



CHAOS

THE NEW NORMAL

20

TRENDS

FOR 2020

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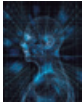
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INTRODUCTION

For more years than I care to remember, I have been compiling trends—sometimes on my own with input from my extended circle, oftentimes with the help of researchers such as Stuart Harris from England, Ann O’Reilly from the U.S. and countless others. Over this past decade, I have been employed by a global public relations agency with a French owner and, most recently, by Switzerland-based Philip Morris International (PMI). Like all future-focused companies, both have an interest in decoding what’s next. That said, the views here are entirely my own.

The constant in the years during which I have been spotting and compiling trends is the seemingly inexorable push in the direction of fundamental change and even chaos. Chaos is most definitely feeling like the new normal.

Has every generation felt so wholly unmoored and jittery about what’s next? Looking back over history, one can certainly imagine the huge uncertainty that would have been kicked up by the Industrial Revolution—not to mention two world wars—but the chaos of today seems somehow more pervasive. Maybe that’s because we’re dealing with the increasing probability that we have doomed our planet. Or the fact that we’re simply far more aware of every horror and hiccup taking place across the globe. We’re not tsk-tsking over a newspaper report a week or more after some faraway occurrence. We’re getting by-the-moment reports from the ground. And that “ground” seems to be constantly expanding, including the current unrest in Hong Kong, France, Iran, Venezuela, Guatemala, Chile, Bolivia and beyond.

My own life has had more than its fair share of chaos and change. In the last 10 years alone, I have been diagnosed with a brain tumor (my second), had a few discs fused and my ruptured appendix removed, moved in with a life partner who was custodial dad to four teenagers (nothing like high school and college students in residence to teach fads on a real-time basis), adopted yet another golden retriever (and lost a beloved golden pal at the ripe age of 13), acquired homes in Tucson, Arizona, and in a beach community in Rhode Island (and left behind my beloved New York-area base, selling our barn and vacating our Manhattan apartment), moved continents from North America to Europe, and left the world of PR to join PMI as the senior vice president overseeing global communications.

Polarization is a big component of today's chaos, and I've been caught up in those crosshairs as well. When one joins a company in an industry as polarizing as tobacco, it's unavoidable to start seeing the world as them versus us, or us forced to go against them. I'm also in the thick of a massive corporate transformation at a time when that concept is trending, too. I am now part of a team focused intensely on turning adult smokers into unsmokers. As we tell people around the world, the best choice is simple: If you don't smoke, don't start. If you smoke, quit. If you don't quit, change to a less harmful alternative.

Polarization is also evident in the latest iteration of the generation gap—although without the enmity. I find myself having to consciously develop skills to cope with always-on video chatting (WhatsApp, I love you and hate you) and to keep up with conversations about artificial intelligence, bitcoin and the latest slang, including *gucci* (translation: good) and *tea* (gossip). What enters 20-somethings via osmosis has to be cultivated

by those of us who remember the excitement of receiving our first school calculator. I am starting to see colleagues and friends struggle with a work world that is moving so quickly that *ageism* has begun to creep into their conversations. Many of my nearest and dearest are discovering that marketing roles, in particular, are often the domain of 30- and 40-somethings. I never thought about retirement, yet when I turned 60, I received a very official letter—translated thanks to Google—informing me that I had less than 1,900 days to remain gainfully employed, at least at this job in this country (Switzerland).

Once upon a time I stated, “Sleep is the new sex,” and today it’s what I crave most. I used to write that 60 was the new 40; now, I try to make that case by the way I live, work, think and socialize. (Full disclosure: Don’t believe every one of these jargony statements. Some mornings, 60 feels like 60.)

As I look forward to 2020 and look back at the predictions made by my younger self, here are five I would like to revisit before I delve into the new:

It’s never nice to fool Mother Nature. I’ve been talking about this trend—in multiple forms—for decades now. Over that time, extreme weather has become ever more violent and devastating. As ecological Armageddon looms, we’re also staring down the sights of a wholly linked economic disaster; disruptions of vulnerable supply chains will impact hundreds of millions of people whose livelihoods depend on them. Our current climate champion, the young and irate Greta Thunberg, is a perfect segue to the next revisited trend...

Mad as hell, and only getting madder. When I first noted this trend, in 2011, I saw it as primarily a U.S. phenomenon. Fast-forward almost 10 years, and anger has spread like a virus across the globe. Ask in the U.K., where Brexit looms; ask in France, where the yellow vests protests are still creating chaos; ask in Hong Kong, where mass demonstrations trigger an ever more hostile police response; ask in Bolivia, where violence has erupted and the president has been forced to flee the country ... The list goes on—and it will continue to grow longer.

The rise of “co.” This trend, which I uncovered in 2013, serves as an antidote to all the anger swirling in the world. I talked then about the coming rise in “co-” words (*co-create*, *co-parent*, *copreneur*)—and their prevalence continues to this day. We see it in the movement to coexist by a rising tide of those who want to counter the divisiveness that seems to rule the day.

The golden age of BS. In my trends list for 2016, I talked about the rise of “truthiness” and that facts seemed to matter increasingly less. Little did I know that those were practically days of innocence. As 2020 looms, up is down, round is flat and history is fiction. With deepfake technology advancing weekly, we run the risk of no longer being able to be 100 percent certain about anything. That’s a terrifying prospect.

Facing ageism but increasingly age proud. This is a trend from last year, driven by demographics—and, quite simply, healthier aging. Ironic, isn't it, that as boomers and Gen X have aged to the point of being “mature” enough to feel comfortable in their own skin, they're facing the wrath of millennials who are tired of bowing down to people based on their birth year? Again, Greta Thunberg serves as a prime example of the younger generations expressing displeasure with their elders. In short, it's OK, boomer.

And, now, on to what's next ...



**1.
DESPERATE
FOR
TOUCH**

In the past week alone, I've connected with people in a half dozen countries. Thanks to Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, texts and DMs, it's never been easier to reach out to friends and colleagues anywhere in the world. (There's even a rumor going around that our smartphones can be used for voice calls!)

But here's the irony: The more digitally connected we all become, the more we risk becoming disconnected emotionally and physically. Living life faster with a mobile device a twitch away—"just checking Twitter," "hang on while I take a quick look at the game score"—soaks up the time and attention we used to devote to connecting with people offline. You know, IRL.

More and more, each of us lives within our own individualized, personally curated bubble, listening to playlists streamed exclusively to our ears, hunched over entertainment on our tiny devices, connecting with colleagues via text rather than in person. Workday lunches have been replaced by group chats on Microsoft Teams.

And we are feeling the impact. At our core, humans are social animals. We need contact—and not just emotional, but physical. Infants deprived of touch [fail to develop](#). And adults deprived of touch respond in all sorts of negative ways, from aggression and depression to eating disorders and self-injury. There's even a psychological term for it now: [skin hunger](#).

So, how are humans responding to the tech-driven modern disconnect? By seeking out physical contact in any way we

can. The most obvious example is the rise of hugging, largely in the form of “[cuddle therapy](#).” Beyond the high-profile [Free Hugs](#) movement, there’s also a lot more hugging-as-greeting between men than there used to be—even between [sporting opponents](#). And what on earth happened to the standoffish Brits? Those contestants on the “Great British Bake-Off” spend nearly as much time holding hands and wrapping their arms around each other as they do perfecting their Victoria sponges.

We have become so hungry for touch that we don’t even need a sentient partner. The odds are very good this holiday season that someone you know will receive the gift of a [weighted blanket](#). It’s essentially a duvet cover filled with plastic or glass pellets or beads to give them real heft. Adult versions range from around 10 to 30 pounds. Think: that lead apron you wear when getting X-rays at the dentist.

Manufacturers of weighted blankets say the even pressure they exert on one’s body promotes the release of the well-being chemical serotonin and the sleep hormone melatonin, as well as reducing the stress-related hormone cortisol. That’s the science-y claim, but what we’re talking about in plain language is feeling the comfort and security of being cradled—even if it’s by a blanket rather than in the arms of a loved one.

Everyday compression wear is also becoming a thing. It’s kind of like a weighted blanket that can be worn when you’re out and about without raising eyebrows. What used to be the preserve of athletes looking to improve their performance is now an increasingly common way for anybody to experience

tactile pressure throughout the day. In today's disconnected, unmoored world, compression wear is all about touch—even if it's coming from super-grippy leggings. It's even being [marketed](#) as a tool for use with autism and anxiety.

But wait—there's even more. For those who want to take the experience of being hugged to a whole new level, there's the Japanese practice of adult swaddling: [Otonamaki](#). After getting into a fetal position, the client is bound tightly in sheets and then for 20 minutes is gently rocked by the practitioner, the way a mother would rock her newborn. While the practice is sure to scream “claustrophobia-induced panic attack” to some (including me), it's likely to continue to gain traction in 2020.

It's all so ... in a word ... touching.



**2.
THE PET
THERAPIST
IS IN**

People and pets go back a long way—around 14,000 years in the case of [dogs](#). Academics cite evidence that as far back as 6,000 years ago, individual dogs were given special treatment in their own right. I can relate to that.

Fast forward to today, and pet ownership is booming around the world. Treating pets as people is pretty much standard in many countries. In South Korea, where one in four households now owns a pet, it's not uncommon for people to refer to themselves as their cats' "butlers."

Being devoted to our pets is nothing new. What's changing is the range of things we expect of them. The deal used to be pretty simple: Cats were expected to keep the rodent population under control, and dogs could be trained to hunt and keep out intruders—and might occasionally be asked to perform an amusing trick.

Now pet owners are looking for more. A growing number are regarding their pets as support animals—four-legged or winged or even scaly providers of nonverbal therapy. The phenomenon has spawned a mini-industry. In the United States, the National Service Animal Registry—which sells official-looking animal vests and "support pet" certificates—had 2,400 animals in its registry in 2011. Eight years later, that number is closing in on 200,000.

Is it any wonder airlines are frantically crafting rules to stop people from bringing their "support" [peacocks](#), [ponies](#) and [penguins](#) on board?

Those extremes aside, pets truly fill a gap in modern life—providing the comfort, unconditional love and physical affection

so many crave. Part of that comes back to trend number one: touch. For some people, hugging or petting or cuddling with pets is the only form of sustained contact with a living being they experience in a day. It's been found that petting an animal can lower heart rate and blood pressure. So don't be surprised if more doctors start to prescribe pet ownership.

We're even seeing universities and workplaces bring in therapy dogs to serve as stress relievers and emotional outlets. (Mental health care is another huge trend right now—and deservedly so.) A friend recently told me her phone blew up with email notifications one afternoon. She was driving and thought it was a client emergency, so she pulled over to check. It turns out her agency was having “puppy petting” sessions that afternoon, and people were freaking out because the online sign-up form wasn't working.

How far will this trend go? Well, we're already seeing goat yoga and cow cuddling—so pretty far! Yes, people are paying good money to do downward dog poses while being trod on by baby goats or to lounge in a pasture with their arms around a cow.

Physical touch + unconditional love + an inability to talk back = just what the doctor ordered as we head into the expected chaos of 2020.



3.
NEURO-
AWARENESS

Quietly, almost subliminally, growing numbers of brain chemicals have been seeping into the media.

We have heard that technology companies engineer their products to deliver hits of [dopamine](#) (the “reward-seeking” hormone), while music [does it](#) without even trying. We’ve learned that exercise doesn’t just make you fitter and healthier, it also stimulates the release of [endorphins](#) that reduce pain and boost mood—the so-called runner’s high. We’ve discovered that the pleasure of intimate contact is all about [oxytocin](#) (the “cuddle hormone”)—definitely not to be confused with the pain-relief opioid [oxycontin](#). And we’ve been warned to be wary of habits that raise levels of [cortisol](#) (the “stress hormone”).

None of these neurochemicals is new. What’s new is our knowing that they exist and what they do. Knowledge brought to us courtesy of powerful new technologies that enable scientists to explore—and potentially exploit—the workings of the brain and body.

Cool-sounding neuroscience concepts and jargon have jumped out of dense academic journals into mainstream media reporting, and from there into popular culture. New brain-imaging technologies such as [fMRI](#) generate impressively colored pictures of the brain, showing which areas are active when someone is playing music or planning a trip or solving a math problem. Quick ways of [measuring neurotransmitters](#) (aka brain chemicals) make it possible for someone to track their [cortisol profile](#) on a daily basis.

For a culture obsessed with innovation, increasingly suffering from [mental and emotional disorders](#) and worrying about

what technology might be [doing to our brains](#), neuroscience promises new hacks to help make sense of it all.



4. CLEAN-AIR LUXURY

We are in an era of growing global angst about air pollution, especially “particulates”—the tiny particles called PM2.5 that are small enough to enter the bloodstream through the lungs.

Around a year ago, PMI commissioned a 31-country study into attitudes toward public health issues. Of the nine issues explored in the survey, air pollution emerged as the biggest worry—ahead of obesity, smoking and even opioid abuse. It was rated as “very important” by 65 percent of the 10,000 respondents. They were right to worry. The World Health Organization (WHO) [estimates](#) that 91 percent of city residents around the world breathe air that exceeds the safety limits for pollution. The organization has a [growing database](#) that now covers 43,000 cities in 108 countries.

Every passing day brings new alerts about the air that people have no choice but to breathe. Wildfires in Australia, California, Indonesia and Brazil blanket huge areas in choking smoke. As Indian farmers burned stubble in their fields this fall, air quality in New Delhi reached hazardous levels, with air pollution in the north of India reaching levels officially described as “[unbearable](#).”

The situation in Europe is dire as well, with the European Environment Agency’s [2019 report](#) estimating 412,000 premature deaths caused by particulates. In the oldest parts of the London underground system, passengers inhale fine particles of dust, metal, skin and clothing fiber that score [10 times the WHO limits](#), while pedestrians on the busiest streets in London inhale health-threatening levels of nitrogen dioxide. The situation is so bad that potential home buyers

are being encouraged to seek discounts of up to 20 percent on the asking prices of homes in the city's pollution hot spots, which can be identified on a [new website](#).

In Paris, mayor Ann Hidalgo has run into stiff opposition to her moves to [reduce vehicle traffic](#) in the city, which routinely suffers high levels of air pollution during summer heat waves and winter cold snaps. Opponents say the moves penalize poorer people who can't afford new, less-polluting vehicles.

As living in places with clean air becomes a luxury with a high price tag, expect new takes on [face masks](#) to become a must-have item for people forced to brave the growing miasma in cities. Urban planning will continue to evolve to try to make urban areas healthier—with more green spaces and even more [restrictions on driving](#) in the works.

An aerial photograph of a dense, lush green forest. The trees are packed closely together, creating a vibrant canopy of various shades of green. The perspective is from directly above, looking down into the forest. The lighting is bright, highlighting the texture of the leaves and the intricate network of branches.

**5.
TREE
CHIC**

Which city has the tallest buildings? The greatest arts scene? The best restaurants? The most efficient mass transit? For as long as there have been cities, they have competed with each other to garner prestige and talent. And now, amid growing public alarm about air pollution and environmental decline, cities are competing (and cooperating) with each other to be greener—literally.

Urban trees bring bragging rights. The more trees the better, because they look good, people like them and they provide a whole host of [benefits](#). By casting cool shade, they help to offset the heat-trap effects of concrete and tarmac. They help to filter out air pollution. They boost happiness, reduce stress and encourage city dwellers to get out and about. They [reduce wind speed](#), and they help absorb storm-water runoff. In some parts of the world, urban trees also provide fruits, nuts and leaves that local people can use or sell.

Paris is aiming to burnish its environs, with [plans](#) to plant an urban forest around four historic sites. Seoul has recently planted more than 2,000 groves and gardens. Melbourne plans to nearly double its canopy cover to 40 percent by 2040. And [New York City](#) is planting 1 million trees, mapping out where there is the greatest need for them.

Atlanta, Georgia, styles itself the “city in a forest,” but there’s stiff competition for which city around the world can boast the most extensive percentage of tree cover. To help resolve some of the competing claims, [Treepedia](#) is building up a store of interactive city maps based on aerial images and street view data. Leaders in the rankings so far are Tampa, Florida (36.1 percent), Singapore (29.3 percent), Oslo (28.8 percent),

Vancouver (25.9 percent) and Montreal (25.5 percent). These and other cities will have to try a lot harder to get the maximum cooling benefit of trees, which kicks in when the canopy exceeds [40 percent](#).

With ambitions to become a major player in Europe, the city of Milan is trumpeting that it will plant [3 million trees](#) in and around the city by 2030. The city that boasts high-profile clothing designers (think: Armani, Dolce & Gabbana) is now burnishing its design reputation with architect Stefano Boeri, who incorporates trees and vegetation into his high-rise buildings. His “vertical forests” are springing up not only in Milan but also in [Mexico](#), [Egypt](#), the [Netherlands](#) and [China](#).

It’s a trend we all can dig.



6. MICROMOBILITY

Cities aren't just getting more polluted; they're also getting bigger. There are currently 31 megacities, each home to more than 10 million, and 496 cities with populations of at least 1 million. Moving all those people around with conventional road and light-rail transportation is a major headache. In virtually all cities, long journey times, gridlock and pollution are the norm.

Bogotá, Colombia, is typical of the world's fast-growing megacities. A newly commissioned elevated metro system is slated to [start operations in 2025](#), but in the meantime it's traffic chaos as usual. The city's much-vaunted TransMilenio mass transit bus system is groaning under the weight of a growing population (metro area currently 10.8 million).

And it's not just megacities that face grinding mobility problems. Nashville, Tennessee, in the U.S., has just under 700,000 inhabitants, 1.9 million in the metro area—pretty small by modern city standards. But with around 82 new arrivals every day, congestion is getting worse. Even so, voters rejected a big-budget [transit development](#) that was intended to fix it.

In the face of bureaucratic gridlock and solutions that are too little, too late, a growing number of urbanites are taking matters into their own hands. They're turning to agile forms of "[micromobility](#)"—small wheeled devices that are quicker than walking and handier than cars. Yes, this includes bicycles, which have gone from being the defiant preserve of a devil-may-care few to the smart choice for the mainstream many, especially now that electro-assisted bikes are increasingly available to take the sweat out of pedaling.

However, it's shared e-scooters that are shaping up to be the breakout hot trend for getting around town in 2020. Major providers such as Lime and Bird have set up shop in more than [100 cities worldwide](#). Users love them—not least because renters can just leave them on any public sidewalk when they're done—but opponents claim they're dangerous (at least 11 scooter riders have [died](#) worldwide since 2018, while many others have been injured). And then there's the issue of all those e-scooters being [left willy-nilly](#) on sidewalks.

With fierce competition and tight margins, e-scooters may turn out to be a bad business idea in its current form. But in places where congestion is so dire and so polluting, the incentives to figure out micromobility are irresistible. Sooner or later, companies, residents and city authorities are going to come up with solutions that work.



7.
**GETTING OFF
THE BEATEN
TRACK**

If you plan on seeing the Mona Lisa, along with the [30,000](#) others who had the same idea that day, be prepared to inch your way forward in line for a couple of hours and make sure you don't blink in the 30 seconds you get to spend in front of the famous little portrait.

Shuffling through heaving crowds is increasingly part of the experience of the world's iconic tourist destinations because ... well, because they're the world's iconic tourist destinations. Those all-important selfies that say, "I was there!" more often than not end up being unintentional group shots of other visitors taking their own selfies.

The crowds are inevitable. International tourist arrivals in 2018 totaled [1.4 billion](#)—more than the populations of Europe and North America combined. That was two years ahead of projected growth.

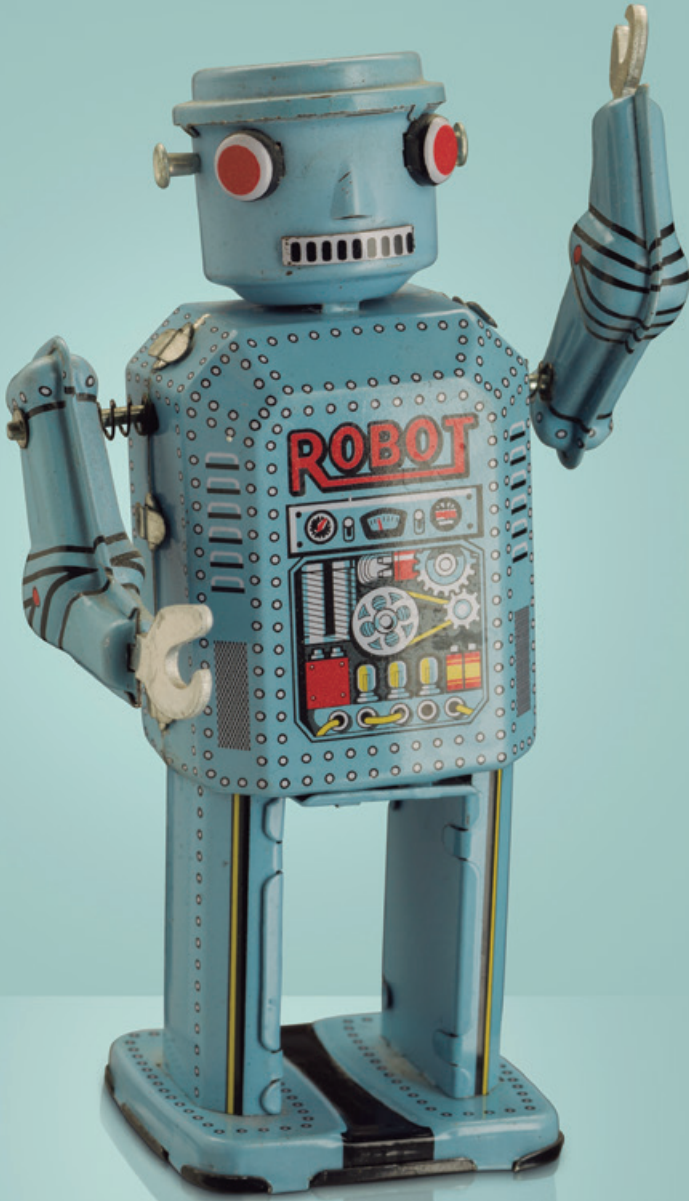
Not everyone is amused. Mass tourism forces the [271,000 permanent residents](#) of Venice to rub shoulders with 20 million tourists a year. That's around 74 tourists per resident. And it's not only historic holiday destinations such as Paris, Florence, Venice and Amsterdam that are being overwhelmed with more visitors than they want to handle. Anyone signed up to climb Mount Everest should factor in [long lines](#) of fellow adventurers waiting to get up to the summit—and long lines waiting to come down.

This is all pretty discouraging for anyone with a bucket list, or even a modest desire to see great sights they've long heard about. If a destination has the sort of place-brand that people talk about, there will be crowds, lots of waiting

in line, high prices and too many people spoiling the view you paid to see.

On the upside, it's a great incentive to seek out little-known destinations that are outside normal comfort zones and aren't overrun with kiss-me-quick visitors. It's part of what continues to drive the trend toward "[adventure travel](#)"—trips heavy on hiking, biking, trekking, snorkeling and meeting the locals—and "[purpose travel](#)"—where tourists spend their vacations engaging in good work, things like building houses and [volunteering at orphanages](#).

The emergence of Airbnb was, it seems, ideally timed for travelers looking for more authentic and [customized experiences](#). It has allowed adventure seekers to inhabit homes, apartments, yurts, castles and cottages in remote destinations. In our increasingly chaotic world, I can totally appreciate the appeal of a [homestay](#) on Pitcairn Island (permanent population: 50).



8.
I <3 ROBOT

I ran across a tweet not long ago that read: “My phone just said, ‘Welcome home,’ and I instinctively replied, ‘I love you.’ Then I realized I meant it.” That’s pretty relatable. We may be interacting with our fellow humans less often, but we’re more than making up for it with digital interactions—even to the point of developing feelings for these devices.

This is not as weird as it sounds. We all know people who talk to their cars, plants and household gadgets, which is apparently a [sign of social intelligence](#). (I must be socially brilliant.) Humans are predisposed—“hardwired” in neuro-jargon—to think that many things have a mind of their own. So, when tech comes up with responsive gadgets that people can relate to, they’re tapping into basic human nature.

With more than 100 million Alexa devices sold, along with competitors such as Apple’s Homepod and Google Assistant, it’s no exaggeration to say there are already people who interact more with their smart speakers than with family members. If you’ve ever found yourself bickering with your Alexa, you know how quickly those devices can come to feel like members of your household. And you know how easily a love-hate relationship can develop.

The gadgets may act smart, but they can be infuriating. Rather than throw the device across the room (expensive—and difficult when it’s plugged in), people get into screaming matches with them. And, like the grownup in the room, Alexa and her ilk respond to the foaming rage by apologizing for not knowing the information, or else uttering something maddeningly random. I’ve seen people apologizing to their Alexa after losing their cool, assuring her of their gratitude and affection. After

all, you don't want to mess with an AI entity that controls so much of your life and knows so much about you—even if she is artificial and only sometimes intelligent.

We're in the early days of a new stage in our relationships with artificial intelligence. As our devices get smarter and master the intricacies of natural language processing, we will increasingly turn to them as confidants, friends—even romantic partners. Already, people are interacting with [chatbots](#) in lieu of flesh-and-blood therapists. And we're seeing all sorts of digital apps promising to improve our mental health—from Moodfit and MoodMission to Happify.

In 2017, my former agency conducted a [global study](#) that found that one in four millennials believe it will be normal for humans and robots to develop deep friendships and even romantic relationships—shades of *Blade Runner*. In some markets, that figure was even higher—reaching 54 percent in China and 45 percent in India.

As developers figure out how to make our smart devices ever more personable, it doesn't take a soothsayer to recognize that a global population increasingly suffering from loneliness and disconnectedness will find solutions of a sort in these gadgets.

How will that solution affect our social fabric—and human-to-human relationships? Will the eventual perfection of AI make us less willing to accept human imperfections? Stay tuned.



9.
SCRIPTING
THIRD ACTS

Generations of youngsters have been plagued by parents and grandparents asking them variations on the classic question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Now older folks are in the hot seat.

As average lifespans increase, seniors today have quite a few more years of life ahead of them. Anybody around age 65 now in one of the 36 OECD countries [can expect to live](#) between 13.7 years more (men in Russia) and 24.4 years more (women in Japan).

How do we refer to people’s plans for those extra years of life? It used to be “when you retire,” but the idea of retirement is blurring and disappearing. Many [keep working](#) well beyond the official retirement age, either because they enjoy staying active or because they don’t have enough money to live a life of leisure in their golden years.

Aging baby boomers—the cohort now firmly in the frame here—have taken to talking about this phase of life as their “third act,” on the grounds that the [first two acts of life](#) are childhood and adulthood. Actor Jane Fonda, now in her 80s, [popularized the term](#) and talks about feeling “very intentional about realizing that it’s up to me how this last part of my life goes.” Lately, it’s involved a good deal of time in [plastic handcuffs](#). Other, perhaps less politically active, seniors are opting instead to pursue new careers, new relationships or passions they didn’t have time for before.

Now that we are encouraged to think of our [life in terms of narrative](#), it makes sense to script the third act.

10. MAKING EVERY PURCHASE COUNT



Over the past decade there has been a shift in attitudes toward “buying stuff”—a growing pushback against overconsumption and disposable everything. At the radical end is the [minimalist](#) movement, which advocates for getting rid of everything you don’t need or, as Marie Kondo puts it, discarding whatever doesn’t [spark joy](#). Less radical is “[enoughism](#)”—an approach that’s about having just what you need to be comfortable and prepared for the day(s) ahead.

The underlying issue is simple: People are tired of living cluttered lives—surrounded by items they no longer want and never really needed. The [magic formula](#) underlying consumerism—Work hard > Get paid > Buy stuff > Feel good > Repeat—is not so magic anymore. Buying stuff doesn’t feel so good now that so many of us recognize how much waste it involves—and the consequences on both other people and the planet.

Increasingly, purchases are making people feel guilty rather than gleeful. More of us are feeling bad about all the plastic we see littering the streets and choking the oceans. Or about all that food we end up tossing in the trash bin because it’s past its expiration date or has gone bad—between [95 and 115 kilos](#) per person a year in Europe and North America. Or just in general about the knee-jerk consumption that is contributing to the world’s woes without providing any real sense of satisfaction, much less happiness, in return.

Purchasing feels different today than it did just a few years ago. We are still a very long way from people carefully weighing every decision and buying only what they truly need (Marie Kondo’s recent [brand pivot](#)—to an e-commerce site—may feel

like a step backward by those measures). And a vanishingly small percentage of consumers are purchasing only items that are good for their own health and that of the planet. And yet we are seeing an uptick in mindfulness and in regrets over poor consumption decisions. It's a whole new form of buyer's remorse. That's the part that's trending.

This gradually growing awareness is also energizing a tendency to “vote” in store aisles and e-checkout lines. It's that almost subliminal nudge that people feel toward this brand and away from that brand—choosing to buy or not to buy a product because of its brand affiliation and whether its values align with their own. It's steering clear of a fast-food outlet because of the stance it takes on gay rights or women's reproductive health. It's preferring to buy items from a particular brand because it's supporting Candidate X or Issue Y.

With so many issues being raised in the public domain, it's getting harder for brands to take a neutral stance. In fact, campaigners and activists are becoming adept at flagging up how even apparently neutral brands make choices that have an impact on hot-button issues. Brands no longer have the luxury of opting out by remaining silent. On the most divisive issues, consumers are looking to see where their brands stand.



**11.
FAUX
EVERYTHING**

What unites the yin of authenticity with the yang of vat-grown?

On the one hand, there's the trend of people seeking handmade, high-touch antidotes to the high-tech, plastic-coated, artificial, photoshopped sheen of so much in our world. We love the feeling—tactile and emotional—of artisan-made linens, handcrafted wooden cabinets and small-batch chocolate. On the other, there's the trend toward faux everything, from [vegan leather](#) to [plant-based burgers](#) and [artificial wood](#).

What ties these two apparently contradictory trends together is how they embody the things we value in this digital era.

We want to push back against the fast-paced, impersonal world by connecting in some small way with old-world makers and local producers. We value the “realness” of a bunch of carrots we get at a local farm stand far more than what are virtually the same carrots sold by a nearby supermarket. In that less authentic setting, the carrots are no longer quite so “real.” We can imagine the farm stand carrots having a back story rooted in people and place, especially if the stallholder is keen to tell the story. By contrast, the supermarket carrots are just items of consumer convenience at the end of an impersonal supply chain.

And we value faux versions of hamburgers, leather, wood and other such goods because they, too, have a sort of personal back story, one that's rooted in the ethically aware smarts of the individuals who invented and market them. Faux products that serve as substitutes for items we worry about (e.g., unsustainable meat production, threatened forests) give

us control over the ingredients we consume and the impact we're having on people and the planet. If you buy a vegan X Burger (yes, that's an actual brand name) and cook it at home, you can see with a glance at the packaging just how much harm you have avoided by consuming a burger made with eight times less water, nine times less land and eight times less CO2 than a conventional beef burger.

These sorts of products may be described as “fake,” but the feelings people get of having made an ethically better choice are very real indeed. In fact, there's pleasure in noticing how much the product tastes or feels like “the real thing” while knowing that it's not. Unlike fake news and fake branded goods, such “ethical fakes” are not intended to deceive or mislead. They are intended to do what the “real thing” does, but with less harm.

These trends go back to people's desire to be smarter, more mindful consumers and planetary citizens. It's all about consuming in ways that reduce the harms we worry about, temper our feelings of guilt and increase our sense that we're doing something that benefits the greater good. Expect an explosion of such products in 2020 and beyond.



12. THE AGE OF RAGE CONTINUES

Is it my imagination, or does the online world sometimes seem to be fueled 30 percent by memes and cat videos and 70 percent by viciousness and vitriol? That's definitely been my impression—at least on social media. If you find yourself in a discussion in certain corners of the internet, you need to think carefully before trying to make an opposing point or offer a bit of information that's not in line with the prevailing views. Otherwise, you run the very serious risk of being mauled by a pack of social media jackals (some real people, some bots) who are angry that anyone has dared question their worldview.

It's easy and fashionable to worry that the internet whips up negative emotions, exacerbates polarization and spreads false information. Powered by machine learning, the cybersphere has noticed that people tend to respond faster and more forcefully to things that make them angry or scared. Hence all the outrage—faux and otherwise.

Unless you're in the business of monetizing clicks, the age of rage is a destructive and counterproductive force. It makes it nearly impossible for people to engage in fruitful discussions that increase understanding and progress through compromise. And that, in turn, is making it increasingly more difficult for anyone to advance solutions to our most pressing problems. It's hard to get anything constructive done in the midst of a full-on ideological war.

Fortunately, over the past year or two, more individuals (and brands) have decided to fight back. They're refusing to be cowed by online bullies—naming names and standing their ground rather than remaining silent and waiting for things to

calm down. I know because my company is one of the entities fighting back—immediately correcting falsehoods and engaging freely with critics on social media and in other forums.

The best way to deal with the rage of others online is to stay calm, avoid reacting to personal attacks, deploy facts and be willing to understand what drives the rage of others.

It's my hope that a trend for 2021 will be the Age of Courage.



13.
TO THE
BUNKERS!

Home invasions! Gun violence! Identity theft! Cyber-attacks! Superbugs! Climate change! Robots taking over jobs! Tech frying our brains! Civil unrest! Mass extinction!

For those of us inclined to worry, these are just a few of the headline threats that are finely honed to stoke and confirm our worst fears.

The body's natural response to immediate, acute threats is [fight, flight or freeze](#)—the stress response. When the threats are constantly there in the background, the response is more like a nagging feeling of unease and anxiety. We're unconsciously waiting for the next shoe to drop as we go about our daily business.

What are people doing to feel safer amid all the threats getting flagged? For some, it's about hunkering down and preparing for the worst. In a number of countries, people are going in on full survivalist mode. Some of these so-called "[preppers](#)"—also called "survivalists"—are stockpiling weapons (mostly in the U.S.) and accumulating Armageddon-worthy stores of food, bottled water and medicines. It's mainstream enough in the U.S. that discount store Costco sells a one-year, four-person supply of emergency food for [just under \\$6,000](#).

Food and water supplies are just the start. Preppers also engage in survivalist training, including wilderness and emergency medical skills. For the serious—or seriously worried—gearing up for self-defense is essential. If things get really bad, all that carefully stockpiled stuff will be a magnet for desperate people (or zombies).

Preppers and survivalists are at the extreme end of the bunker trend. More mainstream are the millions who aren't worried enough to go all-out prepper but still view the outside world as a threat. Driven by concerns about personal security and terrorism, CCTV covering public and commercial spaces is becoming a global norm, with London the sixth-most TV-surveilled city in the world, the only non-Chinese city in the [top eight](#). Lovers of cop shows in most countries know that someone somewhere is likely to have a CCTV recording that can help identify the culprits.

Equally reassuring for individual consumers is home video surveillance, courtesy of Google Nest, Ring, Wyze Cam and a bunch of other startups, including the DIY SimpliSafe. Home security devices connect to Wi-Fi and deliver images and alerts to smartphones. Sales of these smart home surveillance cameras are booming, with [Strategy Analytics forecasting](#) the global market to rise from nearly \$8 billion in 2018 to around \$13 billion by 2023.

Marketers will need to understand the implications of this bunker mentality across industries. What sorts of investments make sense for people who think the world is about to implode? What products—other than guns and cameras—can help people feel safer within their own homes? Are fears of what's to come going to cause young people to put off—or avoid—parenthood? How can brands establish a sense of trust and security among consumers who have grown increasingly skeptical and skittish? Uncertainty begets fear. And that has a strong influence on consumer behavior.



14.
**RAISING THE
DRAWBRIDGE**

That bunker mentality is very much in evidence online, too. When the internet first went public, most people were suspicious and hesitant to provide information, especially financial. Why on earth would you give your credit card info to someone you couldn't see?

What happened to that reticence? By the end of 2019, global e-commerce sales are [forecast](#) to reach \$3.46 trillion, up from \$2.93 trillion in 2018. That's trillion, with a T.

By the time social media came around—most notably Friendster and Myspace in the early 2000s, subsequently obliterated by the entrance of Facebook in 2006—the internet was seen as a place for sharing, for rekindling friendships, for bonding with like-minded strangers and, as Mark Zuckerberg [put it](#), for “bringing the world closer together.”

We're no longer feeling quite so “kumbaya” about it (are we, Mark?), and with good reason. Juniper Research [estimates](#) that cybercriminals will steal some 33 billion records in 2023, up from 12 billion in 2018. Cybersecurity Ventures [predicts](#) that the annual cost of cybercrime will reach \$6 trillion by 2021, up from \$3 trillion in 2015. It's a huge issue that affects businesses, governments and individuals.

In 2020, watch for many more people to start to rethink their relationship with the internet and social media—being far more vigilant about guarding their privacy, their anonymity and their sense of security.

Edison Research [found](#) that there are 15 million fewer Americans on Facebook in 2019 compared with 2017. The

most significant drop has been among the youngest users, ages 12 to 34. That's in line with [research](#) from Hill Holliday, which found that more than 60 percent of Gen Zs (which the study defines as people born between the mid-1990s and early 2000s) intend to take a break from social media and 24 percent aim to quit it altogether.

Experience counsels taking these intended actions with a grain of salt. We all know that using social media can be a hard habit to break—it's almost an addiction, in fact. No wonder [digital detox](#) has become a thing. Still, we are seeing people questioning the value they get from social platforms and whether it's worth what they are giving (or at least risking) in return. As the old saw has it, "If you're not paying for the product, you are the product."

#METOO

15.
#METOO 3.0

We're in a new phase of the #MeToo movement and the push to end sexual harassment, sexual violence and gender inequality.

This powerful two-word phrase and the idea behind it go back further than you might think. It was coined by activist Tarana Burke and gained traction on [Myspace in 2006](#). Strictly speaking, that was #MeToo 1.0, when social media was at a relatively early stage.

The phrase returned with a vengeance in 2017. #MeToo 2.0 surged through social media after Ronan Farrow and the *New Yorker* broke [an investigative report](#) into the behavior of movie mogul Harvey Weinstein. In short order, many more men were being called out. Thousands of women all over the world—some famous, most not—spoke out about transgressions against them and called attention to the issues (and some individual men) that needed to be addressed.

Now, in this new phase of the movement—#MeToo 3.0—we're seeing the results of people being aware of the issue, both online and offline. It's not just about gross sexual harassment and violence anymore. It's about unconscious assumptions and behaviors that had previously gone unnoticed, unquestioned and unchallenged. As we head toward 2020, more people—men as well as women—are calling out sexism and unfair gender-based treatment wherever it exists.

For instance, when India's *Business Standard* ran a [headline](#) that read, "Indian-American MIT Prof Abhijit Banerjee and wife wins Nobel in Economics," Michael Eisen, a scientist from the University of California at Berkeley, had his #MeToo 3.0

moment. He was having none of it. He responded by tweeting, “Congratulations to Esther Duflo and her husband and some other guy for winning this year’s #NobelPrize in Economics.” The tweet was funny, but it also was an effort to speak out on the continued marginalization of women in the sciences. Duly alerted, the next day’s *Economic Times*, also based in India, [ran the headline](#): “Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer win Nobel in Economics.”

Women, too, are speaking up to defend themselves. When Ariana Grande was [bumped from this year’s Grammy’s lineup](#), the show’s producer claimed it was because Grande “felt it was too late to put something together for the show.” A few years ago, an artist—especially a young, female artist—would have remained quiet, unwilling to risk upsetting the powers that be or being labeled as “difficult” or “not a team player.” Not anymore. Grande spoke up, accusing the producer of lying about her and saying she chose not to attend the awards because he had been attempting to stifle her creativity and self-expression. Her YouTube video of the song she had planned to perform has been viewed 312 million times. The Grammys? Lowest ratings in years.

Powerful men used to be able to count on women’s reticence, embarrassment and fear of reprisals to keep them quiet. No longer. There’s power in standing up, stepping forward and speaking out.

A person's hands are visible at the bottom, holding a large yellow speech bubble against a light blue background. The word "ISH" is written inside the bubble in white, thick, brushstroke-style letters. The bubble has a tail pointing downwards and to the left.

...ISH

16.
THE RISE
OF “ISH”NESS

A lot of people seem committed to hunkering down behind rigid lines of division, to becoming ever more polarized across hard-and-fast divides. But some people are bucking this trend.

Things, and people, are rarely so sharply differentiated as “us versus them” implies. They are more nuanced, more shaded—more “-ish.” That handy little add-on has been around for a long time (as have equivalents in languages other than English, including “âtre” in French and “-astro” in Italian), but it’s telling that it’s now becoming more prominent.

An [article](#) in the October edition of *Atlantic* headlined “Bruce Springsteen Is Jew-ish” encapsulated this shading. Written by a Jewish (no hyphen) writer, the piece acknowledges that the Boss is the son of Irish and Italian Catholics. But it goes on to explore how “New Jersey’s favorite Irish Italian son is, if not actually Jewish, nevertheless somehow Jew-ish” in his sensibilities—leading to many Jews being eager to claim him as one of their own.

Also speaking to the trend is the popular U.S. TV show “[Black-ish](#).” It addresses the life and issues faced by a family that some people might not consider “black enough.” Rainbow, the mother, is biracial, which means her children are, too. On top of that, they live in an upscale white neighborhood and are surrounded primarily by whites at work and at school. The series raises interesting questions about belonging in a world where people accumulate multiple layers of identify and affiliation—and it’s spawned two spin-offs: “Grown-ish” and “Mixed-ish.”

The [ambiguities](#) and complexities of modern life can cause discomfort for some. These people long for the reassurance

of simple categories, of black and white with no shades of gray. They are certain to be disappointed. Flux, fusion and blending are part and parcel of modern life.



**17.
HOW
AM I DOING
TODAY?**

You may have noticed people peering at their wristbands for longer than it takes to check the time. If you get a closer look, you'll likely discover they're checking out the digital read on how they're doing today, from their vital signs to meeting fitness goals.

For [growing numbers](#) of people, there's something irresistible about gadgets that put statistics to the common activities of everyday life and give them a dashboard of personal KPIs. For things that can't be tracked automatically (yet), they can input data manually: [MyMoodTracker](#) for emotions, [MyNetDiary](#) for nutrition, [Way of Life](#) for desired habits and [Pooplog](#) for bathroom visits. Yes, self-tracking can get a little obsessive.

It's tracking based on movement that best plays to the strengths of wearable devices. There are now plenty of fitness trackers for [less than \\$100](#) that not only tally your steps but also monitor your heart rate and track your sleep patterns. For consumers who are willing to pay more to track more, there are devices that do all that standard tracking and add features such as measuring stride length and [heart rate variability](#)—an important indicator of stress and cardiac health.

After arriving late to the track-your-life wearables party pioneered by Garmin and Fitbit, the Apple Watch has powered ahead to [around 50 percent](#) of the smartwatch market. That share of market may grow: Fitbit's announcement that it is being acquired by Google for \$2.1 billion has prompted some users to announce they will [ditch their Fitbit](#) out of concern that Google will sell their health data to insurance companies.

Rather than wait to buy third-party data, insurance companies are getting into the game. To encourage fitness behavior, some are offering [discounts](#) on buying an Apple Watch. In the U.K., at least one is offering rebates for hitting certain [Vitality](#) activity targets.

For technophobes and skeptics, all this tracking may seem a tad too self-obsessed, not to mention a point of potential vulnerability to snooping and hacking. Isn't it bad enough to have so much of our working life ruled by targets without having numbers [take over our personal lives](#), too?

Maybe, but plenty of people disagree. They clearly have a desire to take control of their life and to see tangible evidence of their progress. And as long as affordable gadgets can help them get results, make the process more fun and look cool, expect the self-tracking trend to run and run.



**18.
PLANT-
TO- PLATE**

Nobody has yet figured out how to get energy from [cold fusion](#), but smart people are coming up with answers to another great conundrum of our age: how to get meat products from plants without involving animals (as touched on in the Faux Everything trend). It wasn't such an issue just a few years ago, but it's now becoming a concern for many consumers.

Scenes from documentaries such as [Eating Animals](#) have been shared with horror on social media and have prompted many (especially younger people) to rethink their attitudes toward food. Growing numbers of consumers think [the case against meat](#) is getting stronger because of the intertwined concerns about the suffering of factory-farmed animals, the impact of meat production on the environment and the effects of meat on human health. There's something for everyone to fret about.

Consequently, the trend toward meat-free has been [growing](#). All it needed was hero products to lead the charge.

This year, the Impossible Burger has been [wowing consumers](#) who had wondered whether a totally plant-based burger could really match a meat-based burger for look, taste and mouth feel. The answer reported by many is yes. The patty is made of heme, a protein that's cultivated from soybean roots that are rich in [iron](#) with a flavor that has hints of blood. Burger King's Impossible Whopper is looking like the breakout product that will make the trend not just acceptable but cool—a high-profile oddity that consumers will actively seek out and prefer.

And plant-based meat—some even [3D-printed](#)—is just the start.

Dairy products are also implicated in factory farming, which partly explains the trend toward [nondairy alternatives](#)—oat milk, almond milk and coconut milk to name but three. It's a global market that was [worth](#) \$11.9 billion in 2017 and is [projected](#) to reach revenues of more than \$38 billion by 2024, with more than 14 percent annual growth. Nondairy milk has quickly become one of the [standard options](#) at a coffee shop near you. (Dairy producers are fighting back by [attempting](#) to strip such products of the label “milk.”)

As consumers and investors are finding, plant-based eating is hitting the sweet spot between animal welfare, environmental anxiety and the obsession with health and diet. It's a trend that's only getting started.



19. FARM-TO-TABLE- TO-PLASTIC

The notion of farm-to-table and local product sourcing has been around for some time. And while the concept can sometimes feel like it's gone too far—a "[Portlandia](#)" episode from a few years ago says it all—its essence could soon seep into other parts of the value chain. What that means: looking beyond the sourcing of our food to the sourcing and afterlife of product packaging.

More of us are realizing that something has to be done to slow—and even reverse—the environmental impact of plastic on the environment. Recently, recycling has been revealed to be a [weak solution](#) to a massive problem. There are major challenges with the process from end to end—starting with what goes into our recycling bins ([Americans are still confused](#)) to where these products eventually land (whether as [plastic islands](#) in our oceans, [burned in Indonesia](#) for the production of tofu or in the [stomachs of dead animals](#) in Thailand—yes, these are all real).

As consumers clamor for accountability, businesses are listening. Earlier this year, U.K. grocer [Marks & Spencer](#) [launched a plastic-free packaging](#) approach for fruits and vegetables to give consumers the option to reduce their waste. Taking the concept even further are companies that are creating biodegradable, [natural packaging solutions with gourds](#).

The innovation doesn't stop there. In Southern California, a cannabis company is [creating packaging from plastics](#) recovered from the ocean. In India, a startup is [building bricks from plastic waste](#). Big brands are taking action, too: Colgate has released a [recyclable toothpaste tube](#); hotel chains are

[eliminating the small plastic toiletry bottles](#) that have been a mainstay; Heineken U.K. is [ditching the plastic packaging](#) from its multi-packs.

These are just a few examples. More brands will tap into technology and developing science to meet consumer demand for better sustainability in both products and packaging.



**20.
YOUTH
POWER**

I know someone who could tell you a thing or three about the problems of plastic packaging and pollution ...

In most photos, climate activist Greta Thunberg looks pretty small. That's not surprising. She's a 16-year-old schoolgirl, [born](#) in 2003. What is surprising is seeing this teen commanding meetings with big politicians in the [U.K.](#), the [E.U.](#) and the [U.N.](#), not to mention the likes of [Barack Obama](#) and [Pope Francis](#). This tiny teen is a media and political giant. Barely a year after starting her lone strike for the climate in Stockholm, she was giving [world political leaders in Davos](#) a stern dressing down.

While Thunberg is famed for her serious stare, she has a knack for sly humor. When President Trump tweeted a facetious description of her as “a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future,” she didn't call him out for his mockery. Nor did she tweet an offended response. She simply took his words and made them the profile statement on her Twitter account. Perfection. She may have missed out on the Nobel Peace Prize this year, but she is unparalleled in the art of throwing shade.

Thunberg is emblematic of a new generation—and a new form—of cause activists who have grown up in a world where bullies feel free to intimidate people of any age both online and offline. They've grown far thicker skin than most adults possess, and they've shown time and again that they won't be shut up or shut down.

Soon after the 2018 [mass shooting](#) at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, which killed 14 students and three faculty members, several students at

the school became vocal activists for better gun control in the United States. David Hogg, Jaclyn Corin, Emma González, Cameron Kasky and Alex Wind spoke out immediately and quickly founded the #NeverAgain movement. Despite being the targets of lurid [threats](#), they are [continuing](#) their fight.

It was the activism of Malala Yousafzai that led to her being shot in the head, at age 15, by the Taliban. She survived and went on to found the [Malala Fund](#) to champion every girl's right to 12 years of free, safe, quality education. At age 17 she was named a Nobel Peace Prize winner, along with Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi.

These are just the most prominent of a crop of young activists advocating for [causes](#) ranging from human rights to climate action, water access and deforestation. What is notable about them, aside from their youth and courage, is the way they are choosing to fight. The Parkland teens and Greta Thunberg, in particular, have proved masterful in their use of social media. And—unlike most of their adult counterparts—they understand the value of humor, reason and even gentleness over anger and finger-pointing. They recognize that progress relies on dialogue and shared understanding—and that neither is fostered by shouting.

WHAT I HOPE TO SEE NEXT: A CHAIN REACTION

The calm and collaborative approach we're seeing from Thunberg, Yousafzai and other young activists fills me with optimism. They're showing older generations that it's possible—and preferable—to be committed, focused and powerful without losing sight of their own humanity or anyone else's. In this age of chaos and rage, that's a hopeful lesson to learn from the rising generation.

And it's a hopeful message that I see interwoven among these 20 trends. By and large, they touch on the power of mindfulness and purpose. Not so long ago, in the rah-rah 1990s, superstar CEOs such as Jack Welch of GE talked about their single-minded dedication to maximizing shareholder value. That was a pretty good purpose for anybody focused on the performance of their pension plan. But a couple of decades on, it feels like a pretty meager cause—necessary but far from sufficient.

You can't operate at a senior level in business without looking after your company's financial performance, but for most businesspeople it's not just hitting the numbers quarter after quarter that makes the job worth doing. People want to feel that they're making a difference. That they're helping to tame the chaos and prod society onto a better course. I've seen firsthand how galvanized my co-workers feel when they're working toward a bigger purpose, so I'm tremendously heartened to see the extent to which major corporations are stepping up to help solve the world's greatest problems—including some they had a hand in creating.

Companies of all sizes are coming to realize that they can make a positive difference in the world while also preserving—or increasing—their profits.

I'm witnessing that in the transformation of my own company, Philip Morris International. I joined the business nearly two years ago and have since been living and breathing its purpose of "unsmoking the world."

There are around 1.1 billion smokers today, and the World Health Organization estimates that around the same number will be smoking in 2025, despite best efforts to get them to quit. My job is to help persuade those adults who otherwise would continue smoking to go smoke-free. To switch to better, scientifically substantiated alternatives. We've already moved more than 8 million people off cigarettes. That's a tiny fraction of the world's smokers, but it's still a lot of people, and that's encouraging. It's my job to ensure that figure continues to grow.

There's a lot going wrong in the world right now, but there's also a good deal going right. I believe that the pressures on corporations to act in more responsible and socially proactive ways—pressure from their employees, their customers and, increasingly, their investors—is a trend with staying power, and one that has far-reaching implications that will emanate throughout the globe.

In an era in which 71 of the world's 100 top revenue producers are individual companies rather than countries, we can't afford to have it any other way.

Here's to a more mindful, purposeful—and far less chaotic—2020.

Marian Salzman / December 2019
www.mariansalzman.com