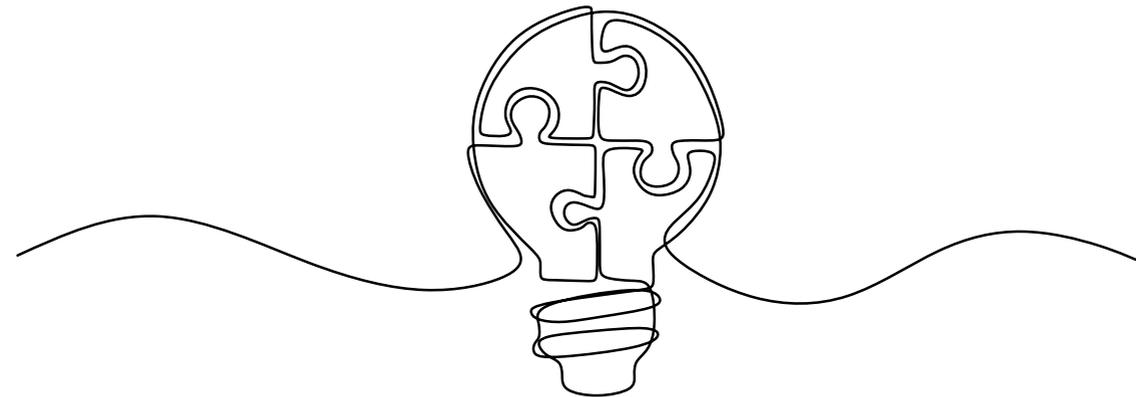
Research⁷ shows that the transition to a green economy represents a multi-trillion-dollar growth opportunity. Cross-industry partnerships and innovation ecosystems focused on collaboration are key to unlocking that opportunity. But the reality is that many organizations find it difficult to overcome a long-standing competition mindset. Challenges around conflicting goals, communication and culture create barriers to collaborative approaches.

► *How can we connect the right people and build the ecosystems we need to achieve our organization's net zero goals?*

• QUESTION 2

Building these ecosystems also means connecting young entrepreneurs with corporations – a proven way to foster mutual growth. Corporations benefit from a more innovative, agile culture and increased focus on sustainability. Startups gain valuable insight into corporate strategies and access to the resources and market access large corporations can provide. But such collaborations aren't always easy. Common barriers include cultural and operational differences, misaligned goals, complex legal frameworks, and resource imbalances that leave young entrepreneurs feeling disadvantaged.

► *How can we create better structures for young innovators and corporations to collaborate in a way that is mutually beneficial?*



⁷ The Circular Handbook: Realizing the Circular Advantage, Lacy, Long, Spindler, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020; McKinsey, Global Energy Perspective 2022; UN Global Compact Progress Report 2023



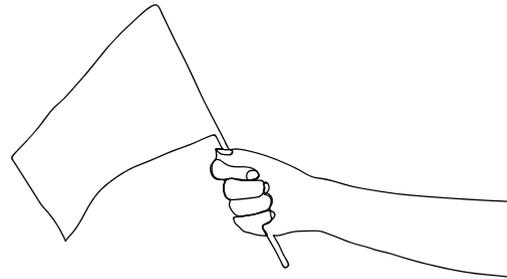
• **QUESTION 3**

Social impact entrepreneurs in particular benefit greatly from ecosystems that offer access to investors, and especially to patient capital. This type of funding is essential because impact ventures often address complex social or environmental issues, which can require longer timelines to generate measurable outcomes and financial returns.

► *How can we build stronger connections between investors and social entrepreneurs, ensuring that changemakers gain better access to funding and resources?*

Strengthening *democracy &* combatting societal divisions

3 Key Questions



• QUESTION 1

Democracy is in decline in half of the world's countries⁸, where rising political extremism reflects deepening societal divisions. Four in five business leaders agree that businesses should act to protect democracy⁹ - but doing so is hard. Many find it difficult to position themselves in the face of the overall economic situation, potential commercial ramifications or even personal threats.

- ▶ *What steps can we take to align our business practices, partnerships, and communications with the principles of transparency and democratic values?*

• QUESTION 2

Divisions are being fueled by mis- and disinformation, which pose significant risks for business leaders as they threaten reputations, erode trust, and destabilize markets. False narratives can spread rapidly, influencing consumer behavior, damaging brand credibility, and even inciting public backlash. Internally, misinformation can sow confusion among employees, undermining organizational cohesion and decision-making.

- ▶ *How can we equip our workforce with the skills and tools to critically assess and counter misinformation and disinformation, ensuring they can navigate a complex information landscape with confidence and integrity?*



⁸ The Global State of Democracy 2023: The New Checks and Balances, International IDEA
⁹ Morning Consult Survey, Business and Democracy Initiative, May 2022

• **QUESTION 3**

Amid growing societal divisions, fostering inclusivity has become both a challenge and a responsibility for business leaders. Within organizations, leaders must navigate diverse perspectives, unconscious biases, and systemic inequalities that can hinder efforts to build cohesive teams and equitable workplaces. Striking the balance between fostering inclusivity and addressing deeply rooted divides requires intentional policies, open dialogue, and a commitment to cultural transformation.

► *How can our organizations foster inclusivity and trust, both internally and in the communities we serve, to counter polarization and build social cohesion?*



We are **THE DO**
— a global
organization
that empowers
businesses,
employees and
entrepreneurs
in key moments
of *transformative*
change.

OUR MISSION

Accelerate purposeful transformation

Everyone knows about the challenges facing our companies and the world. The problem is not a lack of understanding of what needs to be done, but a lack of abilities to solve complex problems with speed. **That's why The DO exists.**

In order to remain relevant in the future, companies need to be part of the solution — not the problem. We help companies remain successful and help solve the biggest challenges of our time by empowering their people and catalyzing change.

Our unique DO Method - developed over more than a decade - is a proven combination of co-creation, hands-on delivery, and learning by doing. We use it to work on our partners' most pressing business challenges, creating tangible results for organizations with everything we do.

Did you know?
Our work with
Partners to create
impact includes:

Implementing transformation

- › Leadership alignment & activation
- › Innovation funnel & pipeline
- › Purpose & value definition and activation
- › Engaging employees & building movement
- › Creating culture mindset shift
- › Enabling collaboration across silos
- › Creating compelling narratives and action based storytelling internally & externally
- › Facilitating exchange with diverse external stakeholders and experts

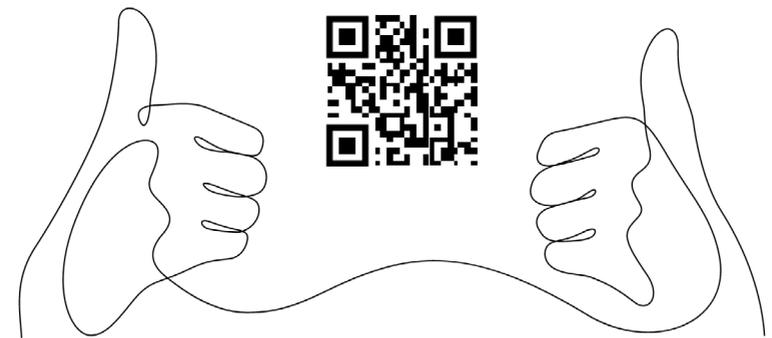
Empowering your people to drive change

- › Inspiring & challenging top leaders
- › Selecting, developing, engaging & retaining top talents
- › Turning managers into change leaders
- › Attracting and enabling young talents and first-time leaders
- › Upskilling and activating the organization on sustainability innovation
- › Upskilling the organization on transformational leadership skills
- › Upskilling the organization on responsible AI

Enabling you to positively impact the next generation and our planet

- › Connecting talented young innovators with leading organizations around key global challenges
- › Building excellent Fellowship programs for impact entrepreneurs
- › Designing and implementing innovative corporate citizenship movements

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Where Change Works

Implementing transformation
Executive education & lifelong learning
Planet-positive entrepreneurship