

Leading the charge on the

SDGs

Best practices for CEOs & corporate leaders

verizon[✓]

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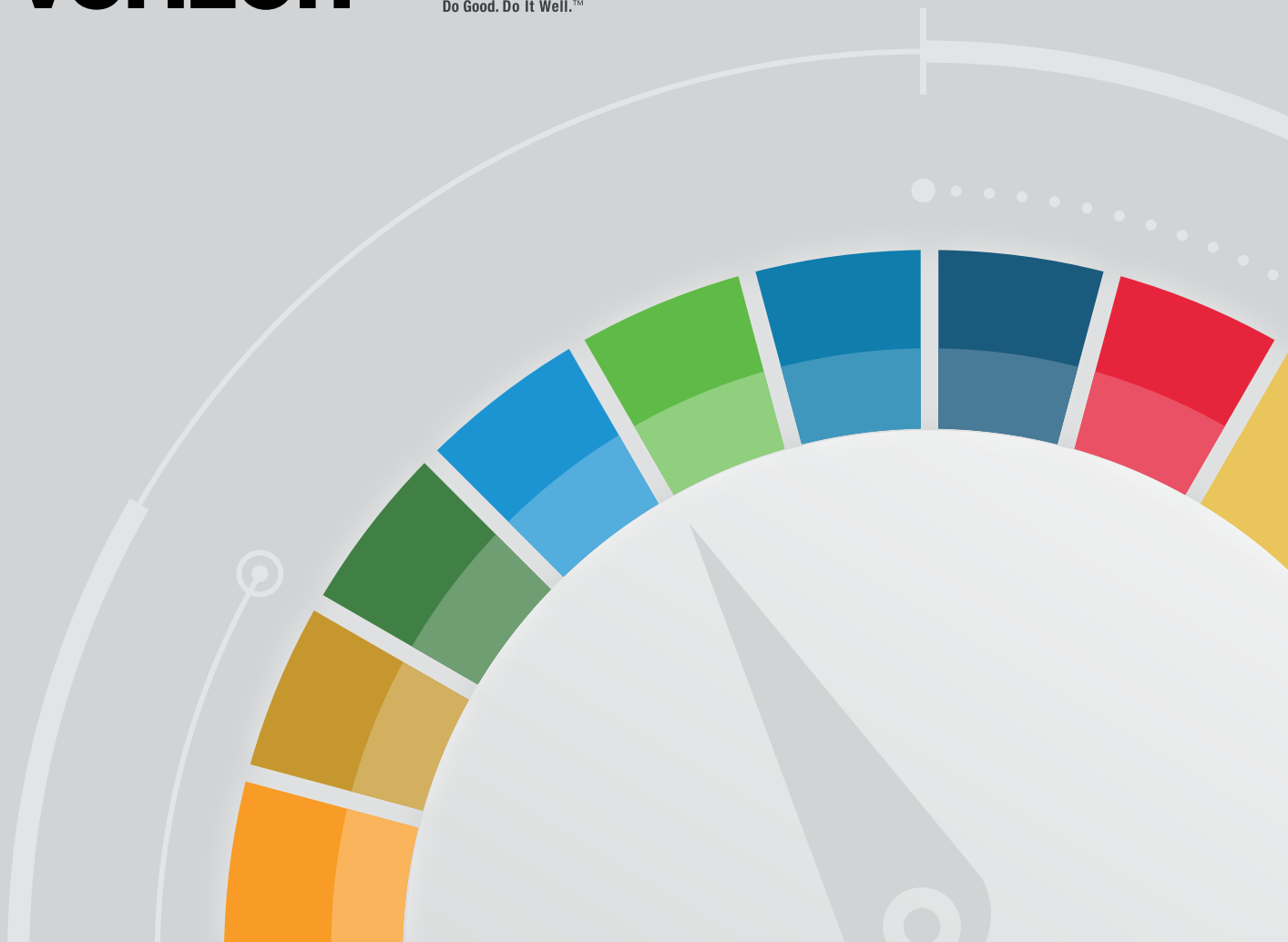


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Introduction

In the early 1970s, economist Milton Freedman famously argued that corporations have no social responsibility to society and Chief Executive Officers, as agents of those who own the company, should operate solely in the interest of shareholders. Freedman's principles of shareholder primacy were routinely adopted and widely accepted by the private sector for decades.

Fast forward to 2019 and bear witness to the 181 CEOs who reset a standard for corporate responsibility by formalizing a commitment to lead their companies for the benefit of all stakeholders — customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and shareholders. The **announcement** from the Business Roundtable, the organization for CEOs of large U.S. corporations, represents another milestone in the ongoing evolution of corporate engagement in global development.

Most people now accept that business has a critical role to play in driving positive social change and contributing to sustainable development. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals appeal directly to the private sector to help solve a wide-range of development challenges through initiatives such as **SDG Impact** and **guidelines** on private sector engagement with the SDGs.

What are SDGs?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 global goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all.” Each goal relates to a global challenge, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Also known as Agenda 2030, the SDGs were set in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and intended to be achieved by the year 2030.

As the primary framework to connect business strategies and operations with development priorities, companies can leverage the SDGs to capitalize on new business opportunities, create jobs, and make positive and demonstrable social and environmental contributions around the world.

But despite pledges from companies to commit to the SDGs and progress on some of the goals and their associated targets, it is no time for backslapping or celebration. A U.N. Global Compact and Accenture **study** recently found that businesses' contribution to the SDGs is simply not on track and “socioeconomic, geopolitical and technological uncertainties over the past four years have distracted CEOs' sustainability efforts.” Other studies suggest that while the private sector may be expanding philanthropic giving or Corporate Social Responsibility programs, few are actually shifting business models to support the SDGs. Some critics even assert that



much of the corporate engagement with the SDGs is superficial and companies are not actually changing their priorities or behavior to advance the agenda.

Verizon and Devex wanted to learn more about these dynamics, so we conducted two complementary surveys: an online survey of over 850 experienced global development professionals and an in-depth interview survey of 31 corporate and development leaders.

Overall, the SDGs have created this consciousness and mass movement that has really been pushing business leaders to think about how they change their business and approach new business opportunities.

John Sargent | Founding Partner, BroadReach

According to our online survey, 94% of respondents agree that CEOs and corporate leaders are important in driving the discussions around the SDGs and 88% believe that in order to achieve the agenda they must engage with the development community. Our conversations with leaders, meanwhile, revealed that by engaging with the SDGs, CEOs and corporate leaders can differentiate themselves from the competition, enhance their brands, and attract new consumers. They stress that these leaders hold significant convening power and influence – they can energize and broker development partnerships in ways government leaders cannot. They also bring unique insights and expertise in innovation, marketing, and other areas that are critical for socio-economic development.

At the same time, 89% of online survey respondents say the private sector is not engaging enough with the development community to advance the SDGs and

61% say that business priorities are not aligned with development issues. While the leaders we spoke to acknowledge that partnering with the development community helps business navigate the local development landscape, they also highlight a number of incompatibilities between these communities, including the technical languages they speak and the goals they set.

So what can and should CEOs and other corporate leaders do to move the needle? Our survey and interviews suggest that CEOs be bold in their commitments and serve as genuine SDG champions, both internally and externally. They should strive to build trust with development organizations and local communities by being authentic and transparent, including focusing on those SDGs and targets where their companies can make the most impact. While philanthropic and CSR initiatives are important, our survey results and interviews yield that CEOs should create and pursue shared value strategies by integrating social and environmental impact into business planning and operations. And understanding today's emphasis on data and analytics to drive business success, CEOs should implement systems and metrics to track their SDG and social impact performance.

Corporate leaders can bring a huge amount of expertise and knowledge to the table. All the attributes that make their organization powerful and effective can be applied in a development setting. Bringing that knowledge and perspective can be really game changing.

Jeremy Hillman | Director, External Relations, World Bank Group

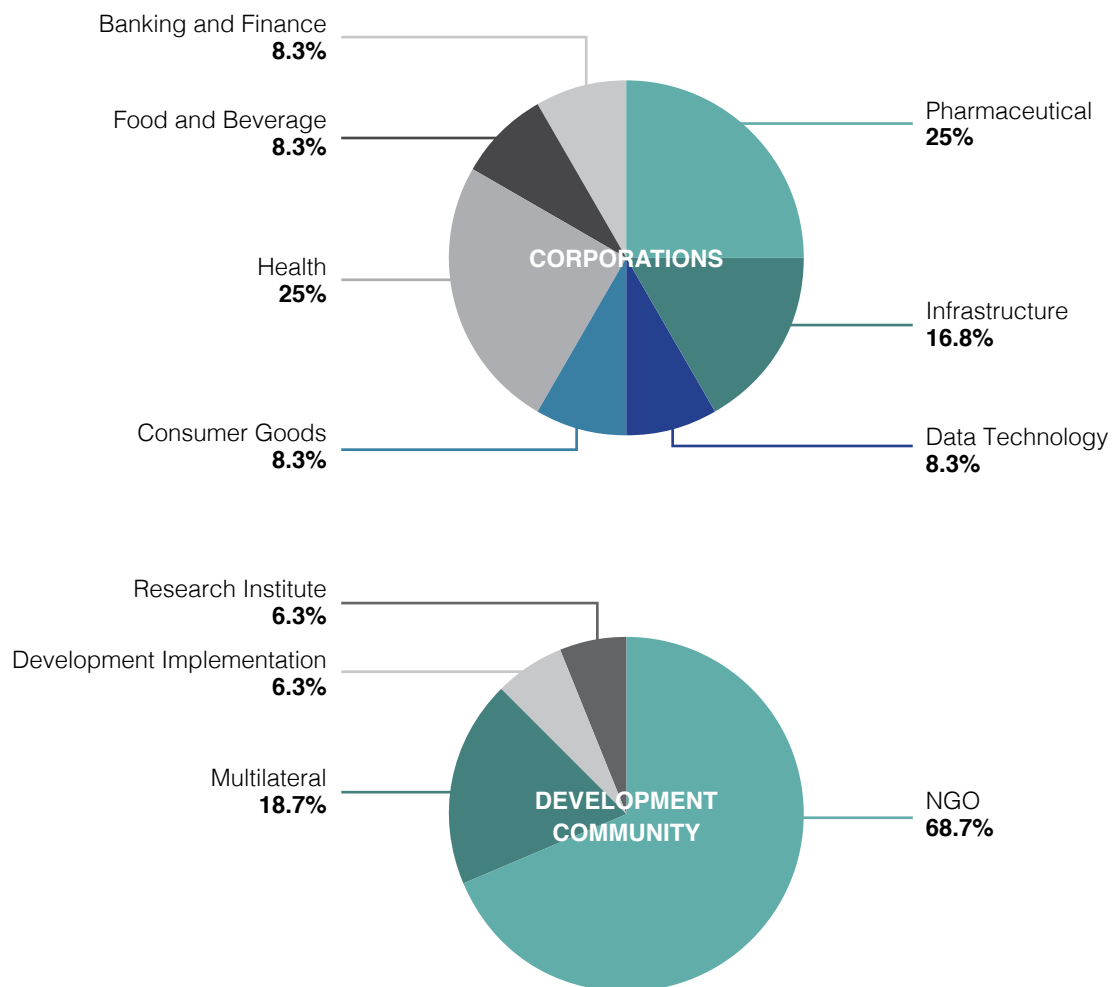
Methodology

The data and information gathered for this report is based on 31 in-depth interviews with corporate and development leaders and an online survey of over 850 experienced development professionals.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

To gather different perspectives and insights we spoke to a diverse set of individuals including corporate leaders, heads of departments and corporate foundations, and development community representatives from multilateral agencies, international NGOs, implementers, and research institutions.

Interviewees work for the following types of organizations:

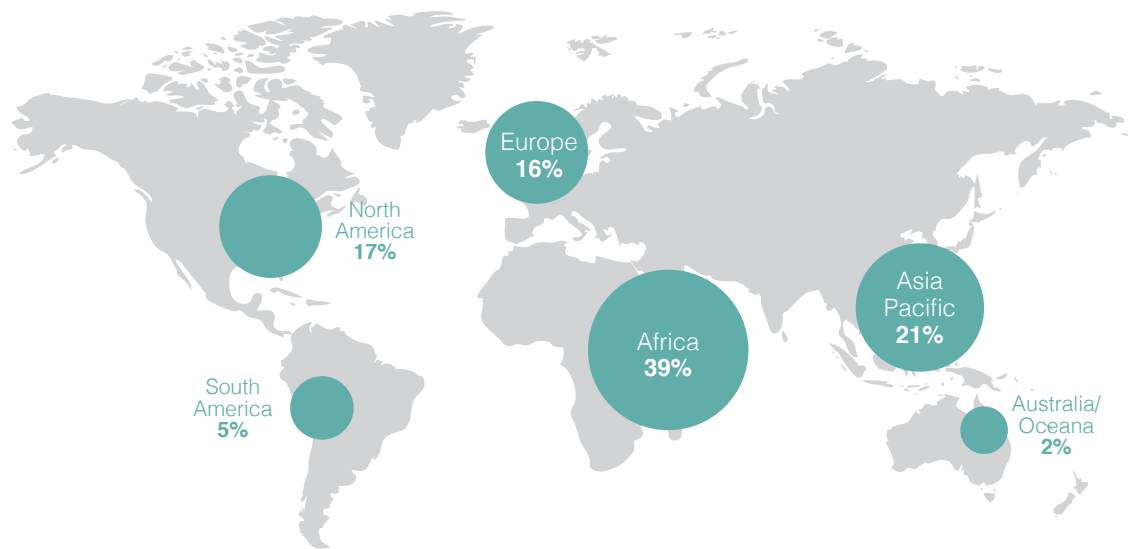


ONLINE SURVEY

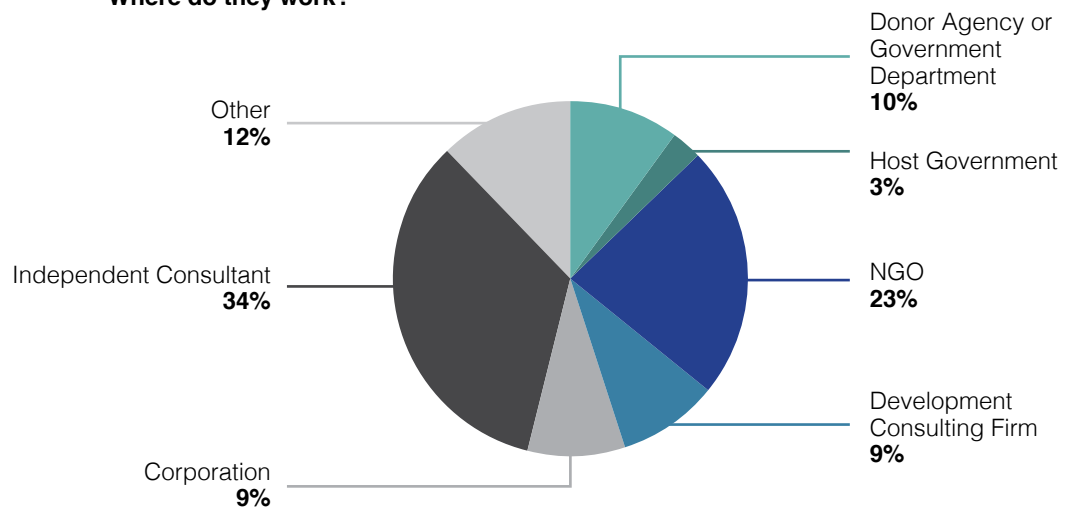
Tapping into the Devex network of over one million development professionals, we reached out to thousands of development professionals with balanced representation across regions, sectors and years of work experience.

Meet the **852** online survey participants

In which region are our survey respondents based?



Where do they work?



Key Findings

By now we know that effectively harnessing the power of business leaders for the SDG agenda is instrumental in meeting the targets by 2030. According to Devex's online survey, 91% of development professionals believe that increased private sector engagement is critical to achieving the SDGs. But doing good can also be good for business. The ability to balance profitability and sustainability can become a competitive advantage, and leading companies have already proven a link between SDG engagement and business opportunity. So what can and should CEOs and other corporate leaders do to better contribute to and advance the SDGs? Clearly, there are many paths to navigating sustainability and the SDGs successfully. We talked to top-tier executives from the private sector as well as their development sector counterparts and surveyed over 850 development professionals to uncover some of the most compelling best practices.

1

COMMIT PERSONALLY

There are no grey areas when it comes to commitment. According to Devex interviewees, superficial commitment and a lack of genuine engagement with development issues are the biggest stumbling blocks to sustainability at the corporate level. Because CEOs and other corporate leaders are more than just figureheads of their organizations, executives must be the champions that drive change. This means committing personally and leading by example.

Devex interviewees note that there is no substitute for a hands-on, dedicated and engaged CEO. Active corporate leaders can convey a message of authenticity and dedication to employees and the larger development community. A creative way to foster personal commitment is through missions to low- and middle-income countries. In Rajasthan, India, nonprofit organization PYXERA Global is implementing the Joint Initiative for Village Advancement (JIVA), an integrated community development program supported by the John Deere Foundation. PYXERA Global CEO Deirdre White recalls how Sam Allen, then CEO of Deere and Co., inspired commitment to corporate purpose by bringing a team of executives from the tractor and farm equipment manufacturer to volunteer on farms and in schools in three rural villages. "Sam led a team of C-suite folks who went to the community. They were so emotionally involved in this employee volunteering experience that they decided to invest long term."



I think we are seeing a strategic moment of opportunity: here we are in a very disruptive moment and I think it is probably sometimes down to individual CEOs in the private sector who have both the vision, the clarity of thinking, and the personal commitment to be part of the change rather than abdicating responsibility.

Achim Steiner | Administrator, UNDP



CASE STUDY

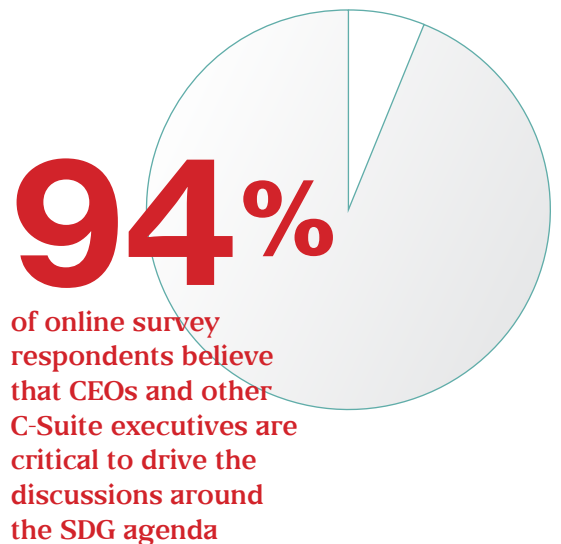
Making sustainability issues personal

Broadening access to medicines and treatment not only requires a systems-level approach, but one that is tailored to a specific context. For Dr. Susanne Weissbaecker, Global Head for Access to Medicines at Takeda Pharmaceuticals, gaining that personal insight continues to inform how she shapes the company's approach to reaching underserved populations.

"Traveling to countries like Kenya or the Philippines, you get a completely different feeling for the challenge. You get a deeper understanding of the challenge. You need to know the local needs – the local complexity in those underserved patient populations. If you talk to community health workers about their challenges in helping patients, if you understand what the gaps in the health system infrastructures are, you get very passionate about it," she said.

Takeda first launched its Access to Medicines strategy in 2016, which serves as the company's blueprint for reducing unmet medical needs along the entire patient journey – from increasing awareness, screening and diagnosis, to improving treatment and patient support. Since then, the company has helped train over 4,000 health care providers and community health workers around the world, provided support for over 125,000 patients in treatment, and facilitated the screening of over 1 million patients for cancer, hypertension and diabetes. Thanks to these efforts, Takeda now ranks within the top five pharmaceuticals in the [Access to Medicine Index](#) alongside GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis, Johnson & Johnson, and Merck (also known as MSD outside the U.S. and Canada).

Devex interviewees note that personal commitment also means leading global conversations on private sector engagement with the SDGs. Interviewees say that regular collaboration and active involvement in global discussions fosters a better understanding of development issues and helps corporate leaders craft and promote effective sustainability strategies. Close collaboration also allows actors from both sides to align their priorities. And participating in global events provides executives with an opportunity to build their company's brand and reputation by exchanging knowledge and best practices with the development community.



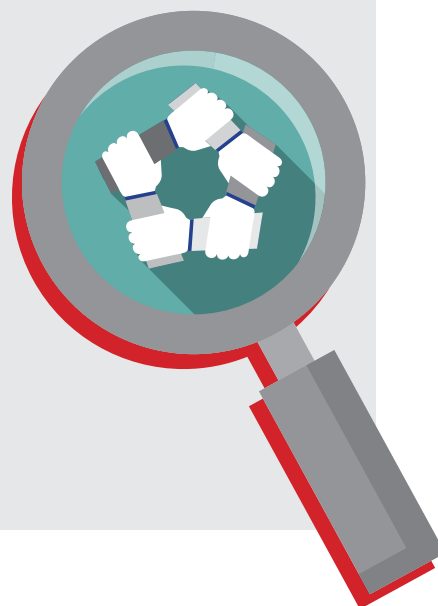
I participate in a number of events so I can listen and learn about what others are doing, particularly best practices that we could potentially incorporate into our own work. It also gives us the opportunity to share some of the experiences that Merck has had throughout our history of engagement in this space.

Brenda Colatrella | Associate Vice President, Corporate Responsibility, Merck



How can corporate leaders effectively drive global sustainability conversations?

- Have a clear agenda, focus and strategy
- Share ideas and enter with a collaborative mindset
- Hold open and honest conversations
- Be consistently present and dependable
- Capitalize on big global advocacy moments (U.N. Climate Summit, U.N. General Assembly, etc.)
- Engage through multiple venues and channels to show commitment and thought leadership



2

BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND DEVELOPMENT EXPERTISE



Over the past 70 years, international development has grown into a complex network of different actors that rely on evolving tools, resources, and engagement practices. Local ownership, transparency, good governance, and human-centered design are all well-known concepts to development professionals, but often mean little to corporate leaders. Devex interviewees note that most C-suite executives struggle to understand the development language and have an outdated understanding of how development works. Yet, establishing a firm grasp of the SDGs and the terminology around them can help corporate leaders add real value.



It's rare to have a CEO that's really well-versed with the SDG agenda. Because the SDGs are not in the public mainstream dialogue, it's more difficult to get them in front of a CEO, to get their attention and the necessary buy-in to this bigger idea about the company being sustainable in every way, and not just net zero.

Steve Kenzie | Executive Director, UN Global Compact Network UK

Having CEO support can make a key difference in aligning companies with the SDGs, because then you have leadership guidance as well as the sustainability department where you have the experts and the people who already know what to do. When those two things come together, you are more likely to get middle management buy-in and that's how you change companies internally.

Uwe Gneiting | Senior Researcher, Private Sector Team, Oxfam



More work needs to be done, particularly in the banking world, as it is not just about including SDGs in the literature, but also investing more time on the issues at a very senior level. They need somebody sitting at the executive table to maintain that focus and emphasis (e.g. on climate change issues) and to ensure that it does not get lost along the way.

Philippe Valahu | CEO, Private Infrastructure Development Group

According to Devex interviewees, SDG support is essentially window dressing if companies fail to employ staff or find partners with the right development expertise. A dedicated sustainability head can serve as a focal person that helps corporate leaders make the right sustainability decisions and mainstream sustainability activities across the company. UAE-based construction company Majid Al Futtaim, for example, brought in **Ibrahim Al-Zu'bi** – a rising voice and sustainability thought leader in the Middle East – as its Chief Sustainability Officer, transforming the company's sustainability efforts. In addition to being part of sustainability coalitions, such as the World Green Building Council, Al-Zu'bi's **strategies** now drive more responsible business practices, raising the company's sustainability profile.

3

NARROW YOUR FOCUS

Too many goals, too little focus has always been the biggest criticism of the SDG agenda. Devex interviewees lament that corporate leaders struggle to wrap their heads around the 17 goals and a staggering 169 targets. Without a clear focus on specific targets, organizations have difficulty demonstrating impact and maintaining momentum. According to our interviewees, corporate leaders should narrow their focus and strategically promote a specific issue or agenda rather than try to cover all the SDGs and failing to make a difference on any – known as rainbow washing.

42%

of online survey respondents say that corporate leaders should identify and prioritize the SDGs that are most aligned with the company's strategy and operations

It's impossible for us to be successful from a business perspective if we don't account for sustainability, but we don't try to do everything at the same time. In our case, out of 17 SDGs, we decided to focus on five of them. This is not to say that we are not tackling the others, but priority setting is something that is quite important if you want to achieve real impact.



Mauricio Adade | President, Latin America and Global Malnutrition Partnerships, Royal DSM

For corporate leaders, this means taking an introspective view of their businesses to determine which areas have the greatest impact on sustainability. Ideally, corporate leaders align specific sustainability goals with their company's core business, since this is where firms will inevitably excel. Devex interviewees also advise corporate leaders to approach the SDGs with a clear focus on business and ensure that activities address both development and business goals.

Initiatives such as the UN SDG Compass help corporate leaders identify the SDGs that are most relevant to their organization.



CASE STUDY

When business guides priorities

In many cases, identifying SDGs that make sense for company engagement involves assessing all operational levels to determine points of intersection between business goals and sustainability. For Unilever, this meant mapping out the firm's various operations and business lines to find focus areas and improve sustainability. Unilever launched its [Sustainable Living Plan](#) in 2010, which serves as the company's central strategy to achieve positive social change, minimize environmental impact and grow the business.

"You can deliver for shareholders by being a purposeful, sustainable business," says Jonathan Gill, Global Sustainability Director, Strategy and Corporate Engagement at Unilever. "Water, sanitation and hygiene is one of our core strengths. We've reached a billion people to improve hand washing practices. We've enhanced the livelihoods of millions in our value chain and are aiming for millions more. In energy, our new CEO Alan Jope just announced this year that we use 100% renewable grid electricity across all our operations. These are just some areas where our business intersects with driving a positive impact."

Ophthalmic optics company EssilorLuxottica focuses squarely on its comparative advantage: vision. Instead of trying to address all SDG targets, the company works primarily where it knows it can make an impact. Hubert Sagnières, Executive Vice-Chairman of EssilorLuxottica and Chairman of Essilor notes that "as an optics company, our global mission really is to eliminate poor vision from the world in a responsible way. This is what's driving all our actions and strategies." In Bhutan, Essilor is currently expanding

its global network of primary vision care providers that will sustainably serve remote areas. After a discussion with Bhutan's Prime Minister and the country's Ministry of Health, Essilor aligned its program to the country's development priorities, recruiting and training more women to contribute to broader gender targets.

4

GO BEYOND PHILANTHROPY

"Business as usual will not achieve the SDGs" is a common refrain that underscores the urgency of changing the way businesses currently operate. Devex interviewees stress that to meaningfully contribute toward achieving the SDGs, businesses must go beyond philanthropic gestures and make fundamental changes to their operating models. Interviewees note that one such approach is creating shared value. A step up from CSR, CSV focuses on solving social problems profitably.



93%

of development professionals believe that the SDGs should be integrated into companies' corporate strategy and purpose



What is "shared value"?

Developed by Harvard professor Michael Porter and Harvard Kennedy School of Government Senior Fellow Mark Kramer, **shared value** revolves around the premise that the competitiveness of a company and the health of the communities are mutually dependent. A shared value approach reconnects company success with social progress by generating economic value in a way that also produces value for society by addressing its challenges.

Key features of the shared value approach:

- integrates social and environmental impact into the business to drive economic value
- motivated by competitive advantage
- driven by corporate strategy
- managed across the entire company

“

In many ways, shared value is a stepping stone to true integration. We want to go one step further and encourage those corporate leaders to think about the fact that there's no longer two parallel tracks. To actually be a profitable and sustainable company, you must have significant social impact.

Scott Jackson | President and CEO, Global Impact

Embedding the SDGs into company business models means incorporating the SDGs into overall strategic plans and making business practices, including operations and supply chains, more responsible and sustainable. **Studies** show that investors, consumers, and employees are increasingly expecting companies to build responsibility into their strategies and core businesses. In addition to helping companies differentiate themselves in an ever-crowded marketplace, social responsibility also incentivizes innovation within companies, which in turn builds competitive immunity and long-term sustainable growth. Devex interviewees emphasize the importance of folding ethics and sustainability into a company's core business and assert that the role of corporate leaders is to provide the necessary strategic direction. In other words, business planning must take a mission-driven approach.

At Mars Incorporated, for example, company practices and internal sustainability initiatives help internalize the SDGs, ranging from broad policies such as equal pay and gender representation to more practical actions such as reducing non-essential travel, developing a recycling plan, and implementing water and power conservation programs. The company also supports specific development targets as long as they are closely tied to its core business. Recognizing that farmer poverty poses a serious risk to its supply chain and long-term growth opportunities, Mars launched the Farmer Income Lab in 2017. An incubator for knowledge and new farming models, the Lab focuses on building sustainable supply chains and improving farmer income.



Rather than looking at engaging with the SDGs as a philanthropic or CSR activity, business can often create most impact by integrating and aligning their SDG agenda within, and with, their business agenda. Driving change for all actors is not about business as usual, it's about creating unusual partnerships and unusual business that include positive impact as a norm.

John Fairhurst | Head, Private Sector Engagement, The Global Fund



Integrating the SDGs into business strategies: top 5 recommendations from development professionals

Ensure company compliance with sustainable best practices and create accountability through measurable performance metrics based on SDG indicators



Identify and prioritize the SDGs that are most aligned with the company's strategy and operations



Invest in long-term corporate sustainability solutions and strategies



Change business models to ensure a business purpose beyond profit



Partner with development programs and funds that facilitate corporate engagement



You cannot divide agenda A and agenda B. You have to be credible throughout your organization. Within your organization's canteen, start using sustainable and local products and stop using plastic, or even meat. Go through the organization's travel behavior, tender procedures, energy and water use, printing practices, etc. Consistently drive change and measure the difference you make on all levels, as only concrete results will enthuse and encourage people. The CEO is responsible and must be a living example of the change he or she wants to see.

Simone Filippini | President, Leadership4SDGs Foundation



CASE STUDY

Turning a sustainable business model into business as usual

A corporate sustainability early adopter, Johnson & Johnson first built environmental responsibility language into its guiding mission statement over 40 years ago. More recently, the global health care and consumer products giant was among the first major companies to publicly commit to the SDGs, identifying **five strategic areas** where J&J is uniquely positioned to create sustainable and scalable impact. Each area has its own five-year target and a publicly accessible **online dashboard** that measures company progress.

These strategic priorities trickle down into the company's day-to-day hiring, procurement, and manufacturing processes. By hiring a Chief Diversity Officer, the company has developed a number of **strategies** for its over 126,000 employees worldwide including LGBT-friendly policies, strong female leadership representation, and supportive working environments for people with disabilities. J&J also embeds sustainability requirements in contracting processes, cemented in its **Sustainable Procurement Program**, which requires procurement partners to adhere to **responsibility standards** and report on sustainability goals. And J&J's **Earthwards program** pioneers sustainable product design and innovation for over a hundred consumer items, medical devices and pharmaceuticals. The company has also made a commitment to drastically reduce the use of plastics in both its products and packaging, eliminating plastic microbeads in its personal care products and aiming to use **100% sustainable packaging by 2025**.

It has not been difficult, it's kind of like the fabric of who we are. The issues that we are trying to solve with the SDGs are the same issues our employees are trying to solve – health care, education, food, women's rights. It hasn't been a hard sell. It is seen as a powerful commitment to each community that we are actually working.



Adrian Thomas, MD | Vice President, Global Access, Programs & Policy, Johnson & Johnson Global Public Health

5

ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES

Online survey respondents believe that creating a company culture of responsibility for the SDGs is the second most important role of corporate leaders, after aligning the company's core business strategy with sustainability.

A visionary CEO is one thing, but getting a whole company to move the needle is another. Typical corporate mentality is slow to change by nature due to the sheer size and complexity of companies. Different departments or business lines that have different reporting lines and numbers often function independently or even in competition. As a result, initiatives are difficult to spread beyond the immediate circle of influence as people and teams are not able to collaborate and leverage each other effectively. **Studies** have indicated that CEOs and other corporate leaders should act as catalysts to motivate their organizations and set expectations.

Embedding the SDGs in company strategies must go beyond merely imposing changes on employees and involve the whole organization in the process – not just the sustainability department.

Devex interviewees recommend convening various departments to set the company's sustainability goals, as well as conducting seminars where employees learn about the SDGs and suggest ways the company can contribute. Discussing the SDGs and sustainability practices can boost corporate morale, improve culture, and create a sense of purpose among employees.

Even if the CEO is not championing these issues very vocally or publicly, they have an important role in promoting a supportive culture in the organization to enable these approaches to go forward.

Laura Kelly | Director, Shaping Sustainable Markets, International Institute for Environment and Development



Initiatives that effectively engage employees:

- Employee volunteer programs in emerging markets
- Leadership training programs with sustainability as a core component
- Annual company awards to teams creating the biggest sustainability impact
- Company-wide celebrations when a sustainability target is achieved
- Incentives for reducing carbon footprint at work
- Supporting or establishing company **Green Teams**



Commit your people to actually go out and understand at a really core level what these challenges are. Because you don't really understand "end all forms of hunger" in a visceral way that incorporates into your long-term strategic thinking unless you really see what hunger is.

Deirdre White | CEO, PYXERA Global



CASE STUDY

Employee volunteer programs & on-the-ground realities

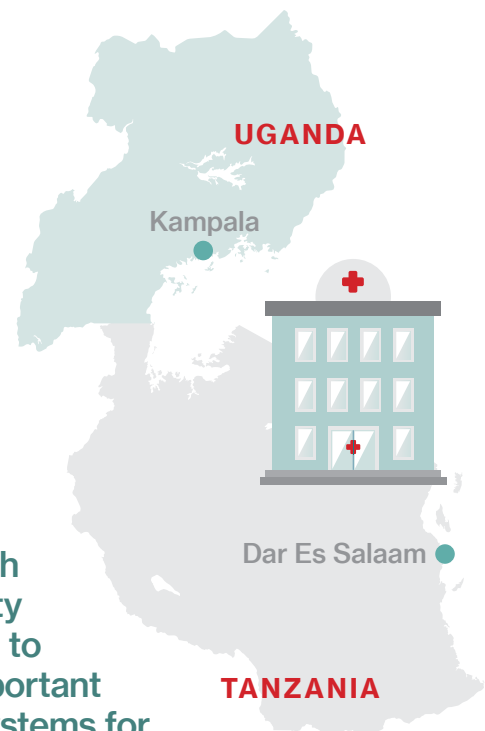
In 2003, Pfizer established its skills-based volunteering program that takes a collaborative approach to deliver on its commitment to address pressing health needs in underserved communities around the world. In 2015, as part of a pro-bono consulting assignment, the NGO IntraHealth International hosted senior Pfizer leaders at its offices in Tanzania and Uganda, where Pfizer's senior leadership was exposed to the complexity of Africa's health care sector. Company leaders met with government officials, donors, international and local NGOs, the private sector, and other stakeholders, went on site visits to specialized hospitals and rural clinics, and witnessed firsthand the challenges NGOs like IntraHealth confront in providing access to health in resource-strapped environments. These experiences also deepened Pfizer leadership's understanding and engagement in global health and development. Pfizer's engagement with IntraHealth extends beyond this one initiative in 2015; since 2006, 14 colleagues have served in individual skills-based volunteering fellowship assignments in IntraHealth offices in Africa and India.

These participants were selected among Pfizer's top tier executives – they could be the next CEO – and for some of them, it was their first time in sub-Saharan Africa. It was definitely a transformative and eye opening experience for both their executives and our own staff.

Rebecca Kohler | Chief Strategy Officer, IntraHealthGlobal

The partnership with IntraHealth gave our leaders the opportunity to share their business acumen to help IntraHealth advance its important mission to strengthen health systems for communities in need around the world. In turn, this immersion experience expanded our leaders' perspectives and appreciation for health needs in emerging markets and the role NGOs play in addressing global health challenges.

Caroline Roan | President, Pfizer Foundation; Vice President, Global Health & Patient Access, Pfizer Inc.



6 BUILD PARTNERSHIPS

Although companies are becoming more and more active in the development field, they cannot and should not transform into full scale development organizations. Partnerships are the practical solution. Inclusive partnerships

are mutually beneficial and leverage resources, expertise and experience to find the best solutions. Yet, companies and development organizations such as NGOs often struggle to partner.



Top challenges the development community faces when trying to partner with corporate leaders

Development objectives often clash with business objectives

44%

Corporate leaders have limited time to engage on development issues

19%

Corporate leaders do not understand development issues and concepts

14%

Corporate leaders are not accessible

12%

Businesses lack transparency

7%

If we want to embed sustainability into our business and have a positive social impact, there needs to be a clear recognition that we can't do these things on our own, that we need to work with partners in the development community. And we need that kind of upfront high level recognition that partnerships are critical.

Jonathan Gill | Global Sustainability Director, Strategy and Corporate Engagement, Unilever

To jumpstart collaborations, corporate leaders need to find the right partners. Devex interviewees recommend organizations with extensive local expertise, that amplify and complement corporations' capabilities, and are geared toward guiding companies to become part of the sustainability discussions rather than just implementing projects or programs. Building trust and aligning objectives are also prerequisites for successful partnerships. Frank and meaningful discussions help align goals and create synergies. For example, a partnership between Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and Unilever's Lifebuoy brand emerged out of the shared objective to reduce under-five mortality. The

Safal Shuruaat program, designed to promote handwashing with soap and increase demand for immunization in rural India, leveraged Gavi's access and understanding of local health systems and Unilever's storytelling and behavior change expertise.

Corporate leaders play an essential strategic and facilitator role in shaping partnerships. But Devex interviewees stress that in order to really scale and make a sustainable impact, partnerships need multiple points of engagement at different levels and across the company. This enriches engagement while addressing practical issues such as potential staff turnover.



CASE STUDY

Finding the right partners for the Business Ally Network

Deliver for Good is a global campaign of more than 400 organizations working across sectors and issues to find solutions that advance gender equality across the SDGs. At the 2019 Women Deliver Conference in Canada, the Deliver for Good Business Ally Network was launched with Merck and P&G as founding members. The Network is designed to strengthen collaboration within the private sector and to promote critical investments in girls and women. Members work alongside civil society partners to leverage the voice, expertise, and scale of the private sector to implement progressive gender policies and programs, and invest in girls and women.

Evelyne Guindon, Managing Director of External Relations at Women Deliver, notes that what sets these companies apart and makes them ideal partners is that they recognize that achieving gender equality is both the right and smart thing to do, and that they leverage their unique strengths to do so. For instance, 49% of Merck's workforce is represented by women and 41% hold senior management roles. Merck is committed to focusing on and tracking these numbers to achieve gender parity by 2030. In addition to closing the gender gap within the workplace, P&G leverages its voice in the media and through advertising to tackle bias, spark conversations, and motivate change. Deliver for Good Business Ally Network members are committed to removing barriers and creating gender-equal environments within their companies and beyond.

When you bring leaders together, across sectors, you not only break down barriers to honest conversations about gender equality, you gain insight into what is truly at stake and how best to accelerate progress for girls and women. Creating the space to share ideas and challenges is key to creating actionable solutions that can be shared and replicated. CEOs can seize on their experience and influence to advance a multitude of issues.



Evelyne Guindon | Managing Director, External Relations, Women Deliver

7 MEASURE AND COMMUNICATE IMPACT

While making commitments is easy, measuring progress towards those goals spells the difference between true sustainability leadership and greenwashing. As former Credit Suisse Investment Management Head of Sustainability and Impact Investing Rosa Sangiorgio puts it, “if you don’t measure it, you can’t achieve it.” According to Devex interviewees, creating systems to monitor and evaluate progress towards sustainability targets is key to any corporate sustainability strategy. This involves clearly defining goals that are aligned with the SDGs. Corporate leaders must lead this effort. Devex interviewees note that CEOs have a responsibility to communicate sustainability priorities down the operating line so that specific teams can break down targets into measurable key performance indicators. This creates a roadmap for compliance that spans across departments.



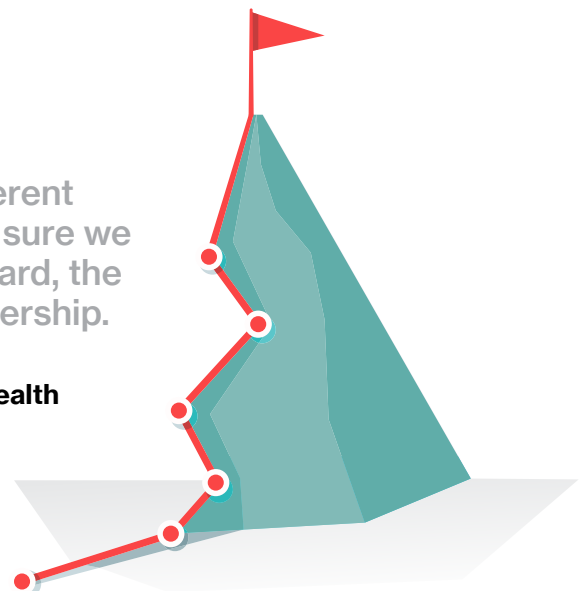
50%

of online survey respondents say that it is essential to ensure company compliance with sustainable best practices and create accountability through measurable performance metrics based on SDG indicators



Different parts of the organization take different accountability for setting goals and making sure we achieve them. These are reported to the board, the executive committee and to the sector leadership.

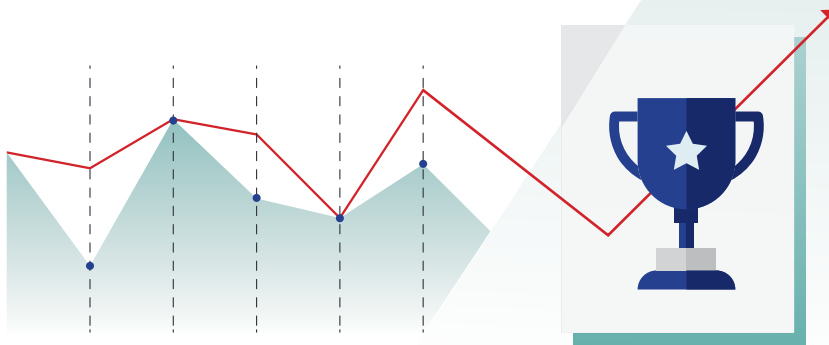
Adrian Thomas, MD | Vice President, Global Access, Programs & Policy, Johnson & Johnson Global Public Health



It is just as critical that corporate leaders and companies are willing to be held accountable. Devex interviewees recommend submitting production practices to certifying bodies to ensure that operations are up to standard. **B Corporation certification**, for instance, helps and certifies companies to balance profit and social impact. Corporate leaders can also leverage tools and organizations that guide corporate SDG compliance, including the **SDG Compass** or the **World Business Council for Sustainable Development**.

Investors and their boards need to be willing to change certain metrics. Only when you turn sustainability targets that the company has linked to the SDGs into metrics within the business divisions and incentives linked to them, will the transformation start.

Stefan Germann |
CEO, Fondation Botnar



But measuring impact should not stop there. Devex interviewees stress that corporate leaders should communicate success stories to raise awareness on existing best practices and inspire others to follow suit. Highlighting the powerful voices of corporate leaders draws attention to the growing sustainability movement and indicates that there is plenty of room at the table. Private Infrastructure Development Group CEO Philippe Valahu recalls attending an event on water sustainability where Heineken CEO Jean-François van

Boxmeer presented his company's **water conservation efforts** in the value chain: "For me, that was very telling because here you have a CEO showing that you can marry what he has to do, which is account quarterly to shareholders, with conducting business responsibly and with concern for the SDGs. People like that should be identified and put out there in a more visible way."

“

It's very helpful when CEOs step up and make public statements about development issues. When other business leaders see that kind of high level buy-in and strong advocacy, it demonstrates what's possible and gives them license to do the same.

Steve Kenzie | Executive Director, UN Global Compact Network UK



CASE STUDY

Measuring SDG progress

In September 2019, Nestlé Executive Vice President, Head of Operations Magdi Batato signed the UN Global Compact's Business Ambition for 1.5°C pledge to be carbon neutral by 2050. Plans to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions include reformulating products with climate-friendly ingredients, restoring farmland and forests and increasing the use of renewable energy. Within a two-year timeframe, Nestlé aims to come up with a roadmap including intermediate targets to track their post-2020 sustainability agenda.

Across all its operational activities, Nestlé has made commitments mapped to specific SDGs. Progress towards those commitments are outlined in annual 'creating shared value and meeting our commitments' progress reports, which adheres to Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Standards. Additionally, Nestlé's leadership frequently speaks on the company's progress at various sustainability events, such as the UN Global Compact's Leaders Week and the World Future Energy Summit. By demonstrating transparency and complying with internationally recognized KPIs, consumers and stakeholders alike can hold Nestlé accountable to their ambitions and promises.

Climate change is one of the biggest threats we face as a society and as a business. We hold ourselves publicly accountable by reporting our impact on the environment and our progress against our commitments. We strive to make our company more sustainable and we want to inspire others in our supply chain and industry to do the same. This is essential to protect the planet as well as ensure our success.



Magdi Batato | Executive Vice President, Head of Operations, Nestlé

Conclusion

Global development and social investment were once dominated by public sector actors, particularly international donor agencies and governments. Under this paradigm, the world achieved remarkable socio-economic progress and made major strides against the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – the first global development agenda focused largely on global health. Today's global development agenda – the SDGs – is far more expansive, ambitious and universal in scope. Increasing SDG financing from billions to trillions as required means the private sector must step up and join the fight.

CEOs and other C-suite executives can and should look at this new age of sustainability and the SDGs as an unprecedented opportunity. But because the business and development worlds seldom operate at the same tempo or with the same goals, corporate leaders must make special and concerted efforts to meaningfully engage with the SDGs. This report outlines a few practical steps corporate leaders can take to align their companies with the SDGs and accelerate their sustainability and social impact commitments. We hope it guides and inspires corporate leaders around the world to learn more about the SDGs and how to shift business strategies to contribute.

Acknowledgments

This report is the result of contributions from numerous individuals and organizations. We would like to thank all participating organizations and especially our in-depth interviewees for sharing their passion, knowledge and experience.

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