

goodness&co

**CHOOSE  
COURAGE  
TO MAKE BUSINESS  
A FORCE FOR GOOD**

Insights for a future-fit economy

# EDITO

**Change is never easy.**

**But some years reveal with absolute clarity what leadership truly demands.**

2025 was one of those years, marked by backlash, geopolitical instability, economic challenges, social fragmentation, and rising expectations on how business should lead. A reminder that transformation is rarely linear, yet always necessary.

**In this context, one quality proved essential: the ability to choose courage.** To take difficult decisions when pressure intensifies, to stay true when compromise feels easier, to hold firm to an ethical compass when the lines begin to blur.

This courage exists, vividly. It lives in leaders who refuse to step back, Bill Gates' relentless work on global health, Mike Bloomberg's unwavering commitment on climate resilience and Ursula Van der Leyen defending an economy where performance and social progress go hand in hand.

**This year also confirmed something fundamental: business remains one of the most trusted engines for progress.** Across sectors, we witnessed leaders moving from intention to demonstration, from statements to actions, from isolated efforts to collective momentum.

**It strengthened a commitment we hold deeply at Goodness & Co: transformation happens with people, and with leaders who believe in business as a force for good**

As we enter 2026, our conviction is stronger than ever: Leadership is not a title. It is a choice to serve, to choose courage, and to anchor decisions in what truly matters.

**Isabelle Grosmaître**

Founder & CEO

# Goodness<sup>, noun</sup>

*/ 'gʊdnɪs /*

Goodness is the quality of being kind, helpful, and honest. It can refer to an organization's or a person's actions and behaviors, and it is about being generous to help build a world where people and planet can thrive. It also reflects our faith in human goodness.

# BUSINESS AS A FORCE FOR GOOD, THE ONLY WAY FORWARD

*Business is no longer observing the debate from the sidelines; it sits at the center of the response. In a year marked by disruption and distrust, companies were once again identified as the most trusted institution to deliver societal progress in the Edelman Trust Barometer 2025. In parallel, expectations have sharpened: organizations are now asked to sustain the economy while serving the common good and to demonstrate their contribution to society.*

*Leaders see it clearly: **88% of CEOs now say the business case for better business is stronger than ever.***

## 1. DOING MORE THAN TALKING

Consumers have already signaled the shift: 81% of brands could disappear without concern, yet loyalty rises sharply toward companies that act with intention. In a world saturated with promises, where the line between real and fake is increasingly blurred, trust is earned through evidence.

**The era of proof has begun, and the confidence of all stakeholders is now at stake.** We are past the pledges and promises. Companies need to demonstrate their contribution. In fact, businesses with purpose in action will thrive, as they will be chosen by employees, consumers, partners and investors. The question is no longer the why. It is how. We are entering a new era of governance and leadership, where the distance between those who deliver and those who communicate is widening fast.

Ultimately, progress depends on action, on movement. It comes from trying, doing, iterating, and adapting. And at the heart of this capacity lies an engine often underestimated: entrepreneurship. It is what enables action in uncertainty. Without it, progress stalls.

**How can companies truly value entrepreneurship as a culture?** Tech companies embody it best, Amazon, Alphabet, Salesforce, but also companies such as Decathlon, IKEA, L'Oréal, Lego where experimentation and rapid iteration in problem solving, small teams with big missions, empowerment to act like owners and accountability are encouraged. It is a cultural choice.

## 2. A WAKE-UP CALL FOR EUROPE

**Europe faces a strategic inflection point, where competitiveness, regulation, and sovereignty now converge.** In her recent message to us in May, Ursula von der Leyen reminded that “economic success and societal impact can and should go hand in hand.” This captures one of Europe’s enduring strengths: its ability to connect innovation with social and environmental value, supported by strong public-private cooperation.

But this purpose is being tested. Procedures, silos, and the belief that standards alone will secure competitiveness are slowing Europe’s capacity to act. Without greater speed and coherence, strategic ground may be lost. What remains distinctive, however, is Europe’s ability to hold entrepreneurial freedom and social responsibility together, a balance the world increasingly lacks. **This capability is what can allow Europe to redefine its own path to competitiveness in the decade ahead.**

# GOVERNANCE OF THE FUTURE, WHERE THE SHIFT BEGINS

*The world is changing. Governance must reflect this change.*

*Today, only **6% of global CEOs are women** and **29.6%** of board seats are held by women. Combined with the fact that **70% of directors** say their board is not effective at integrating ESG into strategy and governance, this reveals a deeper issue: many boards are still built around too narrow a range of perspectives. And in a world where societal expectations, risks, and opportunities are shifting fast, the quality of judgement depends on the diversity of the voices around the table.*

*This gap will shape the next decade, as governance remains the decisive lever of transformation - the place where purpose becomes strategy, where risks become foresight, and where long-term value is either enabled or blocked.*

*Boards operating with legacy mindsets fall behind. The shift required is clear: from guardians of continuity to stewards of competitiveness, capable of navigating complexity, anticipating societal shifts, and holding the organisation accountable to its purpose.*

## 1. GETTING THE BOARD ON BOARD, FROM COMPLIANCE TO COMPETITIVENESS

When we convened the world's largest gathering of committed board members - 800 directors from all regions, together with our partners at ChangeNOW - one insight stood out with absolute clarity: **everything starts with who is in the boardroom.** What if we keep an empty chair to represent the next generation?

Board composition and mindset is not enough. It is about embedding purpose in every decision. Purpose informs how capital is allocated, how portfolio strategy evolves, and how emerging technologies (in-

cluding AI) are integrated to empower people and accelerate impact. This is what opens pathways for sustainable business models and genuine relevance.

In turbulent times, the most effective boards act as critical friends: they combine challenge and support, using purpose as a shared direction. And across our work, one lever repeatedly proves decisive: aligning incentives with long-term value.

## 2. HARNESSING THE POWER OF PEOPLE, WHERE ENGAGEMENT DRIVES CHANGE

Transformation does not come from the top alone. Data shows that about 10% of committed people can shift an entire organization.

**Our research as a « Jeune Entreprise Innovante » reminds us that empowerment is the name of the game when we transform.** When trust is there, through clarity of purpose, psychological safety, and real permission to act, people move from executing to contributing. Initiative rises, judgement sharpens, and ideas emerge from lived experience.

**One of the most visible expressions of this shift is the rise of new governance model with Next Gen Committees and Stakeholders' Assembly.**

**Next Gen Committees:** As a concrete form of inclusive governance, they surface what matters for the next generation, broaden the organization's field of vision, and demonstrate how shared intelligence can accelerate adaptation and momentum.

**Stakeholders' Assembly.** A key momentum gathering the Board, Sounding or Advisory Councils and Next Gen Committees to work collectively on the vision of success and the challenges to overcome.

# REDEFINING PROGRESS FOR A FUTURE-FIT WORLD

***The WHO now considers climate change the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century.***

*This makes one thing clear: progress can no longer be defined through economic output alone. The health of people, the stability of ecosystems, and the resilience of our economies have always been interconnected, and in 2025, this interdependence became impossible to ignore. Redefining how we measure progress is now essential.*

## **1. HEALTH, LONGEVITY AND WELLBEING, THE NEW INDICATORS OF PROGRESS**

Traditional indicators like GDP or productivity no longer capture what societies are experiencing. With chronic disease rising, aging of populations, and expectations shifting fast, a more meaningful question emerges: what if health, longevity and wellbeing became the core indicators of progress?

**This has been our conviction from the very start.**

The cost of inaction is three times higher than the cost of action. We need to reinvent models, and shift from a system of reaction to a system of prevention. We love the major progress being done with innovation in early diagnostics, breakthroughs in longevity markers and next generation care. Many corporates are embracing this shift with Danone's long-standing work on health through food, in Philips' shift toward preventive and connected care, and the recent alliance between L'Oreal and Kering on longevity.

What emerges is a different horizon of progress: not only adding years to life but adding healthy years as a foundation for resilience across

people, organizations, and economies.

## **2. PEOPLE AND OUR PLANET'S HEALTH: RISING OR FALLING TOGETHER**

In 2025, the link between environmental stability and human health became visible in concrete ways: heat affecting labor capacity, air quality driving chronic disease, and food disruptions creating both nutritional and economic pressure.

More corporates, such as DSM-Firmenich or Novo Nordisk, are investing in models where prevention, environment and wellbeing reinforce each other. Cross-sector efforts point in the same direction, with coalitions such as ONE Sustainable Health, aligning business (Veolia, Merieux and Sanofi), science, and public institutions (ANSES, AFD, Institut Pasteur) around long-term human wellbeing. WHO, UNEP, FAO and Wellcome Trust are now treating these issues as one system to scale the work. The momentum continues with France hosting the ONE HEALTH Presidential Summit next April.

**Health is no longer an industry, it is the foundation of societal strength, economic resilience and shared prosperity.**

# AI & TECH POWERED BY NECESSARY PURPOSE

**64% of global executives say AI is already enabling innovation across their organization.**

*But the real question has shifted: not what AI can do, but what it should do. The acceleration is real, in health, circularity, education, operations, and technology now has the capacity to stabilize systems as much as to disrupt them. Its impact depends less on its power than on the intention and discipline with which leaders choose to deploy it.*

*The opportunities are unprecedented. And so are the risks: unequal access, governance gaps, polarization, and a growing distance between technological capability and societal readiness. **AI has become a test of leadership before it is a test of innovation.***

## 1. PURPOSE MAKES TECH A FORCE FOR GOOD

AI is reshaping how decisions are made and how systems function. When deployed with intention, it improves precision, access, and resilience. At Vivatech, this was visible in advances ranging from data-driven health diagnostics to predictive circularity models, more adaptive learning systems, and resource-efficient operations.

Several organizations illustrate this direction. Siemens is using AI to improve infrastructure efficiency, Roche is advancing personalized care through data, and EDF is applying AI to optimize energy planning and grid stability. These examples show how technology strengthens essential systems when guided by a clear societal purpose.

**Purpose becomes the compass:** it determines what AI is built to solve, whose needs it serves, and how trust is maintained. Without this anchor, innovation moves faster than confidence.

## 2. TECH SETS THE PACE, BUT LEADERSHIP SETS THE COURSE

AI can accelerate everything, but it only creates value when guided by purpose, responsibility, and a clear outcome for society.

A 2025 MIT study underlined the gap: **95% of generative AI projects show no measurable ROI**, not because the tools fall short, but because organizations lack redesigned workflows, clear guardrails, and leaders able to define where AI truly serves the mission. The Adecco Group shows that AI's promise only materializes if organizations invest simultaneously in skills, culture and new models of work, turning tech readiness into human readiness.

This year, the most effective organizations relied on sounding boards, mission committees, and external advisory boards to frame AI as a tool by people, for the people, a tool for better decisions, test assumptions, and anchor technology in long-term contribution. These mechanisms did not slow innovation; they made it more intentional and more trustworthy.

**Impact emerges when leaders align AI with purpose and societal value.** AI will reshape business. Leadership will determine how.

# COALITIONS BECOMING THE NEW NORM

*The scale and complexity of today's challenges can only be solved through collaboration. No company, no matter how committed or capable, can shift an entire industry alone. **In fact, 65% of major transformation initiatives report higher impact when executed through cross-industry coalitions rather than solo efforts.***

*Coalitions are no longer an exception, they are becoming the operating system of progress, providing scale, legitimacy, aligned incentives, and the ability to turn fragmented efforts into coordinated action.*

## 1. FROM THINK-TANKS TO ACT-TANKS

**Coalitions are shifting from inspirational gathering into true execution engines**, structural levers of transformation that bring coherence with fragmented practices. They create shared frameworks, interoperable solutions, and common metrics that help entire sectors to move in the same direction.

Many alliances began from a defensive posture, lobbying to avoid regulation, yet more are stepping into a proactive purpose-driven leadership. Momentum is visible across sectors:

The Consumer Goods Forum shows how retailers and manufacturers can share data, insights and learnings to accelerate collective progress. The Ecobeautey score proves that an industry can align to drive more sustainable consumer choices. The Watch and Jewelry Initiative, led by Cartier and Kering, mobilizes luxury maisons towards more responsible practices. The Fashion Pact brings together over 200 fashion companies around shared commitments to climate, biodiversity and oceans.

The coalitions create a level playing field for progress, enabling collective action to gain both speed and scale.

## 2. MOVING FORWARD WITH COLLECTIVE ACTION

Some coalitions are now moving into true innovation labs, encouraging new ways of working and unlocking breakthroughs that no organization could achieve alone. The collaboration between Roche, Microsoft, Siemens Healthineers, Harvard and Movement health illustrates the power of cross sector coalition to unlock new pathways for access, and impact at scale.

These coalitions operated as ACT Tanks, testing solutions, scaling what works, measuring outcomes, and building accountability frameworks that strengthen credibility and accelerate adoption. Livelihoods and The Future is Neutral are sharing this forward-thinking mindset where impact has become the organizing principle: with proof over promise.

This year also revealed a deeper insight: **care can be transformative.** In October, at the Raising Hope for Climate Justice gathering in Castel Gandolfo with Pope Leo and our community of For good Leaders, we witnessed how care, for ecosystems, for people, for future generations, creates alliances that would otherwise be impossible. Care invites imagination, strengthens courage, and turns diversity into unity of purpose.

Care gives coalitions meaning and evidence gives them their discipline. Together, they turn ambition into real transformation.

# FUTURE-FIT COMPANIES : LEADING THE NEXT ERA OF COMPETITIVENESS

*Across industries, a clear pattern is emerging: the organizations that are pulling ahead are those able to navigate disruption, transform early, and create value that serves both business and society. They invest with intention, adapt faster, and convert complexity into advantage.*

**Future-fit companies are not only doing good, they are doing better.**

*Their anchor is purpose treated as a strategic lens. Purpose clarifies where a company can make a real contribution and guides decisions, trade-offs, and priorities.*

## 1. INNOVATING WITH PURPOSE, WHERE GROWTH MEETS CONTRIBUTION

**Future-fit companies innovate through purpose, building solutions that deliver business value while meeting societal needs.**

Decathlon virtuous growth shows how revenue can be decoupled from carbon emissions through reuse, repair and circularity. Walmart's Gigaton project mobilized thousands of suppliers to reduce carbon emissions, waste and costs. Schneider Electric demonstrates how purpose-led innovation can reshape categories, influence behavior and set new set new industry baselines.

The most forward-looking organizations combine purpose, science, and creativity to shape culture and open pathways for net-positive outcomes.

## 2. VALUE CREATION FRAME: ALIGNING PURPOSE, OPERATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

Leaders increasingly recognize, aligned with our work at of Value Balancing Alliance, that the essence of corporate value is measured not only by its financial performance but also about its contribution to society, nature and the economy.

The key questions are: how do we measure? how do we steer decisions accordingly?

Academics institutions such as Harvard, Oxford or IMD are developing methodologies to translate social and environmental impacts into the language of business.

At the same time, pioneering organizations are creating their own value creation frame, moving from hundreds of disconnected KPIs often used in reporting, towards a focused set of 10 - 15 metrics to steer strategic decisions that strengthen competitive edge and resilience.

**Family-owned business understood it earlier.** Financial performance is necessary but not sufficient to pass the company from one generation to the next. It is about creating value for a wide range of stakeholders: consumers, distributors, competitors, suppliers, employees, shareholders. MARS, one of the world largest family-owned company, developed a compass to guide strategic decisions and incentives compensation: a four-quadrant framework to balance financial performance, quality of growth with non-financial objectives : positive societal impact and being a trusted partner. MARS has been a pioneer.

Other companies are joining the movement. Value creation frame is becoming a way to steer the company toward long-term relevance. It provides a shared language, connecting divisions, functions, and geographies around one direction. It is about shared ownership. Value creation becomes everyone's job. By aligning purpose, performance and operations, value creation frame enables companies to shape the future, rather than react to it.

# A call for courageous leadership

This moment demands clarity. We are not navigating an incremental shift, but a profound transformation in how business creates value, engages with society, and prepares for the future. The disruptions we face are an invitation to act, as standing still is no longer an option.

**The shift ahead is not philosophical. It is structural, operational, and deeply cultural.**

The future calls for courage: strategic, societal and practical.

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the ability to act with purpose when the path is uncertain and when comfort suggests delay. It enables leaders to test, adjust and learn.

It is what gives teams the confidence to innovate and organizations the ability to adapt.

Courage is what inspires the next generation to build and lead. Leading with intention is about presence. It is about making deliberate choices for better futures, especially when pressure intensifies. And above all, it is about recognizing that transformation is a collective endeavor.

Progress accelerates when leaders move together, not alone. The future depends on the choices we make now. What is at stake is nothing less than the world we pass on.

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The best way to predict  
the future is to create it.

Peter Drucker

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## LEARN MORE ABOUT US

Goodness & Co is a platform for positive transformation, focused on one objective: making business a force for good. We work with boards, CEOs, and leadership teams of pioneering organizations to anchor purpose in decisions, transform operating models, and build organizations ready for the future.

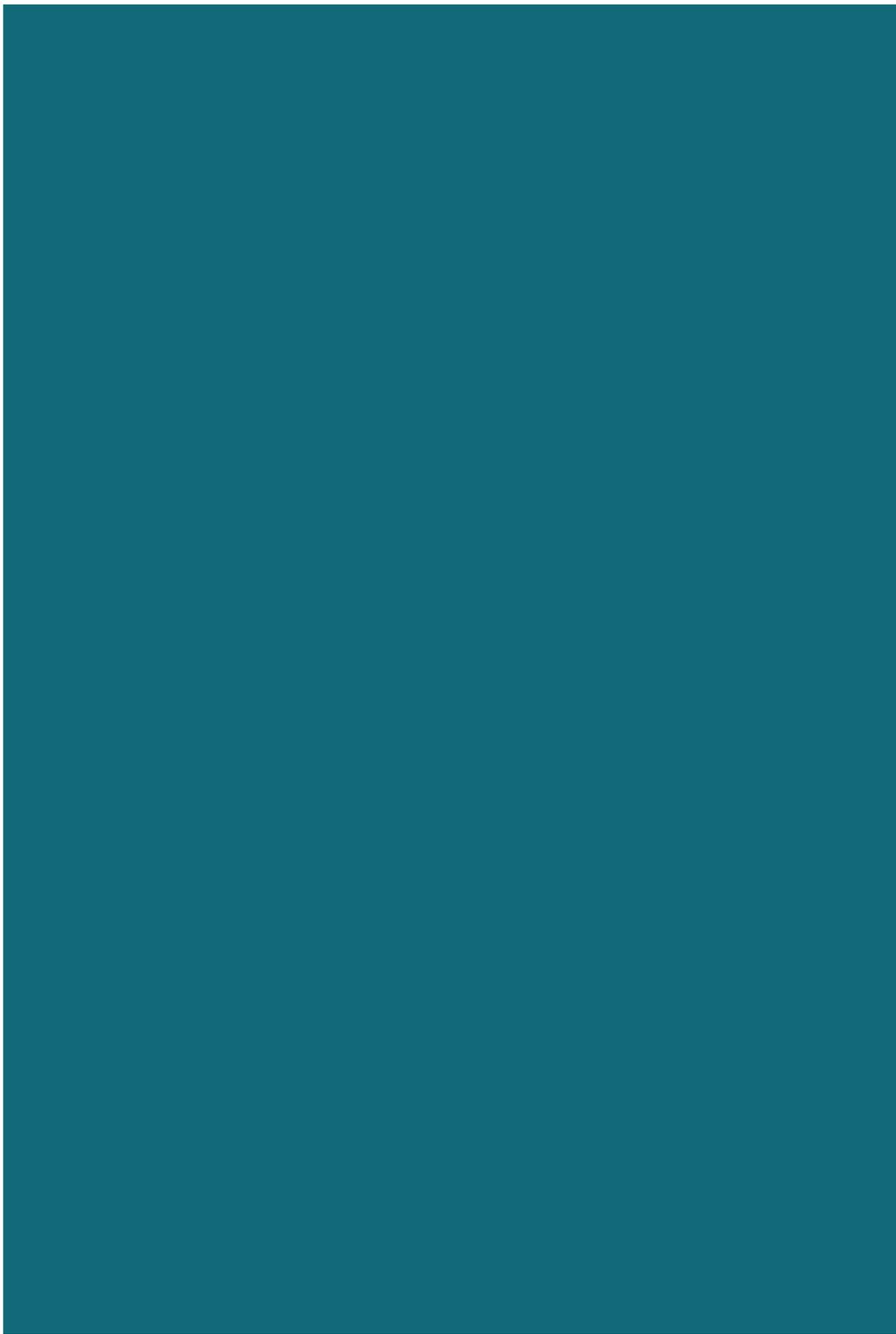
### **Our work spans four strategic domains:**

- Boards & governance
- Value creation
- Empowerment
- Coalitions

### **Get to know our work and platforms:**

- Business as a Force for Good - the book by Isabelle Grosmaître
- Strategic publications - Getting your Board on board (2025), ...
- LinkedIn
- Les Pionnières Podcast (Goodness & Co x BPI) - conversations with front-runner women leaders shaping the world
- LinkedIn Learning « Entreprise à impact : passer des mots à l'action »

## GET IN TOUCH !





As a platform for change, Goodness & Co is profoundly grateful to partner with pioneering organizations demonstrating every day that courageous leadership can transform markets, governance, and lasting value. Our gratitude goes to our clients, partners, and allies who make this journey possible.

Among them, Adecco Group, BIG Media, B Lab, BPI France, Consumer Goods Forum, Chapter Zero, ChangeNOW, Columbia, Communauté des Entreprises à Mission, EIT Food, EU Commission, For Good Leaders, Forum de Giverny, Groupe Bel, Groupe SEB, Harvard, HEC, IFA, INSEAD, Kering, KPMG, L'Oréal, Livelihoods, Microsoft, New Deal, One Sustainable Health, Oxford, Peter Drucker Forum, Raising Hope, Roche, Value Balancing Alliance, Veolia, Watch and Jewelry Initiative.

Thank you for your trust, your courage, and your commitment to shaping a future where value creation and societal progress move together.

This year showed us once again that when leaders join forces with clarity and purpose, transformation accelerates.

**goodness&co**