

Paul Polman

Discover the inspiring journey of Paul Polman, former CEO of Unilever and a visionary leader in sustainability and business innovation. From his humble beginnings to becoming a global advocate for change, Polman's story is a testament to impactful leadership.

KEY TOPICS

- Becoming Net Positive
- Purpose-driven Business
- Leading Transformation
- Business as a Force for Good

BIOGRAPHY

Paul Polman's Journey to Net Positive

Born into a family of six in the Netherlands, Paul Polman was instilled with the values of hard work, dignity, respect, equity, and compassion from an early age. His parents, a teacher and an administrative worker in a tyre factory, were his early inspirations. These foundational values later became the bedrock of his leadership philosophy.

Education and Early Career

Paul Polman's academic journey led him to the United States, where he earned dual degrees in economics and business studies from the University of Cincinnati. This period was not only significant for his academic achievements but also for meeting Kim, his future wife and partner in both life and philanthropy. Polman's career commenced with roles at three of the world's leading companies: Procter & Gamble, Nestlé, and Unilever. These experiences taught him the importance of value creation through diverse business models and the essence of serving a broad range of stakeholders.

A Global Visionary

As the CEO of Unilever from 2009 to 2019, Paul Polman transformed the company into a model of sustainability and ethical business. Under his leadership, Unilever saw a 290% increase in shareholder returns, top- and bottom-line growth, and received global recognition for its sustainability efforts and as a preferred workplace. Polman demonstrated that responsibility and performance could go hand in hand, setting new standards for business leadership. Post-Unilever, Paul Polman has not slowed down. He actively works at the nexus of global business, government, and civil society to address some of the world's most pressing challenges, such as

climate change and inequality. His contributions to the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals underscore his commitment to a sustainable and inclusive global economy.

Thought Leadership and Authorship

Polman's book, "Net Positive: How courageous companies thrive by giving more than they take", co-written to inspire a shift in business mindset towards regenerative models, reflects his vision for the future of business. He believes in leadership that is bold, collaborative, and transformative, capable of solving humanity's greatest challenges. Polman's advice to young executives is clear: be bold, take risks, and never give up. His journey underscores the importance of humility, partnership, and a relentless pursuit of one's beliefs. On a more personal note, Paul Polman is also learning the art of farming, rewilding a farm in the south of England with Kim. This endeavour is not only about personal growth but also about creating a sustainable legacy for future generations, including their grandchildren.

Book Paul Polman To Speak At Your Next Event!

Paul Polman's journey from a small town in the Netherlands to the global stage of business and sustainability is a powerful example for current and future leaders. His insights on responsible leadership, corporate sustainability, and the power of transformative action are invaluable for anyone looking to make a positive impact in today's world. Discover how Paul Polman can inspire and motivate your team at your next corporate event by visiting our contact page.