Jill Standish [00:01:28] Great. It's fantastic to create this with you, Mark, you and I have known each other for some time, and this is the 15th year of Fjord Trends. And we do this every year. And it's very meaningful for me because a lot of these have so much applicability to retail. And so before we dive in here, I think it's important for those who are listening how we come up with these because it's not just you. I mean, you're a brilliant guy, but.

Arthur Zackiewicz [00:01:58] It's Mark sitting with a legal pad and having a sip of Scotch.

Jill Standish [00:02:04] Yes, exactly, Mike. So, share with those who are listening in kind of how these are created.

Mark Curtis [00:02:09] Yeah. So I mean, I think that's commonly used term is we crowdsourcing and when we crowdsourcing from all two thousand designers who work across Fjord within Accenture Interactive and they're in about 35 cities. And we literally go to all of them and say, tell us what you think the major things are happening at the intersection between technology and humans and business. What are the things happening there that you think are going to affect the way in which we should design products, services, and experiences over the next one to five years? And we take all of their input and there's a lot of it, and then we do something I call pattern recognition in early autumn when we say, well, what are the big things we're seeing here across the world? These are literally global. And how do those make sense and how do we articulate them?
And so, the trends are really an articulation of the things about designers who work with our clients everywhere are seeing and thinking about and thinking, I need to be thinking about this when I look at what we do next year.

**Jill Standish [00:03:10]** Yeah. And these trends are they're very simple in wording, but they're very meaningful. And I think they're very relatable, right? And I think they're very relatable, especially because coming out of the last two years, I mean, it's been almost two years that we've been doing this kind of weird work the way we're working and the way we're doing things. And so let's just dive right in. The first one, Mark, is called come as you are. So, as you describe this one kind of give us a glimpse as to what it is, and then we're going to kind of translate that into why it matters for retailers.

**Mark Curtis [00:03:50]** It is. You've rumbled. You've rumbled those. We're quite keen on song titles.

**Arthur Zackiewicz [00:03:47]** Isn't that an old Nirvana song? Come as you are.

**Mark Curtis [00:03:57]** But the trend this started a few years back and it's a little bit out of control now. So, yeah, come as you are, we've seen a really big shift in how people think about their sense of agency over their lives, and this is being created really and you mentioned the two year thing just now, Jill. This has been created by coronavirus and the time and space it's giving people to think about who they are. And, if you just put one little lovely piece of evidence for this, it's Tom Daley, the British Gold Medal winning diver at the Olympics, turning up and being seen knitting happily in the stands as he was watching what other people were doing. And you know, here's a guy who is a professional. He's at work. Let's not forget that. And he's just saying, Look, this is who I am. So think of that as a sort of leitmotif for all of what we're talking about when we think about come as you are. Because what's happening here is people are saying, I'm not sure I'm comfortable just defining myself by the work I do now, and I'm rethinking who I am and I'm rethinking my values. And of course, that then has this big knock-on effect for both employers and for anybody serving consumers, because those consumers are rethinking who they are. But their employees who are serving them, they're rethinking who they are, as well. And so you see an outburst of this, for example, with the great resignation, which literally this morning I've just seen numbers are saying is getting worse, not better in the U.S., despite predictions to the contrary. But you also see it coming out, and this is both cause and effect, in the side-hustle economy, where people are going, you know what, I don't just have to do what I do nine to five. There are other things I can do enabled by technology platforms, by Airbnb that allow people to create experiences and sell them in their spare time, for example. So this trend is really interesting because it's changing the shape of the way we work, and it's changing the shape of some people and how they think of themselves. And that, of course, has an effect on the products and services we might want to sell them.

**Jill Standish [00:06:03]** Yeah, and just I think you're right, people have reevaluated how they spend their time and that has trickled down, especially to retailers, as they're looking to staff, their stores, their staff, their DC's, this labor reset is a big one. And I do think that hiring practices and making sure that the role of what your day to day role is in the store matters. And instead of being just a cashier, maybe you're being hired to be a brand ambassador, or a problem solver, or a designer, or a stylist. And those type of nuances, I think, is really important.

**Arthur Zackiewicz [00:06:42]** We talked about this before about the role of retailers that it's becoming. If you're a sales associate it becomes less transactive and more engaging with the customer. I think that's the only way to win, right, is you want to work for a brand or retailer that in a position that has meaning and purpose, right? That's so that's definitely changed. And I was
also thinking about, Mark, what you said about the great resignation. Maybe it was renamed. Maybe it should be called the great resentment because things have shifted and it's almost a kind of it's a permanent shift. I don't think it's going to go away anytime soon. But, there's a lot of, I come first, it's me and what's important to me, as opposed to kind of working for something outside of yourself, right?

**Jill Standish** [00:07:33] Yeah, I think you're absolutely right. And this next trend that we're going to talk about is also really meaningful and has a lot of really it's very apropos, given it this time. It's called the end of abundance thinking,

**Arthur Zackiewicz** [00:07:49] I like it already.


**Mark Curtis** [00:07:57] Yeah. You know, Jill, given that the context of this is retail, this is very, very relevant to retail. And what's really happening here is after a couple of years of dealing with all sorts of stuff going on around the world because of the virus over the last nine months, as everyone is super aware, we've had huge supply chain challenges. And, we can drill down into where those came from, they came from the Suez Canal, they came from a shortage of ships, they've come from a shortage of workers. The shortage of workers itself is a supply chain challenge. In terms of actually, where do I get the workers for my shops, etc., or my factories? But what we think is happening is that that is opening the door to people, reassessing a fundamental expectation about consumerism and consumption, which is that we've been, and I think people are coming up against this globally, we've worked for the last, probably since the Second World War, it off a fundamental assumption that we can always dig up more, we can always make more, we can always imagine more. We can always buy more and we can always consume more. What we've come up again, we came up over the last nine months against the reality that that is not the case. I talked to an Australian supermarket this week and they have a problem with the lack of staff, and they're not able to stock the shelves and they're running out of product. And that's don't underestimate the impact that is having on people both at the organizational level and also at the consumer level, because that's also being twinned with headlines around climate crisis. And we're really bringing those two things together here. And we think that what's happening is a window is being opened up for people to think about their fundamental assumptions around consumption in the context of I need to do something about the environment. Now, I know not everybody believes that that is the case, but actually the majority of people globally do. And it's rising, particularly if they're at the younger end of the market, where a global survey of 10,000 young people showed incredibly high levels of pessimism around this. So it may just be, and we put a question mark at the end of this trend deliberately. It may just be that we're at a place where there is a window open which we can step through that says, let's rethink some of our assumptions about the that it's always got that everything is abundant, and to actually reset the way in which we buy and sell and trade things in a different space. Probably one where we focus more on better, rather on more and more and more.

**Arthur Zackiewicz** [00:10:33] But Mark, I mean, how am I going to fill that empty space inside when, you know, when I can't do my retail therapy shopping. Is it, you know, how can you help?

**Mark Curtis** [00:10:43] Yeah, I mean, that is a, that is a great question. And the, we are not saying that this is something suddenly everybody is feeling everywhere, and that everyone has reset their expectations, and that their addiction to retail is going to go away. But we think it marks the beginning stage where we start questioning that, and some people will be moving away from it. And eventually, it will become a broader-based societal thing where we really do stop relying on mass consumption
endlessly and start thinking and rethinking our values. And in a way it’s related to the first one. People are rethinking their values about who they are, but they’re also rethinking their values, about what they consume. And the hassle we’ve had over the last nine months, I think, has just raised this big question mark, and also introduce people to the idea that they can go without certain things. It’s not an easy one, and I’m not pretending this trend is.

**Jill Standish [00:11:48]** Well, I think the businesses are responding. If, if indicated by the rise of the second-hand economy, the pre-loved economy, the pre-worn economy, and the upring of such businesses like Poshmark and Thread Up. And we’re seeing that that grow extremely fast. And I often look at consumer appeal around things like thrift. And thrift, when I was growing up, was very much a place where if you couldn’t afford something, you went to a thrift store. And now it’s becoming very much more like the word vintage and vintage is in vogue, I say. And so, you get these, especially with Gen Z, you get a lot of folks saying, listen, it is really cool to buy something pre-loved and pre-worn and vintage and gift that. I mean, that was part of some of the research we found during our holiday research. And I think that’s part of this abundance. You know, this resetting of you don’t always have to have more and new that you can borrow, rent, reuse. Look at what Levi’s is doing with their campaign around, wear them longer, by less. I mean, that to me, is amazing coming out from a retailer themselves saying, listen, wear them longer. Which is lovely.

**Mark Curtis [00:13:16]** You know, it’s interesting that that absolutely validates what we’re saying here.

**Arthur Zackiewicz [00:13:20]** I was going to say, thrifting is a verb, right? It’s a lifestyle now, right?

**Mark Curtis [00:13:27]** This goes to the heart of innovation as well. We typically, the default setting for innovation is let’s create new, but maybe the default innovation should, you know, for innovation if we can still do innovation, but we don’t just constantly have to think about new. We have to think about better or different.

**Jill Standish [00:13:42]** Yet companies like Urban Outfitters is a really good example. Now, they have retail, wholesale, thrift and rental all under an umbrella. I mean, so you can, you can for a subscription, lock in eight new or eight items per month or whatever it is. And listen, it is an amazing way of getting something fresh, but not actually buying it and putting it in a landfill. It’s a reusing economy coming up. It’s really interesting to watch this trend. Trend number three.

**Mark Curtis [00:14:19]** So trend number three is called the next frontier. And this is really about the metaverse. I mean, how could we not talk about the metaverse in 2022? It would have looked kind of deficient not to do so. I think, you know, most of the people we talk to are still struggling to understand what the metaverse is. So let me try and simplify. The Metaverse at the moment is a gas. There are a large number of technologies and other trends that are going to come together in the same space and represent the next big era of digital. That’s effectively what it is. It doesn’t really exist yet, but it is potentially enormously powerful. And there are three pieces to think about. Maybe four when we think about why it’s so powerful. The first is place. So, the metaverse, and this is, of course, very important for retailers, hugely important, that the metaverse, if it’s nothing else, is about place. Either anchored in the real world via augmented reality or actually anchored in this entirely its own world by virtual reality. The second P is population. There’s always people there, a bit like a shop. So, if there are people there is not
going to be much fun, but there are people there. And Peloton and Zwift are both from the fitness area. I think early prototype examples of the metaverse and what's critical, for example, in Zwift, which I use it's a cycling app, is that there are other cyclists there. If they're not there, I can tell you what happens when the internet drops, it's no fun. And then the third bit, again, this is really relevant to retail. The third piece, property. So you can own things in the metaverse. Now, I defy you to tell me that you look at websites and apps and say, well, I own something here. You don't. The property is a thing in the metaverse, particularly via NFTs. And that's very powerful because that introduces the idea of scarcity. It introduces the ideas of supply and demand. It introduces the ability to price things in different ways. NFT is, of course, also allowed you to code things so they change over time, so their values can change over time as well. So those three P's are really what I would call the three P's of the metaverse. And I think the best and simplest way to think about it, you could kind of add a fourth, which is purpose. You're going there for a reason like I go to a shop for a reason. You're going to need a reason to go to the Metaverse. And the reason had better be better than tell me all about this brand because frankly, that's not very interesting. And we went through that at the beginning of the internet 25 years ago, like all the early websites were, let's show off our brand. And then two years later and we went, and that's not very interesting. Now let's do something which is functionally more meaningful.

Jill Standish [00:17:23] Yeah. And I think the myth that we need to bust here, if we were going to bust a myth, is that this metaverse is really only for gaming. And maybe that's going to be a first place that we see a lot of metaverse, let's say, activity and joiners, et cetera. I mean, there's all great examples that come sort of in the gaming because that is a communal group of people that have been playing in a virtual world together. But what I'm seeing and I'm curious, Arthur, is your opinion. I'm seeing companies say I need to jump in because that's where people are.

Arthur Zackiewicz [00:18:03] Yeah, you have. Yeah, right? You have to go where the eyeballs are right or so. Right. But you're right. I think I think Bill Gates, right. He said recently, maybe a month ago, that he expects within three years that most business meetings and interactions and events trade shows, for example, will take place in the Metaverse, right? So it's not even built yet. And here we are trying to find, okay, what is the purpose?

Jill Standish [00:18:27] Yeah. And I mean, we in Accenture hired a lot of folks this past year, and traditionally we have them join and go off to a training facility to get to know the firm and get to know each other. And because we couldn't do that in the pandemic, we sent these folks headsets and said, join in, get to know your team. And, now I know it's not the same, I mean, Arthur, I would love to have a drink with you in a bar and sit next to you and have a conversation. But if we can't do that, maybe it's a lot easier to do these things through this augmented reality, extended reality. And in addition to that, I'm seeing that this augmented reality or extend to reality is actually meeting physical places so you could get something in the metaverse that would unlock a physical activity. So it's almost like to me thinking about new ways of loyalty. If you have a non-fungible token that allows you to get into a concert and the concert is real. That, to me, is blending both the physical and digital world. And I think that's an indication for retailers to think, how does my brand show up there? How do how does my fan base interact with me there? And I think that's the kind of the implication I'm considering with retail.

Mark Curtis [00:19:47] There is another p here which is portability. So, you know, you're going to need to be able to say, everyone's talking about the facts. If there are different instantiations of the metaverse and there will be, then you'll need to be able to carry the thing that you have from one to another and you, yourself, your imagery will need to be consistent between one and another. But Jill, I've just realized listening to you. There's also portability issue between Real World and the Metaverse. And I
think that that's a really interesting idea that how do you create that portability between the thing that you, you go and do digitally and the thing that you're doing in the real world? And then where they blend together, we're going to have to have portability there. And I think experimenting with that will be really important for retailers and product companies over the next couple of years.

**Jill Standish** [00:20:38] Yeah. And back to this abundance thing we were talking about, ESG and sustainability and this abundance thinking, perhaps this metaverse and owning things digitally and trading them digitally will help there because I think the raw materials are not being used. The pretty simple concept, right? It's a digital, it's a digital asset versus a physical one. And that could also have implications for cost of goods sold, profitability. It's just a different way to think about it. Right?

**Mark Curtis** [00:21:14] It's exactly right. We positioned these trends next to each other deliberately because there is that juxtaposition. Just at a point when we're thinking about, do we really have to do, we can we really go on believing in eternal abundance in the real world? The Metaverse opens up the opportunity, infinite possibilities to do different things.

**Jill Standish** [00:21:34] I mean, I want to have real clothing just so just so, you know, I don't want to have virtual clothing, but my avatar is going to look really cool. That's all I can say. As head of retail, I'm going to make sure I've got a cool avatar. So let's go on to trends number four, which is this much is true. So, Mark, talk a little bit about this one.

**Mark Curtis** [00:21:57] There's an interesting start point to this, which is that Google started 24 years ago, and if you think about it, Google has turned us all into machines for making questions. We just ask way more questions than we did 25 years ago, and I don't think I need to prove that we just do you know the phone, if you're in a family, the phone is at the table at dinnertime and that creates arguments. Why? Because frequently people will pick it up and say, oh yeah, I can look that up. Let's find out. And that's a human norm now. And it means that we're asking all of these questions all of the time. When we get close to buying something the range of questions that we are asking is expanding. So in a really simplistic way, it used to be, how much does it cost and what does it do? And maybe what size is it? But now we've got other questions like, can I buy now and pay later? Or how sustainable is this? What's his carbon impact or how is this made? Did anyone suffer, have this made? And these expanding role of questions which are increasingly preoccupying people are becoming very important, so just to zero in on one of those, which is the carbon zero one. So there are no standards at the moment where you can actually approach the product and say this television or this jacket or this bunch of bananas, you know, give me some standard that tells me how these have been created, but people increasingly have these questions in their heads. So we see this as a massive and really fascinating design challenge over the next five years, which is how do we then provide the information for customers at or near the point of sale? I'm choosing my words carefully here, both online and offline. And they're going to be the same, remember, because you've got to be consistent in what you say. How do we provide that information and how do we layer it up, and how do we give it to Jill? Whose questions on this will be different from Arthur. So we all approach with our own bundle of questions, but we will expect those questions to be answered increasingly. There's one more thing on this before I finish on it which is, this is where this is both the commerce trend, but is also a trend about trust, and we have to be able to triangulate trust. And again, literally today I've seen some research that shows that people, when they're looking for information from brands, particularly around sustainability, want the information from the brand but they need some kind of third party triangulation on that so that they can really trust that it's real. So that then suggests not only a design challenge but also a challenge for organizations to work with other parties to bring their information to bear so that
what they say is trustworthy and in an age where trust is going downhill sadly really rapidly, just check what the Edelman Trust Barometer says year after year, we really do need this.

**Jill Standish** [00:24:56] Yeah, I think there’s a couple of trends that I’m watching that kind of add to this, or maybe amplify it, which is how fast live streaming is going? And live streaming is a little bit of authenticity coming into, who do you trust? Because a lot of these micro-influencers are people just like you and I. And so if I can see you doing something live that has a level of authenticity, it’s not been doctored, it’s something that I can relate to, I can also ask questions of you. And so this idea of live streaming or live kind of micro-influencer economy that’s coming, Mark, is I think a really good example of people want to have the ability to ask questions to your point. And maybe this will be a trend that also cuts down on returns because you can ask questions like, Hey, how does it fit? Is it really tight? Gosh, that fabric it looks on, on the website, it looks a little rough. Is it rough? So there’s this really kind of cool technology trend around live streaming that I think can actually be adding to this trend, but also helping with some environmental issues around returns and waste. But also, you know, helping with profitability because maybe people will be a lot more inquisitive and get really what they want and know that it’s going to be OK.

**Mark Curtis** [00:26:23] I think that this is particularly important for Gen Z, right? As the parent of Gen Z teenager, she’s skeptical by nature and I think when they’re asking questions to your point, Jill, is there going to be asking the questions that are important to them? So for one consumer, it could be, you know, size and fit and fabric. For another group it could be, was this ethically produced? Is it a socially responsible product that I’m that I’m buying? So it’s, you know, you have to be on your game, you have to be ready to answer all of those questions.

**Jill Standish** [00:26:58] Yeah. Instead of reading reviews from strangers, which is what kind of we came from in this kind of e-commerce world, now it’s a micro-influencer that looks like you, that you can relate to, and it’s a two-way dialog. Those two things I think are really super interesting and how fast live streaming is picking up. So, Mark, yeah, which leads me to the last one, and you’re right, you put these in order on purpose. Speaking about authenticity, handle with care is number five.

[00:27:29] Yeah. So, when we did that research that I talked about earlier, when we were doing the pattern recognition, there was this word that kept popping up more than any other word. Maybe trust was the other word that came across big time this year. But care was this word that just kept coming up. And when we read what people were saying, you know, the penny dropped that care has really moved center stage over the last couple of years. And that’s all about kindness and compassion, and it’s one of the things that’s a defining quality of humans. Now there are many different aspects of care. You’ve got the challenges of caring. You’ve got the cost and role of careers, those who become much more visible and much more widely discussed. I mentioned the Olympics earlier on Swap Daily, let’s shift to a U.S. athlete, Simone Biles, you know, who very bravely basically withdrew from some parts of the Tokyo Olympic Games because she wanted to take care of her mental health in a really high profile situation that she was taking care. And I think that was again, a sort of zygote moment for why care really matters. So when we think about care, we can see that there’s self-care. That’s what Simone Biles was doing. And in my country, for example, 87 percent of H.R. leaders have seen more employees disclosing issues around mental health over the last year. There’s care for others. So, those that take care of others just taken on way more responsibilities on top of often busy lives, pre-pandemic, because services for those they cared for were reduced or disrupted and others could mean relatives. But actually, that can mean other workers as well, and care professionals themselves. So we’ve seen a sharp rise in issues for all of those categories. And then the third area is the rise in care for employees. So we’ve been adding more care
work into employment. Like other businesses in 2021, Accenture notably hired a Chief Health Officer. That’s about care and about worrying about staff. It kind of goes back to our first trend about come as you are. So, we see care as being something that businesses increasingly need to design into their systems. They need to think about absolutely every day. But let’s be clear, there’s opportunity here as well. I think there is opportunity to create and self-care and use care as a differentiator.

**Jill Standish** [00:30:04] Yeah, I. One of the things that we noticed throughout this whole series when Arthur and I have been interviewing folks, is how all of us have changed as leaders over the last two years. And we all became a lot more empathetic, a lot more understanding, a lot more caring. And part of that is a) your work is now your home. And so, I'm zooming into your home and talking to you right now and if I hear a dog barking or a baby crying or a doorbell ringing, I know that I’m zooming into your home and you can see people differently now. And the empathy word I’m hearing a lot that we’ve all been kind of changed. And I think it’s a good thing. So this is me spinning this word care is a real positive one in that we are more empathetic and I'm a lot more understanding of my team when I dial into their home and I see through a screen visually the stress or I hear kids trying to do schooling from home, that also plays out in retail because all these leaders are trying to keep their teams motivated and they know that everyone's going through difficulty and we've all been. This was a very human moment for the past two years. And I think, hopefully we’re going to come out of this and we won’t go back to a world where we didn’t care as much and people could be replaceable. And we weren't as understanding of people’s, you know what they were kind of balancing with their home life. So, I'm looking at it as a positive.

**Arthur Zackiewicz** [00:31:41] The yeah, the soft skills such as empathy of becoming, you know, the forefront of leadership executive leadership skills. We're going to be running out of time. So, I just want to make sure that we cover everything, and if we could wrap up to some closing thoughts would be great. But Mark, a true to form handle with care is indeed the Traveling Wilbury's song. So you stuck to the music? One of my favorite songs. Anyway, so yeah, if you guys could kind of just have some closing thoughts and we'll wrap it up. Mark, do you want to go first?

**Mark Curtis** [00:32:18] Yeah, OK. So when you put all of this together, the stuff that we’ve been thinking about here. Our view is that the whole fabric of life is shifting right now. And, individually, the trends, I hope are interesting. But when you put them together and start thinking about them as a set, then you think about the challenge we have with the way we frame consumption around abundance, the way in which we're shifting, the way in which we think about ourselves as people, the opportunities potentially created by the Metaverse. The rise of care as a thing that is in the foreground in our heads and the need and the way in which we create trust around information. Put those together. We're talking about a resetting of lots of different relationships. Relationships with each other. Relationships with employers. Relationships with employees. That’s a big shift in what we call the fabric of life.

**Jill Standish** [00:33:17] Yeah, and it kind of the great summary for me to add onto that. You did such a nice job, Mark, is it absolutely plays with our narrative to the market around retail, which is this was retail's responsible reset. And at those three words, retail responsible reset, to me means that companies are rethinking what they're doing and they're resetting, but they're doing it with a responsible lens because it's a very human industry that we're in.

**Arthur Zackiewicz** [00:33:47] Jill and Mark, thank you so much. Thank you for listening. This was a special kind of bonus issue, so I hope it was valuable. I found it fascinating and I took a lot of notes. And we'll see you next time on The WWD Voices. And thank you Accenture for partnering with us on this. A great series.
Jill Standish [00:34:04] Thank you.

Arthur Zackiewicz [00:34:05] Thank you.

Closing [00:34:07] Ready. Reset. Grow. Accenture helps retailers around the globe embrace change to seize the future. Learn about the five imperatives of retailers responsible reset and how leading retailers are partnering with Accenture at Accenture.com/retail