



CONTENTS

03 DOING GOOD: THE NEW CORPORATE IMPERATIVE

04 DATA IS THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS SOCIAL OUTCOMES

06 BE CRYSTAL CLEAR ABOUT OUTCOMES

- 06 Start with the end goal
- 08 Ask the key questions and launch the data-discovery process
- 08 Taking a broader ecosystem and policy view
- 09 Focus on outcomes first

11 MAP YOUR ECOSYSTEM

- 11 The inside-out approach
- 12 The outside-in approach
- 12 Leverage the power of the ecosystem

15 EXPAND DATA CAPACITY, EXPERTISE AND INSIGHTS

- 16 Building dynamic solutions with data
- 16 Creating a cadre of managerial expertise
- 17 Effectively communicating the impact

17 MAKE ETHICS YOUR DEFAULT

- 18 Emphasize a values-oriented approach
- 18 Mitigate risks
- 20 Apply advanced techniques to protect privacy

21 JOIN IN THE POLICY CONVERSATION

22 CONCLUSION: YOUR POWER TO DO GOOD RESTS ON THE DATA

24 REFERENCES

Social value has become a driver of both business performance and a range of intangible assets, such as customer loyalty and brand relevance. Businesses must play a critical role in helping to address unprecedented social and environmental challenges around the world. But they can only fully understand and combat these issues if they have the right data, and know how to use it. Accenture has identified five principles, outlined in this report, which help businesses to shape an effective strategy for gathering, assessing, and using data for good.

DOING GOOD: THE NEW CORPORATE IMPERATIVE

Businesses must work in new ways to address the unprecedented challenges the world now faces. People, companies, governments, organizations and communities will need to come together to address critical issues ranging from the future of work and climate change to equality, human rights and responsible innovation.

The need for change was highlighted in August 2019 when the Business Roundtable, a group of **181 chief executives** from some of the world's largest and most successful companies, agreed on a revised statement on the purpose of a corporation.¹

For years, the group had endorsed the principle of shareholder primacy (in other words, that corporations exist to serve shareholders above all). This time, however, was different. In a significant shift reflecting the individual policies of member companies, the CEOs agreed their core purpose also now included investing in their employees, protecting the environment, supporting the communities in which they work, and dealing fairly and ethically with their suppliers.

This growing corporate trend to combine social value with business value has been put into overdrive by the global COVID-19 pandemic. As the healthcare, economic and humanitarian emergency spread around the world, business leaders have had to act quickly. Flexible work practices have been adopted to protect and help employees and their households, as well as new platforms that are designed to help people move easily into new roles where there is the most need for their skills and experience*. At the same time, operations and supply chains have been rapidly repurposed to meet sudden spikes in demand and help communities manage the crisis.

Balancing shareholder interests with employee, partner, community, and social interests has been a priority for CEOs for some time. But the pandemic has brought the need for this equilibrium into even sharper focus. It is, however, often easier said than done. Some are succeeding: in 2018, for example, **Unilever's Sustainable Living brands grew 69 percent faster than the rest of the business, delivering 75 percent of the company's growth.**² And Accenture has identified numerous other examples, including initiatives from Mastercard, LinkedIn, and Barclays.³

Many more, however, are struggling to find the right balance. What's going wrong? There are a range of contributory factors, including everything from regulatory barriers to inflexible corporate structures. But our research indicates the primary barrier is something most companies likely haven't realized: **the data**.

DATA IS THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS SOCIAL OUTCOMES

Consider social and environmental ills like pollution, poverty, homelessness, and hunger. Or the exclusion of people with physical or mental health challenges from the workforce. To proactively impact these issues, companies can include social responsibility in their core business. It does not have to be a secondary initiative. To achieve this, data is vital. Companies can only fully understand and combat these issues if they have the necessary data. But this data is often not readily available, or is only partially available. And if you don't have the right data, it can be highly misleading. Your data might show high unemployment in one region and a lack of skills in another, for example. But if you don't also know that the people without jobs are unwilling to relocate, you're likely to draw the wrong conclusions about what could be done.⁴

Having the data is one thing, knowing how to use it is another. Lacking an understanding of what the data shows (and hides) in the context of social challenges, many organizations struggle to identify with confidence where and how to intervene to bring about positive social change while also growing the business and profits. On that uncertain foundation, they struggle to build a viable business model.

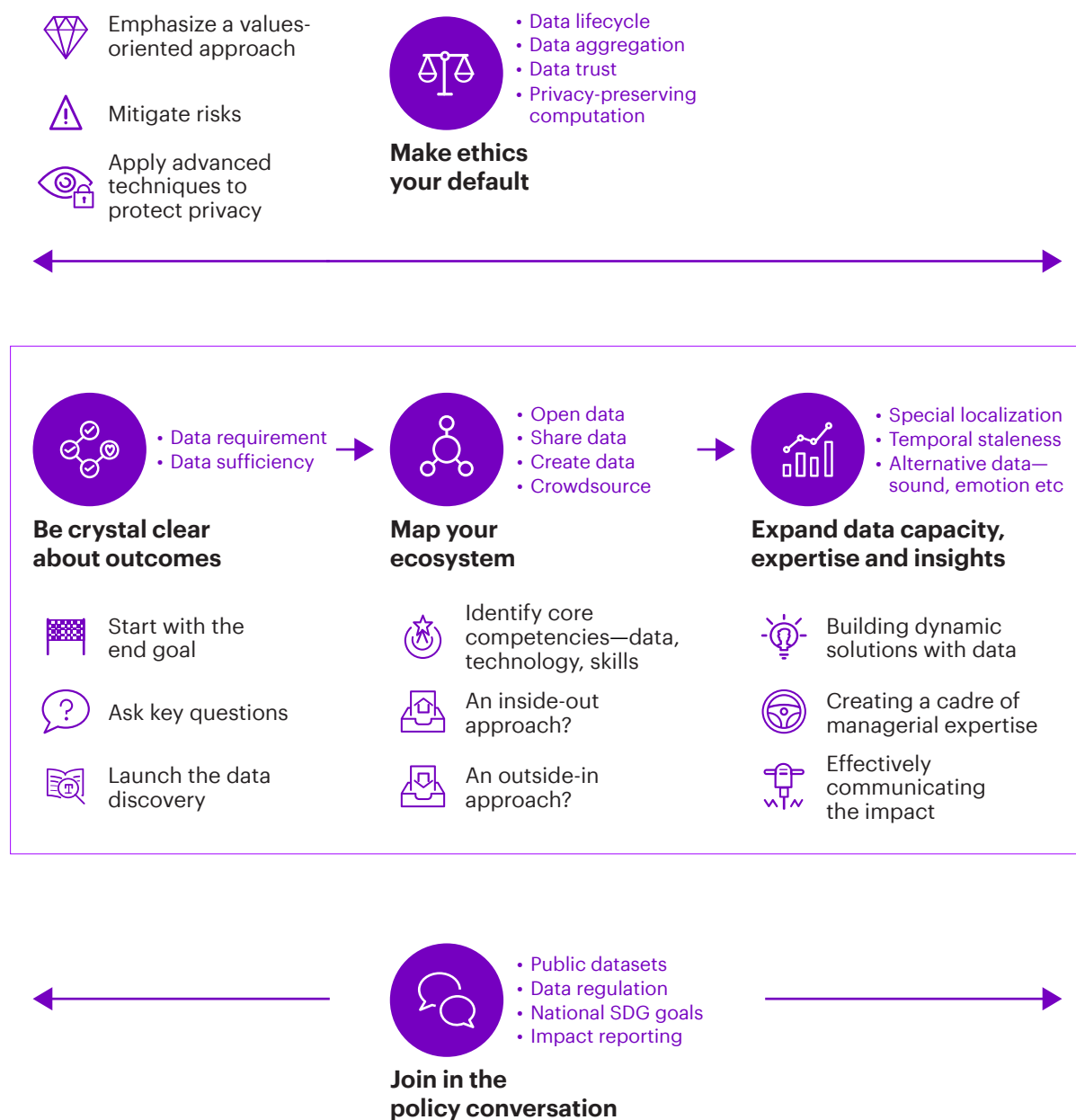
They also struggle to assess the respective strengths of (and potential for collaboration with) other companies, nonprofits and government agencies. They can't advocate effectively for policy and regulatory support. And ultimately, they can't quantify progress, which means they can't present compelling results to stakeholders including shareholders, potential investors, customers and employees.

A comprehensive **data-for-good strategy** helps solve these problems. And our research has identified five key principles for building such a strategy. Based on an analysis of numerous initiatives (including many implemented by Accenture Labs) and interviews with a range of C-level experts from the corporate and nonprofit sectors, these principles help position data as a key enabler for activating and sustaining purpose-based business growth and other social change initiatives.

The five principles are:

- ① Be crystal clear about outcomes**
- ② Map your ecosystem**
- ③ Expand data capacity, expertise and insights**
- ④ Make ethics your default**
- ⑤ Join in the policy conversation.**

Figure 1: The five principles of a data-for-good strategy



Let's consider each of these in turn.

① BE CRYSTAL CLEAR ABOUT OUTCOMES

While they are not competing values, companies do not necessarily see shareholder value and social value as complementary outcomes. Company leaders need to start at the end by articulating the outcomes they seek (purpose). This, in turn, helps identify the relevant **performance indicators** to measure success. Companies also need to develop a set of key questions that will guide a robust **data-discovery process**.

Most companies don't do this. In fact, while **84 percent** of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development's **159 corporate members** reference Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), just **15 percent** indicate targets linked to those goals, and a mere **6 percent** align their key performance indicators (KPIs) accordingly.⁵

As Kevin Desouza, Professor of Business, Technology and Strategy Management at the QUT School of Business, has explained: "Companies are accustomed to beginning with the output and working forward because they need to know how much they can make from any given product. They're not thinking about whether their 'customers' are going to make money. To tackle social problems, we must begin from the outcome and work backwards."⁶

➤ Start with the end goal

By starting with the outcomes it seeks, the company can home in on the data that matters. Otherwise, even if it deploys the latest and fastest data-gathering technologies, it will lack a way to determine what's relevant and what's not. As Lisa Neuberger Fernandez, Managing Director, Strategy and Innovation at Accenture, says: "If the goal is transformational change, it is critical to start with the intended social outcome in mind and then to work back to which technologies can be applied to address the challenge instead of the other way around. By starting with the end goal, it is also easier to convene the right partners who are committed for the long term to see that result come to life."

Take Essilor International, a company based in France that designs, manufactures and markets lenses to correct or protect eyesight. Its executives began with very high-level data showing that poor vision is the most widespread unaddressed disability, **affecting an estimated one-third of the global population, with 90 percent of those affected living below the poverty line in developing countries**.

If current trends continue, **6.6 billion** people will experience refractive error by **2050**. While **3.4 billion** of them will likely afford corrected vision, **3.2 billion** will face affordability, access and awareness challenges.⁷

With this data, the executives could articulate Essilor's purpose—to eliminate poor vision within a generation—and translate that purpose into key targets and performance indicators.⁸



► Ask the key questions and launch the data-discovery process

With the outcomes articulated, the company can begin to think about how and where the business can progress toward the goals it seeks. By asking itself some key questions, the company is better able to focus on gathering the relevant data in the right quantities. Essilor, for example, asked:

- **What is the true cost of uncorrected vision?**
- **What are the key barriers to achieving the goal by 2050?**
- **What is the investment required to achieve this vision by 2050?**
- **What ecosystem support is needed to achieve this goal?**

Realizing that data from a single source would not be detailed enough, Essilor adopted a collaborative partnership model to pool data and knowledge. This **data-discovery** process helped the company quantify the potential lost productivity to the global economy due to poor vision at **\$272 billion**.⁹

Essilor also learned that the primary barriers to addressing the problem include awareness, affordability, access, government programs and data. And that freeing the world from uncorrected poor vision by 2050 will take nearly **\$14 billion** in funding, including support for sustainable access points (**\$2.4 billion**), innovation to create affordable products (**\$0.7 billion**), and subsidized or free services (**\$6.2 billion**).

► Taking a broader ecosystem and policy view

Essilor quickly realized this endeavor wasn't one they could take on alone. So, as well as looking to develop a new range of affordable products, they began building a coalition for change. That included setting up a multi-stakeholder **\$1 billion Vision Catalyst Fund** to expand access to universal eye healthcare. Essilor also set up its own **Vision for Life™** social impact fund, a strategic giving program to support sustainable vision care programs and infrastructure for **2.7 billion** people living with poor vision. Additionally, Essilor now offers a Base-of-the-Pyramid Fellowship to engage young people to collaborate with the company on research projects for social impact in their communities.

Finally, to overcome the data and policy advocacy barrier, **Essilor developed a grant program to create and support the Vision Impact Institute. One of the Institute's early victories: the State of New Jersey approved a bill in May 2019 mandating a comprehensive eye examination by January 1 of a child's first year of enrollment in school.** The Institute also maintains a repository of data and research which is sourced from a variety of organizations and open to researchers, scientists and the general public.

➤ Focus on outcomes first

The key lesson from Essilor's experience? The best way to make the biggest impact is to define the social objective, and then work back to the interventions needed to achieve it. This approach will broaden and deepen your understanding of the challenge. It will also strengthen your ability to envision and develop effective interventions. These could include developing a new line of products, assembling a coalition for change and/or advocating policy changes. They could also include changing suppliers, establishing relationships with new partners, or entering new markets.

Starting at the end also helps you figure out what kind of data you need, where it can be obtained (whether that's deep inside your own organization, open-sourced, or purchased from external vendors) and where you need to share and combine data with other organizations.



HOW AKSHAYA PATRA USED DATA AND TECHNOLOGY AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER

Akshaya Patra, the foundation that runs the world's largest mid-day meal program, articulates its purpose as **"No child shall be deprived of education because of hunger."** The foundation began in 2000, serving mid-day meals to **1,500 students** in five government schools. Today it serves over 1.8 million children in **16,856** schools. By 2025, it intends to reach **5 million** children.

To help translate this vision into reality, Accenture Labs collaborated with Akshaya Patra, working backwards from its goal to articulate the challenge in detail and in context. Key questions included:

- **How can we transform Akshaya Patra's kitchens to prepare more meals with existing resources?**
- **How can we ensure children are receiving nutritious meals?**
- **How can we better monitor meal production, food delivery and supplies?**
- **How can we build trust with stakeholders?**

The subsequent data discovery process included gathering feedback from children and school leaders. It also involved tapping new data sources. The schools' kitchen staff, for example, proved to be a rich source of qualitative information about operations. Converting that human intelligence into machine-relevant data required Internet of Things (IoT) sensors (to monitor and sequence the cooking process, including energy use), blockchain (to gather feedback digitally) and mobile devices (to integrate every touch point).

Based on the data discovered, Akshaya Patra launched a pilot program that converted increased productivity into nearly 2 million extra meals per year per kitchen.



2 MAP YOUR ECOSYSTEM

Few companies can hope to achieve large-scale social impact purely on their own. Overcoming societal challenges requires an ecosystem, often including governments, nonprofits, startups and even competitors. This will be new territory for companies whose focus has traditionally been on public shareholders, boards of directors, and capital providers.

To begin, company leaders need to consider their data through two lenses: their own core competence, and how that competence can, in combination with the broader ecosystem, achieve their desired outcomes.

Take Mastercard's Center for Inclusive Growth. The Center, which is a nonprofit arm distinct from the Mastercard Foundation, seeks to **"advance sustainable and equitable economic growth and financial inclusion around the world."** It has three "inherited" core competences: large-scale individualized spending data; the analytical skills of its workforce; and MasterCard's large investment in digital technologies for financial inclusion.

On their own, these competencies benefit both MasterCard's business and its social stakeholders. However, in combination with other entities with similar social goals, they allow the Center to have a greater impact, enabling both an "inside-out" and an "outside-in" approach to economic and financial inclusion.

► The inside-out approach

The Center's Inclusive Growth Map, available online with open access, uses data from more than **37 million** people across the United States to provide a clear view of the economic opportunity available in each city block in the country.¹⁰ With this information, the Center can influence investors, developers, urban planners, economic development corporations, local and city governments, mayors, and a variety of market participants, such as potential retail entrepreneurs and companies, to revitalize neighborhoods.

In the City of New Orleans, for example, certain neighborhoods lagged far behind others in recovering after Hurricane Katrina. The Center was able to highlight the opportunities for retail in those neighborhoods and, two years later, they had seen a **200 percent increase in economic activity and spending behavior.**

The choice to share data in this way is not easy for companies and requires alignment from leaders at the absolute top of the organization to use their proprietary data for effecting social change.

➤ The outside-in approach

The Center has also helped community development financial institutions (CDFIs). When an analysis found that CDFIs were either stagnating or retreating, the Center dug deeper and identified a clear need for modernization and access to capital. Based on a detailed analysis of how entrepreneurs were accessing funds from financial institutions in specific geographies, the Center then began to provide access to technology and application programming interfaces (APIs) to help CDFIs participate more aggressively in those financial markets.

At present, there is relatively scarce evidence of companies mapping ecosystems to scout out opportunities for collaborative impact.¹¹ **Partnerships to support SDG goals are a low priority among many of the top 500 global companies.**¹² But examples of this kind of collaboration do exist. Loop, a global recycling service developed by TerraCycle, is partnering with companies like Unilever, Nestle and P&G to build a zero-waste platform. It means consumers can get some of the most popular products in brand-specific reusable packaging. Loop arranges for both delivery and empty package pick-up, replenishing the product as soon as the container is returned. Prices are equivalent to in-store items, and manufacturers have the option of designing their own packaging. The platform is also a huge opportunity for manufacturers to learn more about their customers through the data generated by the subscription model.

Alibaba Cloud has launched the “**Tech for Change**” initiative to inspire young entrepreneurs and startups to team up with large enterprises to solve global challenges.¹³ One example of this is its partnership with **iamtheCODE (an African movement to mobilize organizations on STEAMED education) to enable 1 million young women from marginalized communities to learn to code through free training and access to cloud computing resources.**

➤ Leverage the power of the ecosystem

To make a real impact at scale, you need to analyze the ecosystem interdependences, identifying both the complementarities and potential bottlenecks. You need to ask: Where does the data reside? What constraints do frontline workers face? How can we engage with the communities in which we want to operate? What kind of partners do we need to achieve our goals? What role can government agencies play in achieving the impact we seek? These questions will give rise to others. The answers will reveal opportunities for effective action.



MAPPING THE ECOSYSTEM TO PREVENT HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND CHILD MARRIAGE

When organizations find the data they need is missing, incomplete or hidden, they sometimes have to construct it themselves. This was the situation **Accenture Labs and the Child in Need Institute (CINI) found themselves in when they partnered to help eliminate the trafficking of girls and reduce instances of child marriage.**

The data on trafficking and child marriage had no core source. Some information, including education and health data on female children, existed within disparate government departments, which made it difficult to access and integrate. Household data, meanwhile, was limited to outdated information from census reports.

To capture the data needed, Accenture Labs and CINI first conducted a large-scale survey. They used this to develop an app called **“GPower,”** which helps field workers assess the risks faced by individual girls, villages and districts, assigning each a vulnerability score.

To develop effective interventions, the team looked at the ecosystem. For example, the field workers who would be using the app often work in environments with limited connectivity and compute resources.

They also needed real-time information on government programs and schemes available to support vulnerable children. So Accenture and CINI made GPower available on tablets and smartphones capable of analyzing the information entered by field workers on the go. The app also generates each vulnerability score at the edge (on the mobile device) to help inform decision-making in the field.

CINI follows up on these activities with a centralized analysis (via the cloud) of millions of records. It then provides community facilitators with details about available support for each affected girl, and any additional mitigation steps needed.



③ EXPAND DATA CAPACITY, EXPERTISE AND INSIGHTS

To use data to meet both social and business goals, most companies will need to develop or acquire new data science expertise. That includes understanding not only the changing spatial and temporal aspects of data for building dynamic solutions, but also how to combine different types of data—voice, vision, emotion, etc—for greater insight.

TRANSFORMING NATURE CONSERVATION WITH AUDIO ANALYTICS

In partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society India, **Accenture Labs developed a solution using artificial intelligence and audio analytics to detect the presence of endangered species by analyzing recordings of jungle sounds.** Giving conservationists “ears” in the wild is important because it is often difficult to “sight” endangered animals. Further, tracking endangered species by sound can work well in habitats that are difficult to access, whether that’s deep forest or underwater. The partners are also working to extend the solution to endangered marine animals, such as the dugong.



➤ Building dynamic solutions with data

Consider how Facebook is using **multiple data sources** in disaster management.¹⁴ Starting with the vast amount of data generated by the network when a disaster occurs, the company adds other data layers, including satellite imagery and census data, to increase its relevance. This way, it gains a more granular understanding of what the data means. Facebook's algorithm can then track the location of those affected by the disaster, their movements and their ability to access functioning cellular networks.

To closely monitor the temporal and spatial features of its data, Facebook updates its aggregate data every eight hours for a period of 14 days after a disaster strikes. The company also performs spatial aggregation and smoothing by grouping clusters by the weighted average of the population over 360,000 square-meter tiles.

Facebook has similarly launched several tools and initiatives to help the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁵ The company's COVID-19 Symptom Map, for example, invites users to take surveys conducted by universities to forecast the spread of COVID-19 and help researchers and policy makers improve their response to it. High-resolution population density maps drawn from census data and satellite imagery have already helped the World Bank plan for better resource allocation in Spain. Four types of disease prevention maps provide greater insights into the spread of infection and movement of people across geographic locations. For example, the Institute of Disease Modelling used Facebook's Movement Maps (tracking the movement of people based on their use of Facebook on their mobile phones) to inform its transmission forecasts for the State of Washington.

➤ Creating a cadre of managerial expertise

Increasing the data maturity of an organization needs committed managers as well as data science expertise. Take Kshama Alur, the founder of Better Alternative and a former senior executive at Unilever, where she worked on sustainability issues. As she has explained, **"Moving from what you call theory of change to the key performance indicators is already a big step for companies. I would say only a small number of companies do that well. Then, to be able to invest in data capacity and quality experimentation, and drill all of it into the business and the brand, takes a very, very committed program."**¹⁶

She cites Unilever as having been at the forefront of this approach for a decade. Paul Polman, the former CEO of Unilever, put the idea of doing good at the very heart of the entire business. For every project, large or small, project managers had to consider what the impact would be on the SDGs, negative or positive. This seemingly small change had a significant impact on company culture, with business managers thinking more deeply about how to track data and measure change. In contrast, some major multinational brands still measure the impact of their programs in terms of money spent.

➤ Effectively communicating the impact

Smart companies know that a key part of doing good is showing what you've done. This means developing or acquiring the ability to evaluate and monitor the social impact of the company's activities—and communicate the results in a clear and persuasive way.

As the United Nations Global Index Institute (UNGSI) analysis shows, **just 21 of the world's top 500 companies** received positive or neutral coverage from financial analysts on their SDG commitments in 2018. The rest were either ignored or received negative coverage.¹⁷

Without clear communication, based on reliable data, the benefits of social programs won't be realized. Companies can find themselves in the odd position 10 or 20 years down the line of not being able to communicate what they achieved as a brand, and whether the effort was worth it.

Contrast that with Unilever's approach. The company's Sustainable Living Plan includes descriptions of the social challenges the company is addressing, key performance indicators over time, and the role of ecosystem partners in achieving these outcomes. All of these are presented at the company's Sustainable Living Report Hub and accessible via an interactive module, along with three-year summaries of progress.

④ MAKE ETHICS YOUR DEFAULT

Data for good requires a sustained focus on ethics. **While access and participation generate economic activity, it's essential for managers to continuously check for biases.** Otherwise the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning-based algorithms can change data intended for good into the opposite.

Harvard professor Latanya Sweeney's work in the area of "re-identification" of individuals from "anonymized" patient data illustrates this point.¹⁸ As she has explained, **sharing patient data results in several benefits for society, including the better assessment of patient safety, hospitals and physician performance, and the impact of laws designed to protect people (such as those requiring motorcycle riders to wear helmets). But her work has also shown how individuals can be re-identified from publicly available de-identified patient information, a finding that has resulted in several policy changes in the US to increase privacy protections.**

➤ Emphasize a values-oriented approach

The real challenge of ensuring your company puts ethics first is not a lack of guiding values. It's keeping an open mind and being ready to change safeguards in line with the evolution of technology and the ability of algorithms to intensify pre-existing, often unconscious biases.

This requires a values-oriented approach to data. In a company that seeks to improve social or environmental conditions, executives need to constantly assess the trade-off between a profit-oriented and a value-oriented approach. Too often, however, incentive structures lead them to favor profit over social value. To address this effectively, companies need to ensure that their policies, including the criteria by which they assess manager performance, support their values.

➤ Mitigate risks

Data is often not collected for a social purpose. Sharing or accessing data collected in another context can run into numerous barriers, including regulations such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

But there are ethical ways to access or disseminate data. One is to use aggregated data, as Mastercard and Facebook have done, although in other situations this is not always useful, especially when more granular insights are needed. Another option is to provide models developed on large datasets, allowing other organizations to develop solutions for social good without violating individual privacy. The caveat there is that such models must be constantly updated.

Data trusts are a more recent trend. Creating a data trust essentially means giving a nonprofit organization the right to host data and the obligation to defend that data and the interests of the people whose data it is. These data trusts can help companies overcome the challenge of creating special data use agreements with high transaction costs.

One example is the Benefits Data Trust in the United States. This trust leverages cross-agency data along with individual client data to connect people to the public benefits they are eligible to receive. Recently, given the hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Benefits Data Trust also created an **SMS chatbot powered by customer engagement platform Twilio to assist students in filling out college application forms and help them apply for grants, loans and scholarships.**¹⁹



➤ Apply advanced techniques to protect privacy

Maintaining the right balance in questions of ethics and privacy is not always easy. What's more, some companies will have a legal requirement to share data about their customers in certain circumstances. Telecom companies in some countries, for example, are required to share their customer data for emergency responses, although such **"lawful access"** is not always clearly defined, and this requirement is now being extended to include technology companies sharing cross-border data.²⁰ It will therefore become increasingly important for companies to deploy advanced techniques to gain the data insights they want.

Differential privacy is one such technique. Based on the **"Fundamental Law of Information Recovery,"** it aims to maintain individual privacy by infusing a certain amount of noise into the data. This is significantly better than anonymization, which in the words of Jim Fruchterman, the founder and CEO of Tech Matters, is **"a heuristic approach and not a mathematically sound, computer science approach."**²¹

Differential privacy belongs to a new family of privacy-preserving computation (PPC) techniques that are poised to significantly disrupt the enterprise data exchange space. These techniques all allow data to be jointly analyzed without sharing all aspects of that data. By using them, companies can better and more responsibly manage the data in their systems and the risks associated with sharing it, even when used beyond their borders.

Instead of focusing on protecting data from access by unauthorized parties, PPC techniques typically use encryption to represent data in a form that can be securely shared, analyzed and operated. For example, one PPC technique, secure multi-party computation (MPC) provides mechanisms for parties to jointly compute a function or run an operation on their input data without exposing their data. The protocol means that the parties' inputs remain secret, except for what is purposefully revealed by the intended results of the computation.

There are some live use cases currently using MPC approaches to solve real-world business problems. Accenture, for example, is working with semiconductor ecosystem parties to create a trusted, distributed way to share data using MPC and blockchain. Equipment manufacturers need data to deliver better solutions for their equipment, parts and services, and suppliers need to protect their data as well as data belonging to sub-tier suppliers and customer-restricted data. While blockchain provides traceability and control of data views, intellectual property (IP) issues are so severe that the equipment manufacturer that operates on raw data is reluctant to share data, even if the analytics processing never leaves the network. MPC will be able to solve this problem and enable trust and secure data sharing.²²

Ethical behaviors and a values-oriented approach, are needed to determine how data gets deployed in the social context. Data needs to be used to include and not to exclude, to protect and not to exploit people. With the increasing applicability of technology and data in everyday life, we also need a new approach to building trustworthy software. Even some state-of-the-art machine-learning applications, based on massive amounts of data, have turned out to be spectacular failures as they did not learn the underlying semantic concepts the way humans do.

5 JOIN IN THE POLICY CONVERSATION

Scaling up data-for-good initiatives almost always involves working with government at some level. It can be difficult for businesses to use the full power of their marketing and distribution channels for social good projects. As a result, **good ideas often flounder in the transition from the innovation lab to the real world.** Governments can act as enablers or partners to ensure that projects with promise get scaled and replicated across a geography. Governments also host large public datasets that can be tapped for key insights and connections by overlaying smaller datasets on top.

Companies need to be proactive in engaging with governments in shaping policies and regulations that affect their data-for-good initiatives, recognizing the importance of education as part of engagement to ensure policymakers understand value. For example, incentives in the form of tax subsidies or carbon credits have been a key influencer in the adoption of renewable energy. But, while regulation can be used to correct market deficiencies, it can also stifle innovation. Companies therefore need to be able to contribute to the ongoing debate on how changes in regulation and evolving technology impact data-for-good projects.

Participation in policy discussions is also important because of the need to align and bolster social good initiatives with national and international goals. Currently, very few companies show how their initiatives link with national goals. As for the SDGs, businesses are meant to be an important ally in achieving these goals, but there are currently no specific targets assigned to them. It is a purely voluntary process. However, as gaps between stated goals and actual achievements emerge and widen, governments may begin to stipulate specific targets for businesses and/or impose stronger review mechanisms for assessing their performance.

It would be far better for companies to be proactively engaged in an open dialogue with governments, and to fundamentally align their strategies with the broader goals. Companies that are transparent with government about their endeavors can engage in meaningful conversations about their ecosystem and help demonstrate their values and impact to their employees and customers.

This policy dialogue should also include voluntary reporting standards. Right now, there is no standardized format for SDG reporting. As a result, there is no way to assess the performance of companies against their SDG commitments. Some provide only very high-level information, while others have adopted UN Global Compact guidelines. Only a few align their reporting to specific targets and indicators. This issue is gaining attention, and businesses need to be sure they're included in the conversation.

CONCLUSION: YOUR POWER TO DO GOOD RESTS ON THE DATA

During the last decade, every company became a data company. But in the 2020s, with stakeholder capitalism in the ascendant, many businesses have a blind spot that could slow their return to growth: the lack of a strategic approach to data about societal impact. As Jim Fruchterman, founder and CEO of Tech Matters, put it, **“Data remains the immense underutilized asset in the for-good domain.”**²³

Using the five principles outlined at the start, businesses can develop a data strategy that begins to overcome the barriers to combining business value with social value. With crystal clarity on outcomes, they can start showing their stakeholders (including their customers) that they are making a difference. By mapping their ecosystem interdependencies, they can create coalitions for change. By creating a new cadre of expertise, they can embed sustainability and social good into the very core of the business. And by adopting an ethics-first approach, and getting engaged in policy conversations, they can better manage the risks, enhance trust, improve regulations, and maintain their license to operate.²⁴ These capabilities will be increasingly essential as companies look to realize their new and expanded corporate purpose of doing social good.

Technology, especially data and artificial intelligence, brings a fantastic opportunity to solve the world’s biggest problems. Those who don’t participate take the risk of alienating their employees and consumers. The question is not IF companies should do it. **The question is are companies adapting latest technologies fast enough and getting equipped with the right tools (including cloud, AI and privacy protection) to maximize the impact of data for social good?**



AUTHORS



SANJAY PODDER

Managing Director
Technology Innovation for Growth Markets
Accenture
sanjay.podder@accenture.com



SHALABH KUMAR SINGH

Thought Leadership Research Senior Principal
Accenture Research
shalabh.kumar.singh@accenture.com

CONTRIBUTORS



CLAIRE AUBERTIN-NOEL

Growth & Strategy for Growth
Markets
Accenture
claire.aubertin-noel@accenture.com



MATTHEW ROBINSON

Managing Director
Accenture Research



MITALI CHATTERJEE

Research Specialist
Accenture Research



JANARDAN MISRA

Technology Research
Senior Principal
Accenture Labs

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our grateful thanks for the valuable insights of the many external experts who contributed to the report's findings: Jim Fruchterman, Kevin Desouza, Kshama Alur, and Marla Blow.

Thanks are also due to Regina F. Maruca, David Light and Neville Dubash for their input.

REFERENCES

1. Business Roundtable news release, August 19, 2019, <https://www.businessroundtable.org/business-roundtable-redefines-the-purpose-of-a-corporation-to-promote-an-economy-that-serves-all-americans>
2. Unilever news release, June 11, 2019, <https://www.unilever.com/news/press-releases/2019/unilevers-purpose-led-brands-outperform.html>
3. Sanjay Podder and Shalabh Kumar Singh, “Technology for Good: Scaling up Social Transformation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution,” Accenture, 2018, https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-75/Accenture-Tech-4-Good-POV.pdf#zoom=50.
4. Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee, “Economic Incentives Don’t Always Do What We Want Them To,” The New York Times, October 26, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/26/opinion/sunday/duflo-banerjee-economic-incentives.html>.
5. World Business Council for Sustainable Development, “Reporting Matters: Navigating the landscape - a path forward for sustainability reporting”, 2019, https://docs.wbcsd.org/2019/10/WBCSD_Reporting_Matters_2019.pdf.
6. Interview with Kevin Desouza, Professor of Business, Technology and Strategy Management at the QUT School of Business, February 2020.
7. Essilor, “Eliminating poor vision in a generation: What will it take to eliminate uncorrected refractive errors by 2050?,” 2020, <https://www.essilorseechange.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Eliminating-Poor-Vision-in-a-Generation-Report.pdf>.
8. Essilor, “Eliminating poor vision in a generation: What will it take to eliminate uncorrected refractive errors by 2050?,” 2020, <https://www.essilorseechange.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Eliminating-Poor-Vision-in-a-Generation-Report.pdf>.
9. Essilor, “Eliminating poor vision in a generation: What will it take to eliminate uncorrected refractive errors by 2050?,” 2020, <https://www.essilorseechange.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Eliminating-Poor-Vision-in-a-Generation-Report.pdf>.
10. Mastercard, “Inclusive Growth Score™ Methodology v1.0,” <https://inclusivegrowthscore.com/docs/Inclusive-Growth-Score-Methodology.pdf>.
11. Ruth Mhlanga, Uwe Gneiting and Namit Agarwal, “Walking the Talk: Assessing companies’ progress from SDG rhetoric to action”, Oxfam Discussion Papers, September 2018.
12. UNGSII, “SDG Commitment Report: Empowering Investors on Both Profit and Impact,” 2019, https://bd74a1b5-d4ae-492e-bb52-86699b18885e.filesusr.com/ugd/a988f5_97b50909a95b48edb0b333be63284694.pdf.
13. Alibaba Cloud, “Alibaba Cloud Launches Tech for Change Initiative for Social Good at MWC19,” February 27, 2019, https://www.alibabacloud.com/blog/alibaba-cloud-launches-tech-for-change-initiative-for-social-good-at-mwc19_594510.

14. Prasad Banerjee, "How data is helping Facebook provide disaster management maps?", Live Mint, 15 Sep 2019, <https://www.livemint.com/technology/tech-news/how-data-is-helping-facebook-provide-disaster-management-maps-1568543177954.html>.
15. Facebook Data for Good, accessed May 17, 2020, <https://dataforgood.fb.com/docs/covid19/>.
16. Interview with Kshama Alur, Founder, Better Alternative, February 2020.
17. UNGSII, "SDG Commitment Report: Empowering Investors on Both Profit and Impact," 2019, https://bd74a1b5-d4ae-492e-bb52-86699b18885e.filesusr.com/ugd/a988f5_97b50909a95b48edb0b333be63284694.pdf.
18. Latanya Sweeney, "Only You, Your Doctor, and Many Others May Know," Technology Science, Sep 9, 2019, <https://techscience.org/a/2015092903/>.
19. BDT Broadcast, "Media Coverage: This free Philly-made chatbot can help students fill out the FAFSA app," April 24, 2020, <https://bdtrust.org/media-coverage-this-free-philly-made-chatbot-can-help-students-fill-out-the-fafsa-app/>.
20. <https://thetyee.ca/News/2014/03/08/Telecom-Government-Data-Sharing/>.
21. <https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/digital/maximize-collaboration-secure-data-sharing>
22. Interview with Jim Fructerman, Founder and CEO, Tech Matters, February 2020.
23. GRI, UN Global Compact and WBCSD, "SDG Compass: The Guide for Business Action on the SDGs," 2015, https://sdgcompass.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/019104_SDG_Compass_Guide_2015.pdf.

*<https://www.accenture.com/us-en/about/company/people-work-connect?src=soms>

About Accenture

Accenture is a leading global professional services company, providing a broad range of services in strategy and consulting, interactive, technology and operations, with digital capabilities across all of these services. We combine unmatched experience and specialized capabilities across more than 40 industries — powered by the world's largest network of Advanced Technology and Intelligent Operations centers. With **513,000** people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture brings continuous innovation to help clients improve their performance and create lasting value across their enterprises. Visit us at **www.accenture.com**.

About Accenture Labs

Accenture Labs incubates and prototypes new concepts through applied R&D projects that are expected to have a significant impact on business and society. Our dedicated team of technologists and researchers work with leaders across the company and external partners to imagine and invent the future. Accenture Labs is located in seven key research hubs around the world: San Francisco, CA; Sophia Antipolis, France; Washington, D.C.; Shenzhen, China; Bangalore, India; Herzliya, Israel and Dublin, Ireland; and 25 Nano Labs. The Labs collaborates extensively with Accenture's network of nearly 400 innovation centers, studios and centers of excellence located in 92 cities and 35 countries globally to deliver cutting-edge research, insights and solutions to clients where they operate and live. For more information, please visit **www.accenture.com/labs**

About Accenture Research

Accenture Research shapes trends and creates data-driven insights about the most pressing issues global organizations face. Combining the power of innovative research techniques with a deep understanding of our clients' industries, our team of 300 researchers and analysts spans 20 countries and publishes hundreds of reports, articles and points of view every year. Our thought-provoking research — supported by proprietary data and partnerships with leading organizations such as MIT and Harvard Business School — guides our innovations and allows us to transform theories and fresh ideas into real-world solutions for our clients. For more information, visit **www.accenture.com/research**

Disclaimer: This document makes descriptive reference to trademarks that may be owned by others. The use of such trademarks herein is not an assertion of ownership of such trademarks by Accenture and is not intended to represent or imply the existence of an association between Accenture and the lawful owners of such trademarks.

Copyright © 2020 Accenture.

All rights reserved. Accenture and its logo are registered trademarks of Accenture.