

# PREDICTIONS

IT HAS BEEN A DIFFICULT FEW YEARS FOR POLITICAL POLLSTERS. Virtually all failed to foresee Donald Trump's presidential victory and most failed to project the success of the U.K. Brexit campaign and the outcome of national elections in France, Italy and Malaysia (see our story on Page 21). • In polling, there is little room for error – a point exemplified by Hillary Clinton, who won the popular vote (as predicted) yet lost the election. However, in this issue of the Brunswick Review, Britain's Sir John Curtice (Page 27) – a consistently accurate pollster – offers some valuable perspective for business. He notes that if a new product forecasted to grab a 25 percent market share in fact gains only 22 percent, that doesn't doom it to failure. In business, success can be a matter of degree. But in politics, as in sports, it is winner take all. • At a time of global warming, growing income inequality, and dizzying rates of technological change, leaders of business and government need both better and more forecasting in order to try to anticipate the future before trying to shape it. • Enhancing our predictive abilities is a commodity that several business leaders have described as the "new oil." They are referring, of course, to data. Added to models that employ complex algorithms, data can provide a remarkably

accurate portrait of what we will do or want – or what will happen next in the natural world. That such information can be shared, sold or stolen for nefarious uses is well known. But as Robert Kirkpatrick, Director of the UN's Global Pulse Team explains (Page 14), data can also be analyzed and shared to improve and save lives around the world. • One theme of this edition is that predictive analytics – the technology that, for example, enables Amazon and Netflix to make personalized recommendations – will become mandatory for companies of every kind. Another dominant theme is that technology will never fully displace human instinct, intellect or collaboration. When asked to explain how reinsurer Swiss Re (Page 48) has prospered by predicting risk for 150 years, a top executive describes the company as "a university with a balance sheet." On the shores of Lake Geneva, Swiss Re convenes "great minds" from industry, government, think tanks, consultancies and academia to provide human insight and judgment to help it develop an informed view of the future.

This edition, we hope, will inform yours.

**NEAL WOLIN**, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

