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WHEN WE PLANNED THIS EDITION OF the *Brunswick Review*, we were in a pre-Brexit world and the US election was a distant prospect. Our goal was simple: to explore how the world looks through the eyes of different ages, genders and social groups everywhere.

Since then, we have all become more aware of the differences of opinion and great divides within our societies – some are highly charged. These are not simply generational, but involve many complicating factors. Across the world, we are seeing a level of activism that challenges established institutions and political parties.

Brunswick commissioned a study of more than 42,000 respondents in 26 countries. This research produces a number of fascinating insights. Across the developed world, we find the most connected generation ever is now increasingly disconnected from its government and traditional institutions. And they are looking for business to fill the void.

The younger generation are not only more optimistic, they are pro-global and pro-business. Specifically, we asked, “Which institution is most effective at providing solutions to the major challenges facing your country?” Business is the first choice across all age and social groups, topping academic institutions, nonprofits, the military, religious institutions and government. We also asked, which from that list most represents “people like me”? With few exceptions, business came at the top of the list. In the US and Italy, government came last.

The world is not just giving business a mandate to act, it is expecting it to. But to put it in consumer terms, if the category of business is very popular, the product of leadership is not. By a ratio of six to one, respondents think executives are paid too much; only 37 percent regard businesses as honest and trustworthy. While the young clearly see globalization as positive, they expect businesses to act as a force for good in a much broader context, beyond simply creating financial value.

We have no doubt that the companies and business leaders that will survive and thrive in the future will be those that are clearly seen to recognize the problems faced by society, and walk toward them.

Honest and open engagement with all audiences is critical. We believe that more than ever business leaders need to avoid spin or distractions. Our most forward-thinking clients are developing programs that advance bold and creative solutions to the big challenges, and put their leadership back on the front foot. It requires them to speak to financial, political and social audiences with one voice, and embrace the full power of digital communications and creative content.

I would like to thank the many extraordinary contributors to this edition. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have, and that it inspires further discussion and debate.

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