



Breaking through the
barriers to corporate
climate action

In our [Getting Real](#) report for Climate Week NYC in 2021, we set out a blueprint for a commercially smart climate transition.

What we heard back from practitioners was that the blueprint was a valuable guide to what was needed, but that it required an initial step on how to get it to happen. This year, we have focused on that question: How can climate practitioners make the approaches described in our blueprint play out in their organizations?

The biggest barriers they describe are not about their companies' commitment; they are about how,

in practice, to get their organizations to act on

For this report we again interviewed practitioners in companies around the world and across created a diagnostic tool to help organizations get going. We describe four core organizational enablers that make progress possible, the barriers that may be stopping those enablers from working, and the approaches that some practitioners have used successfully to break through those barriers and drive real-world progress.

Exhibit 1: Barriers to progress are now in the doing, more than in the commitment

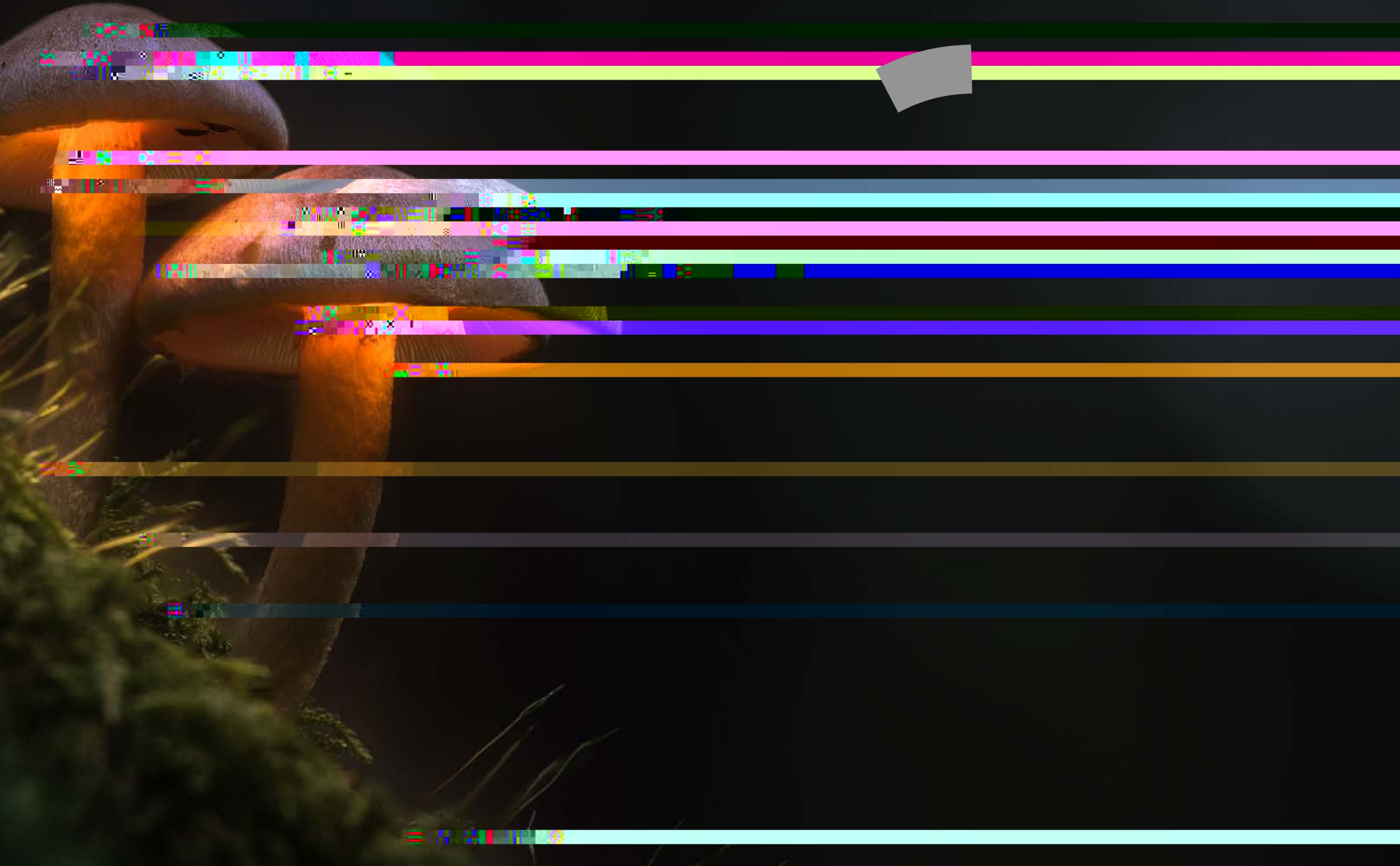


Such a drive is not only suited to the scale of the task, but will also energize the business.

We conducted 29 interviews with advanced climate practitioners in large corporations from a broad transition throughout their organizations. In parallel, we ran a quantitative survey with climate practitioners from more than 100 corporations active in the climate transition, to learn how they

This report would not have been possible without the willingness of climate, sustainability, and

Exhibit 4: Companies surveyed are at all stages of the climate journey



WHAT'S HOLDING ORGANIZATIONS BACK

Practitioners highlighted the barriers they

Exhibit 5: Diagnostic framework — the barriers holding an organization back



ATTENTION

WHY SHOULD I FOCUS ON THIS?

Confusion: I don't know what to do

Distraction: I want to help but I have other priorities

Passivity: This is not my thing

Opposition: I don't want us to do this



VISION

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Uncertainty: I don't know what the world is going to look like

Scope: I don't know how ambitious

Indecision: I don't know which route to take

Incoherence: I'm being pulled in two directions

OPERATION

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Financials: I don't have the funds to act

Technology: The solutions I need aren't available

Scale: I don't have the resources to reach the edges

Ideas: I don't know how to approach this



ACCOUNTABILITY

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT?

Misdirecting metrics: I've over or under committed

Ownership: No one is driving this change

Box-ticking: All my time is spent checking boxes

Exposure risk: I'm scared to act in case I'm criticized

BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIERS

While the barriers are real, we also heard many stories of businesses breaking through them. These stories lead to a menu of approaches (Figure 9.1). The following table details the approaches.

Exhibit 6: Breakthroughs — the approaches that break through the barriers



ATTENTION

WHY SHOULD I FOCUS ON THIS?

Framing: Framing the case for climate action in commercial and business terms, and making it relevant to the business sphere

Education: Training sessions for the board and employees across the organization and relating climate to the individual

Champions: Visible champions among senior leadership and across internal network

Incentives: Climate KPIs rewarded in an individual's pay, particularly at senior leadership level



VISION

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Bravery: Considering transformative or disruptive business models, embracing uncertainty

Leadership: Identifying when to be a pioneer, and innovate, and when to learn from others

Influence: Influencing groups that span the ecosystem, beyond the company

Integration: Integrating climate into the business hand



OPERATION

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Glide path: Breaking down the vision into steps, keeping the end goal in sight

Internalization: Encouraging implementation and adoption of policies

Collaboration: Innovating across the supply chain and engaging in pre-competitive collaboration with peers

Agility: Fostering creativity and fail-fast mentality



ACCOUNTABILITY

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT?

Transparency: Reporting against KPIs, ensuring understanding of the choice of climate

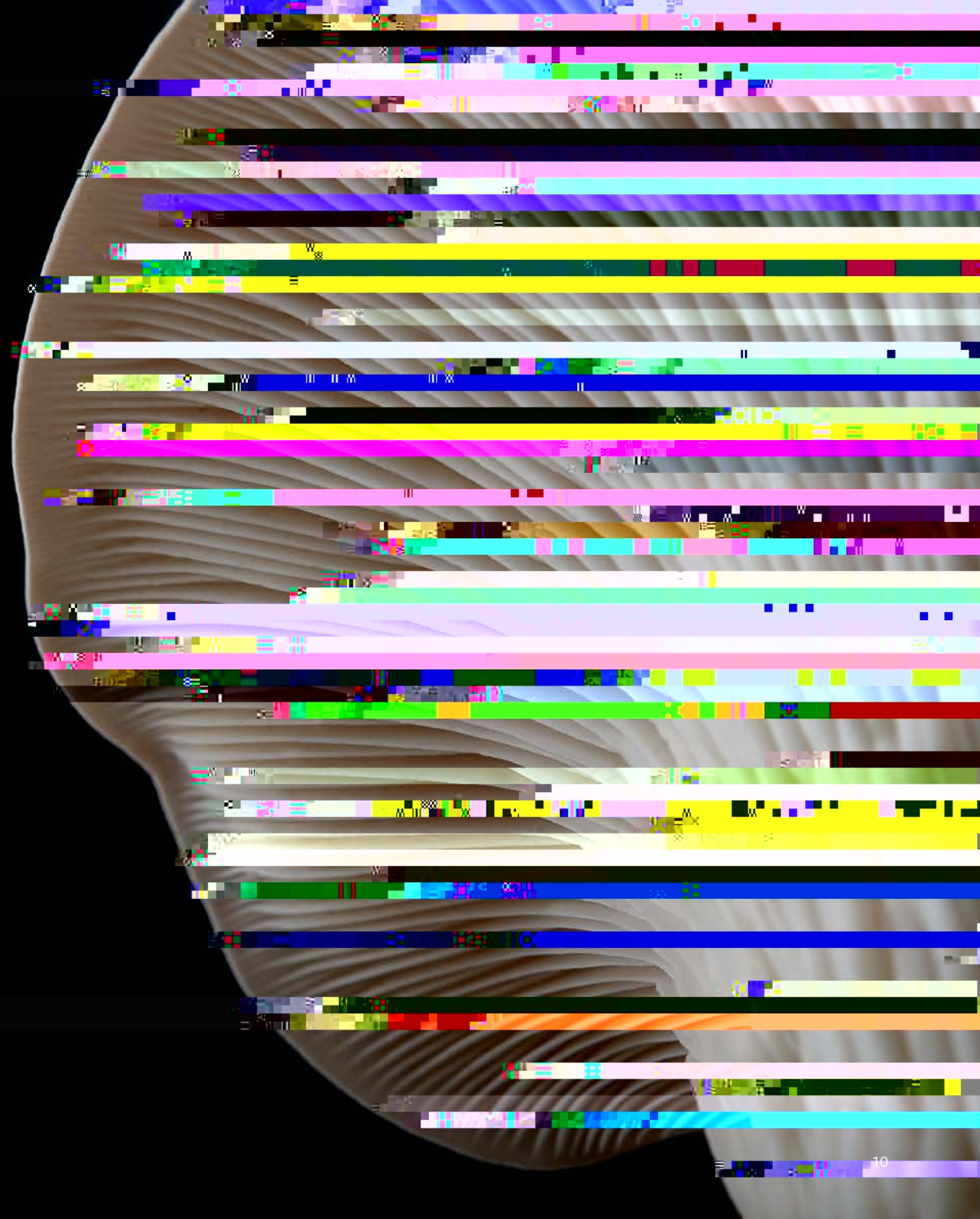
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ATTENTION

Why should I focus on this?

How do organizations keep their people's attention focused on climate, in the face of competing imperatives and confusion about what is practically needed and what they can meaningfully do?

We heard stories of how to frame the case for climate action in commercial and business terms; how to get through to people using education and a network of champions; and how to align incentives so that they reinforce rather than



THE BARRIERS

All the companies we interviewed are active in addressing climate change. Yet attention to the issue remains a challenge: There are plenty of other pressing business issues, often with more immediate and tangible impacts on business results.

We heard of several barriers to organizational attention on climate change. These are worth distinguishing in order to tackle their root causes.

CONFUSION

"I don't know what to do."

Climate issues are pervasive throughout a

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BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIERS

We heard some consistent approaches that are helping companies to break through these barriers.

1. FRAMING

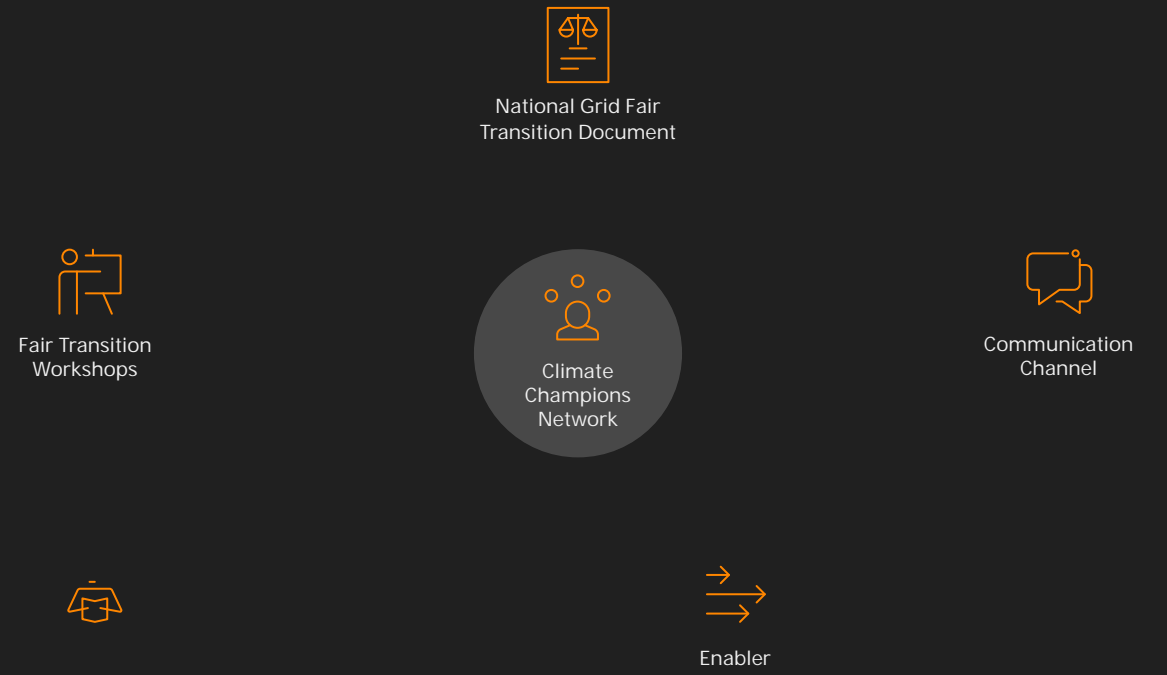
Framing the case for climate action in commercial and business terms, and integrating with the

CASE STUDY

Climate champions at National Grid

National Grid wanted to set out how it would achieve net zero in a fair way, that did not adversely impact other groups. The document would have implications for the business as a whole, and would

The company then ran a series of Fair Transition Workshops to gather input from stakeholders



This is why Ingka Group established a dedicated

CASE STUDY

Employee education at Novo Nordisk

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MATURITY LEVEL	CAPABILITY	ENVIRONMENTAL SKILLS (EXAMPLES)	CIRCULAR FOR ZERO SKILLS (EXAMPLES)	COURSES AVAILABLE:
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02 VISION

Where are we going?

How do organizations create the vision and a daunting range of possibilities? We heard stories of bravery and what makes climate action organization itself; and of the integration of climate and business goals.

THE BARRIERS

The barriers to articulating a vision come from the broad, fast-changing environment and agenda, which make it hard to pin down a meaningful ambition for the business:

UNCERTAINTY

“I don’t know what the world is going to look like.”

The unknowns in climate planning are rife.

“We don’t know how technology will develop.”

“Change can be introduced by an election.” “We

GETTING GOING

03

OPERATION

How do we get there?

How do organizations translate their vision

into action?

What are the key challenges?

How can we overcome them?

What are the key success factors?



GETTING GOING

BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIERS

1. GLIDE PATH

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ACCOUNTABILITY

Who is responsible for what?

How do organizations ensure accountability for

OWNERSHIP

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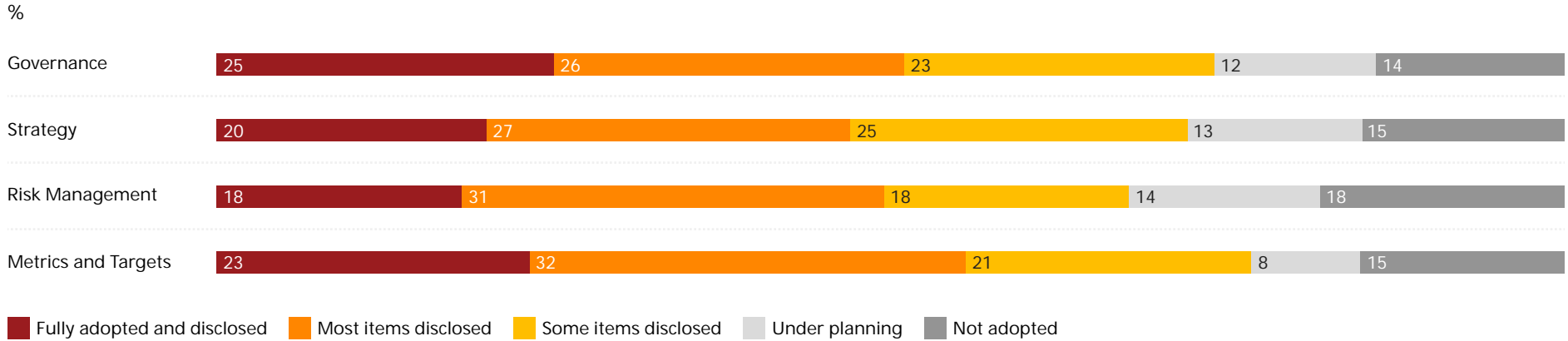
Exhibit 8: Concern about public criticism has on balance a mildly positive effect on climate action internally

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to recycle because of how they are produced to
the company will support the development of fully

Exhibit 9: Most items in TCFD Topics are disclosed by around 50% of participants



Source: Oliver Wyman/Climate Group *Getting Going* quantitative survey of corporate climate practitioners, n=118, July 2022

3. OPERATING MODEL

Setting out shared but clear roles and responsibilities across the organization

There is clearly an important role for the chief sustainability officer (CSO) as “a single point of contact and a critical friend for the core business.” However, sustainability cannot be a siloed activity; it needs to be embedded throughout the organization.

CONCLUSION

How do organizations ensure **accountability**

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