From Action to Advocacy

Corporate Climate Leadership in the Next Decade

Bill Weihl
MIT-6.S898
Nov 19, 2019

The Past

Corporate Action

Decarbonizing operations:

- Buying clean energy - RE100, REBA
- Green buildings
- Energy efficiency
- Buying EVs - EV100
- Regenerative agriculture

Corporate Action

Products:

- Solar
- Wind
- Thermostats
- EVs
- Grid storage
- Heat pump HVAC and hot-water heaters
- Low(er)-carbon steel, cement, and aluminum
- Video-conferencing (and other digital/virtualization technologies)
- Software to design more efficient machinery, planes, etc
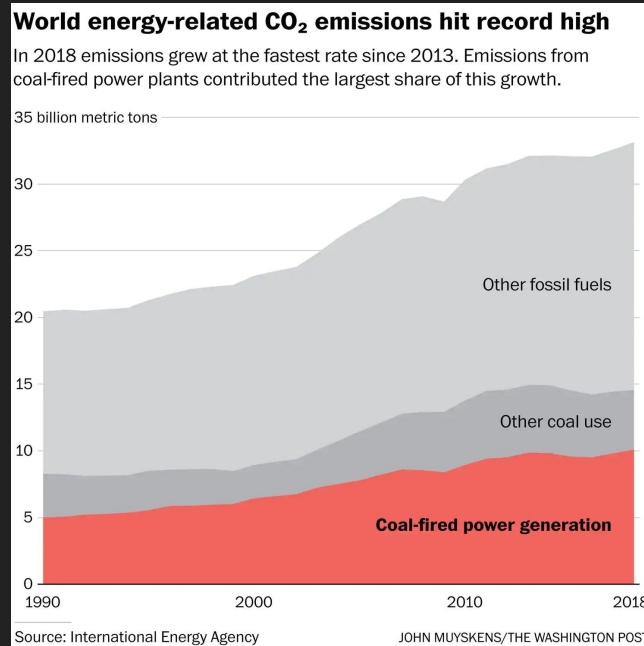
Corporate Action

Innovation:

- Materials - for solar, batteries, etc
- Carbon capture
- "Smart" grids
- Microgrids
- Batteries
- AI (e.g., Microsoft AI for Earth)
- Blockchain?

Corporate Leadership Today

1. Decarbonize your operations
2. Work with your suppliers to decarbonize their operations
3. Produce products to help your customers decarbonize
4. Support the Paris Agreement (and occasionally some specific climate policy)

Energy consumption (and emissions) increased at a record rate in 2018

World energy-related CO₂ emissions hit record high

In 2018 emissions grew at the fastest rate since 2013. Emissions from coal-fired power plants contributed the largest share of this growth.

35 billion metric tons

Other fossil fuels

Other coal use

Coal-fired power generation

1990 2000 2010 2018

Source: International Energy Agency

JOHN MUYSKENS/THE WASHINGTON POST

Data from IEA, March 26, 2019

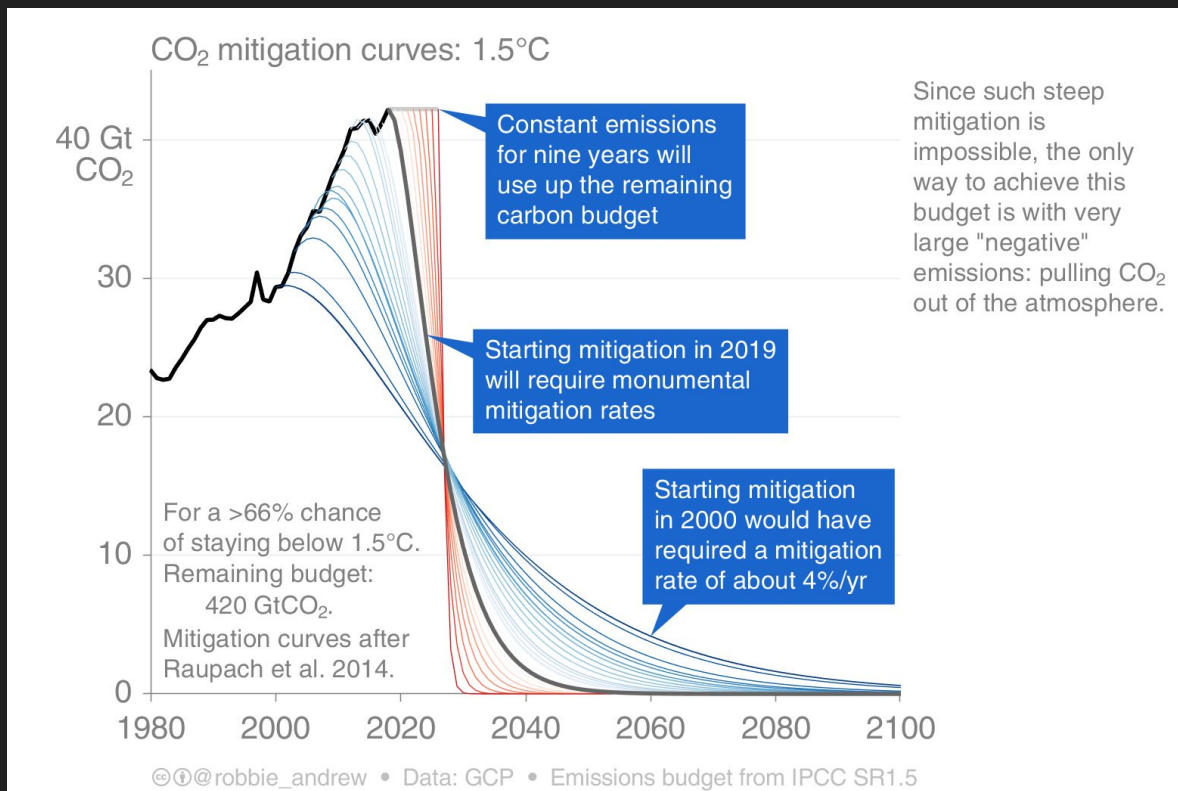Call to action for companies:

Step up your climate leadership

The youth are coming

"Adults keep saying: 'We owe it to the young people to give them hope.' But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act."

- Greta Thunberg, WEF, Davos, January 2019
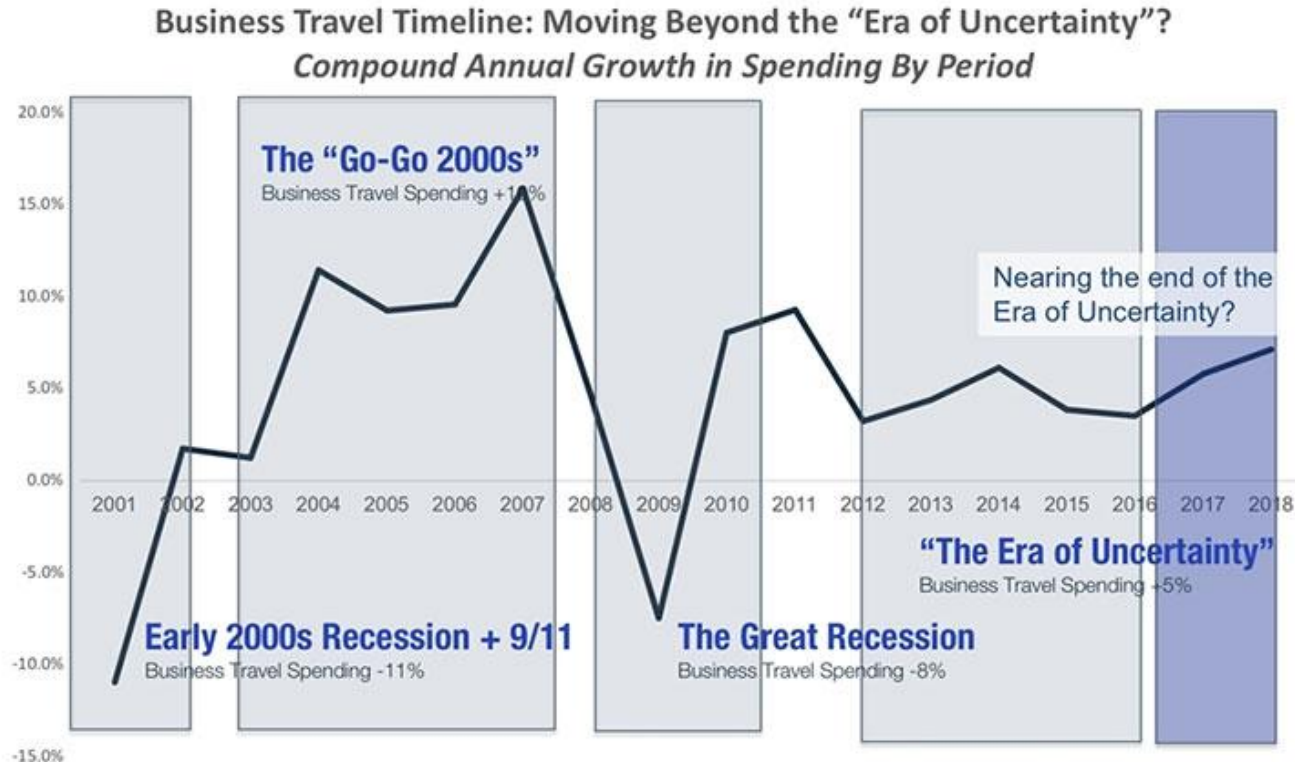
Speed and scale

Individual action

Individual responsibility

...for systemic change

"How Google, Microsoft, and Big Tech Are Automating the Climate Crisis"

(whoops)

But: business travel is growing faster than the economy!

Green finance

We need to change the system

Time to make the leap

from *science-based targets*

Time to make the leap

from *science-based targets*

to support for

a *science-based policy agenda*

The Future

Companies should be *strong advocates for regional decarbonization* consistent with what science requires (in a 1.5°C scenario)

    … everywhere they operate

    … and everywhere they source

2010: equal benefits, fair hiring, serve all customers

"We don't discriminate"

2010: equal benefits, fair hiring, serve all customers

"We don't discriminate"

2015:

- 360+ companies joined an amicus brief in the Supreme Court case on marriage equality
- And Salesforce and others forced Indiana to fix RFRA

2010: equal benefits, fair hiring, serve all customers

"We don't discriminate"

2015:

- 360+ companies joined an amicus brief in the Supreme Court case on marriage equality
- And Salesforce and others forced Indiana to fix RFRA

2016:

- North Carolina passed its "bathroom bill" - and fixed it later under pressure from companies

"We are advocates against discrimination"

From Action to Advocacy

=

From Bystander to Upstander

Key policy principles

Policy needs to be

1. aligned with the latest science
2. rooted in climate justice
3. politically possible
4. transformational, not incremental
5. reasonably certain to hit the IPCC targets
6. robust in the face of uncertainty

Price on carbon? Yes, and… clean energy mandates, tax credits, building codes, R&D for hard-to-decarbonize sectors, etc.

What's the business case?

Climate is a moral and human problem

Silence is not neutrality

Silence is complicity

Companies: time to support *science-based policies*

    … everywhere you operate

    … and everywhere you source

Students: make them do it.

Thank you.