



# The Rise of Forerunners

In 1964, Kenzo Takada – then a 25-year-old fashion designer, bought a one-way, second-class passage from Japan to Europe aboard a boat.

Six years later, he opened a boutique in Paris selling his own creations.

Takada made garments unlike anything Paris had been accustomed to... and he became famous for his colourful and exuberant collections. He believed that “fashion is not for the few”.

He once said: “I’d like to be remembered as a designer who crossed boundaries.”

Today, most companies are on the verge of a different future. And the question is: which companies are recognizing the imperative to embrace change and move beyond the boundaries of a familiar past.

The global pandemic has accelerated a **profound shift in modern lifestyles**, ranging from the rise of micro-mobility and micro-entrepreneurship, to smart habitats, the rise of digital health passports and more responsible consumption.

Of 1,500 senior executives we surveyed, almost two-thirds expect these lifestyles to become the norm in the next five years. Yet, **high awareness of societal shifts is not translating into a sense of urgency**:

60% of companies are still relying on their pre-crisis strategies. However, these will be inadequate for capturing emerging growth opportunities.

To thrive in the next decade, companies must accelerate strategic efforts to meet the moment and contend with the challenges of a shifting society. Only a few companies are doing just that. We call these companies **Forerunners**.

Forerunners are taking bold steps in four priority areas, to better serve the needs of the future society:

## **[CG: Target savvy talent]**

Forerunners bring in new leaders who can chart a different course. They go beyond just uplifting the digital fluency of the current workforce, to attracting and nurturing talent with niche skills that can fulfill new roles in businesses of the future. Specialist talent such as digital anthropologists and AI ethicists.

## **[CG: Create sustainable solutions]**

Second, Forerunners have stepped up efforts to infuse sustainability into **every aspect** of

business – not only reducing their carbon footprint, but also creating new sustainable infrastructure and solutions, ranging from building greenfield concept cities to transforming existing living spaces.

### **[CG: Invest in human care]**

No business can be successful without paying attention to individual as well as collective health and wellbeing.

Forerunners are transforming their business portfolios to meet the more complex needs of a health-minded society and tap into new opportunities in highly personalized “fringe markets” (think highly customized self-care).

### **[CG: Use technology responsibly]**

And finally, society’s expectations around data privacy and protection are rising fast with increasing use of technology.

Forerunners embrace a **fair and ethical use of technology** and are ahead of their peers in focusing on digital asset protection – for example, customer and employee data – and on building tech-augmented, smarter operations.

Forerunners represent **just 11% of companies** we surveyed. They recognize that emerging lifestyle shifts will have a **significant impact** on their businesses. And they are taking decisive action, focused on new, material growth opportunities.

This means 9 out of 10 companies urgently need to step up and **reset their business priorities** in order to succeed in our new reality.

**Society is changing fast – is your business ready to change with it?**

**END**