



Build for the Future, Today

To BCG's network around the world,

Four years ago, we suggested an agenda for business leaders to [win the '20s](#). Right now, the past four years feels like a lifetime, but digging into the ingredients of a successful company is still so important.

That's why I'm excited to share that BCG has updated and applied statistical rigor to our perspectives from that earlier work. A [new report](#) helps us better understand how to win in a changing world defined by digital enablement, embedded AI, rapid technological advancement, and higher societal expectations.

BCG surveyed 725 executives from around the world and across industries, representing \$21 trillion in revenues and a workforce of more than 43 million. We gained a clearer picture of how companies are building (or have built) more than 50 different capabilities that previous research has shown are fundamental to success. Statistical analysis highlighted six attributes that cut across sectors and were the best predictors of performance and preparedness for the future. Those attributes are:

- A clear people advantage to attract, retain, and develop world-class talent
- An operating model that enables agility and resilience to combat exogenous risks
- An innovation-driven culture
- A data platform and flexible, scalable technology platforms and applications to facilitate data access and support business needs easily and flexibly
- Fully embedded AI that can create value for the organization
- Finally, leadership that is aligned around a corporate purpose that integrates sustainability and social impact goals, building trust and transparency among stakeholders

Performance on these attributes was highly correlated with traditional measures of value creation. Future-built companies, 6% of the sample, exhibited all six attributes at scale and generated two to three times better financial performance (shareholder returns, revenue, and EBIT growth) as well as dramatically improved nonfinancial performance (NPS and ESG, AI patents, and Glassdoor recommendations) than the rest of the companies.

Not surprisingly, most of the companies in the top 6% are digital natives—for which these attributes may come more naturally. But there are large incumbents in that group, too, and the top quartile is mostly made up of incumbents.

What are leading companies doing differently?

Here are some examples of how “advanced companies”—that top quartile—are performing relative to the rest. The numbers are striking.

- Five times as many advanced companies are scaling AI solutions as opposed to running pilots at subscale (72% versus 14%).
- Advanced companies invest twice as much in AI solutions and realize 3.5 times greater return on investment.
- Three times as many advanced companies have stronger capabilities in the operational value chain, for example, intelligent asset management, smart factory, automated maintenance, and industry 4.0.
- More than twice as many have stronger capabilities in sales and marketing, and twice as many have stronger capabilities in customer experience and journeys, for example, personalization, consumer-centric services, and customer support and services.
- Twice as many have stronger capabilities in digital ecosystems, such as leveraging platforms and partnerships to drive sustainable revenue growth beyond their core.
- Advanced companies show a greater proclivity for earlier-stage innovation, launching 1.6 times more ventures or new companies than less advanced firms.

How can leaders embed these attributes across their organization?

Think of the six attributes as ingredients, not a recipe. They should be tailored according to industry, company, and starting point. For example, leading retailers tend to prioritize e-commerce, omnichannel, localized pricing and promotion, and demand forecasting, while leading auto and mobility players focus more on integrated customer experiences, workforce management and safety, digital

ecosystems, and industry 4.0.

No matter what, the rules are changing, and CEOs need a plan for change to match. There is no single right answer, but not moving ambitiously enough will almost certainly be a wrong one.

As you'd expect, a lot of our work right now is centered on companies looking to transform—to build resilience so they can weather the massive uncertainties today and to embed the attributes required to win tomorrow. This report, along with the [resilience insights](#) that Christoph has shared with you recently, provides the foundation to do both. Now is the time to act, and we are delighted to be your thought and business partner on that journey.

Until next time,



Rich Lesser
Global Chair

Further Reading



Build for the Future: The New Blueprint for Corporate Performance

The rules for boosting performance and competitive advantage are changing. CEOs urgently need a pragmatic playbook for building the capabilities to win in the future.

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