

# Maverick\* Research: Treat Climate Change as the Biggest Business Opportunity Since the Dawn of Time

Published 12 November 2020 - ID G00735662 - 7 min read

By Analysts [Frank Buytendijk](#), [Jamie Popkin](#)

Initiatives: [Executive Leadership: Digital Business Transformation](#); [CIO Leadership of Innovation](#), [Disruptive Trends and Emerging Practices](#)

Climate change will disrupt every organization. Executive leaders should treat this as an opportunity to reinvent their businesses, as innovations to combat global warming have immediate market potential globally. This set of Maverick\* research advises how to proceed and thrive.

## Overview

### Opportunities and Challenges

- Rising sea levels in low-lying places and a lack of potable water in others will force migration to safer areas that have the resources to sustain human life. This will increase competition for natural resources in those areas.
- Changes in the availability of workers and the behavior of consumers will require businesses to become even more adept at changing themselves.
- Organizations have a chance to get ahead of their competitors by strengthening their supply chains now.
- New regulations banning the use of polluting engines mean that companies could be stuck with unusable, or stranded, assets.

### What You Need to Know

- Climate change is real. Ignoring it is not an option.
- The effects of climate change on how we live will be profound. It will make some places uninhabitable.

## Insight From the Experts

### Tackle Climate Change With Maverick\* Thinking



[Frank Buytendijk](#), Distinguished VP Analyst



[Jamie Popkin](#), Distinguished VP Analyst

Dear reader,

This set of Maverick\* research focuses on the most important problem facing us all: climate change. There is growing evidence that it is occurring faster than experts had expected. Whatever its causes, preparing for its catastrophic effects is the single most important task for organizational leaders at all levels.

The symptoms are already apparent, from wildfires in Australia, California and Siberia, <sup>1</sup> to rising sea levels that threaten the survival of island dwellers, and water shortages in places unused to drought. In 2018, for example, Cape Town faced the possibility of running out of drinking water, and only severe restrictions and recent rains ended a drought that had depleted its dams. <sup>2</sup> Also alarming is the likelihood that the record for the Earth's hottest recorded temperature was broken this year. <sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the dangers, CEOs are not treating this crisis with the urgency that we believe is warranted. A recent Gartner survey found that half of the responding CEOs said climate change is impacting their business, but only 11% identified it as one of their top five business priorities (although that is up from 2% about two years ago).

On the other hand, there are some encouraging signs. More than 100 major companies, including Amazon, BMW, Microsoft and United Airlines, <sup>4</sup> have pledged to reduce their carbon footprints, in some cases to become carbon-neutral or even carbon-negative.

Battling climate change will be challenging. But the "lockdowns" imposed by many countries in response to the COVID-19 crisis have shown what is possible. They resulted in a 17% drop in carbon emissions in April 2020, compared with the previous year. They also led to cleaner air in many large cities and even to resurgences of wildlife. <sup>5</sup> To arrest climate change, however, emissions would have to drop for several years. <sup>6</sup>

This collection of Maverick\* research argues that climate change not only poses great dangers but also presents huge opportunities for CEOs and other organizational leaders willing and able to get the jump on their competitors. Averting a global crisis requires Maverick\* solutions, so they should go on the

offensive. Those that bring forward innovations to combat global warming will cater to a global market of almost boundless opportunity.

*Sincerely,*

*Frank Buytendijk and Jamie Popkin*

## Executive Overview

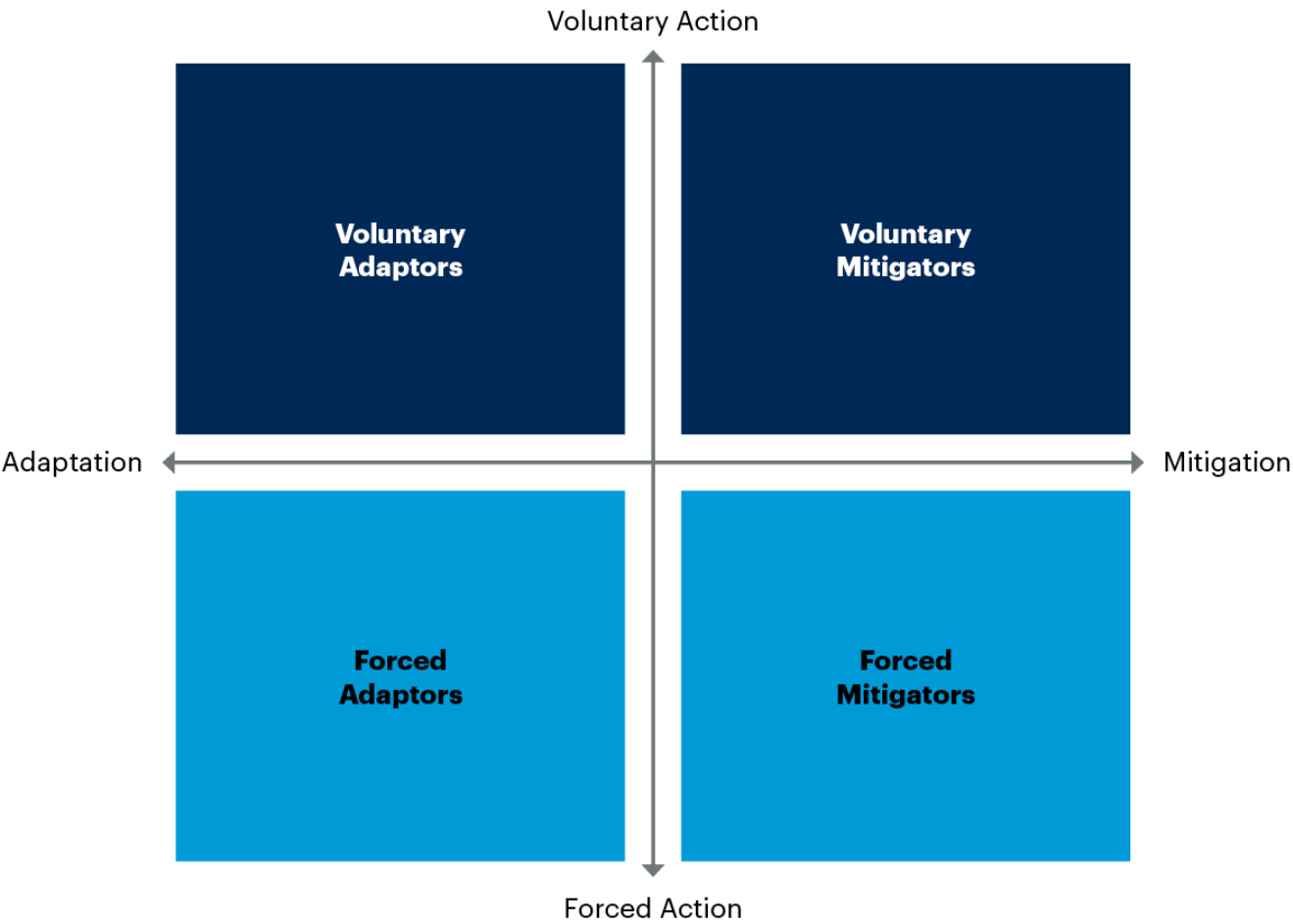
### Definition

The impact of COVID-19 will diminish, even if the process takes years. Climate change, on the other hand, has the potential to change the world permanently. There is no alternative but to try and stop it. Every organization has a contribution to make by thinking radically and adopting Maverick\* solutions.

One of the documents in this collection introduces radical scenarios and responses for supply chains (see Figure 1). These can be applied to other areas as well.

Figure 1. Radical Supply Chain Scenarios

Supply Chain Response to Climate Change



Source: Gartner  
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Maverick\* Research

The “Maverick” research program is Gartner’s incubator for unconventional, disruptive research and insights. Unconstrained by Gartner’s typical process of consensus formation, analysts can take minority positions, introduce new topics, pioneer new research designs, and explore longer time horizons. These lines of research help you get ahead of the mainstream and take advantage of trends and insights that could impact your strategy and your organization (see Note 1).

Research Highlights

Climate Change

Global warming is changing many of the assumptions we made as we built businesses and decided where to live. Gartner’s Maverick\* research offers radical ways by which you can not only meet the challenges but seize the opportunities that lie ahead.

## Related Research

[Maverick\\* Research: Supply Chains Need Radical Action as 'Our House Is Still on Fire'](#) by Sarah Watt and Simon Bailey: Climate change is a burning platform. Organizations that don't address it risk being left with stranded assets and failing supply networks. CSCOs must drive both radical adaptation actions to create climate change resilient networks and radical mitigation actions to avert the worst future impacts.

[Maverick\\* Research: Water Will Become the World's Most Precious — and Disruptive — Commodity](#) by Bettina Tratz-Ryan and Aanchal Mair: An irreversible potable water shortage will make water the most valuable asset of the global economy's financial systems. As water market capitalism catalyzes new business models, winning enterprise IT leaders will orchestrate data and processes on material impacts of business and operations risk.

[Maverick\\* Research: The Future of Business — Profit Second](#) by Nicholas Evans and Jamie Popkin: The most profitable and successful businesses over the next 10 years will explicitly place profit second in their mission statements and business and operating models. They will, paradoxically, net higher compounded revenue over this period than their peers who put profits first.

[Maverick\\* Research: Sustainability Will Be the Guiding Principle for Digital Age Entrepreneurial Leadership](#) by DD Mishra: The importance of sustainability is increasing but few organizations consider sustainability as one of their top business goals. Sustainability will become the guiding principle for digital age entrepreneurial leadership.

[Maverick\\* Research: Climate-Focused Transformation — CHROs to Assume Climate Leadership](#) by Cheshta Dora: Climate change is drastically impacting the world. As a steward of human capital, CHROs must expand their role to include climate leadership and develop climate-focused transformation strategies to ensure climate action and sustainability are considered in all business and talent decisions.

[Maverick\\* Research: Climate Change Needs a Digital Drug Against Delusion](#) by Pedro Pacheco: Reversing climate change is a utopia in the face of a delusional society rejecting pragmatism. Executive leaders must partner to tackle this impending threat to their companies. The solution is a digital platform that influences human behavior through its main drivers: economics and peer pressure.

## Other Maverick\* Research

In addition to research about climate change, Gartner's Maverick\* program has published the following document since the last collection.

## Related Research

[Maverick\\* Research: Welcome to the Splinternet — How Internet Fragmentation Disrupts Business and Threatens Society](#) by Darin Stewart: The internet is fragmenting in four ways — technical, governmental, commercial and social — and each is disruptive. Taken together, these four trends could shatter the global information infrastructure. Organizations must have a plan for adapting as the internet continues to splinter.

## Gartner Associates Supporting This Trend



[Simon Mingay](#), VP Analyst



[Richard Hunter](#), Distinguished VP Analyst



[Sarah Watt](#), Sr Director Analyst

## Related Resources

### Webinars

[The Gartner APAC Guide to Scale Assurance's Impact Through Economic Uncertainty](#)

[Leading Through COVID-19: How Vendors Can Help Vertical Industries Tackle Crisis](#)

[The 2021 CIO Agenda: Rebuilding the Future](#)

### Articles

[Prioritize Digital Business Initiatives to Accelerate Into the Future](#)

[Why Sustainability Matters to Supply Chain Sourcing](#)

[Build Organizational Resilience for Today and Tomorrow](#)

### Peer Insights

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[Join the Gartner Research Circle](#), an exclusive online community where business leaders participate in a two-way dialogue on mission-critical topics, key initiatives and industry developments with our Research & Advisory analysts and experts across numerous disciplines.

## Evidence

<sup>1</sup> [Wildfires, Global Climate Change, and Human Health](#)

<sup>2</sup> [How Cape Town Went From Water Crisis to Overflowing Dams in Just 2 Years](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Death Valley Just Recorded the Hottest Temperature on Earth](#)

<sup>4</sup> [101 Companies Committed to Reducing Their Carbon Footprint](#)

<sup>5</sup> [COVID-19 Shutdowns Will Give Wildlife Only Short-Term Relief From Climate Change and Other Threats](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Coronavirus: Air Pollution and CO2 Fall Rapidly as Virus Spreads](#)

## Note 1. Roots of the Word “Maverick”

Derived from the name of Texas rancher Samuel Maverick and his steadfast refusal to brand his cattle, “maverick” connotes someone who willfully takes an independent — and frequently disruptive or unorthodox — stand against prevailing modes of thought and action.

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