

Press release

Date to 10 February 2020

Subject BDO European Survey: Ensuring a leadership position in 2025
How European business leaders are responding to market disruption in order to gain competitive advantage

European businesses find themselves operating in a difficult macroeconomic landscape. Over the last 5 years, the European economy has grown on average less than 2% per year. Medium-term outlook is for a modest GDP growth of just 1.4% per year in 2020 and 2021.

But how will businesses continue to thrive and grow? BDO's research reveals that European businesses still set an ambitious growth agenda, with increased focus on transformation.

BRUSSELS, 10 February 2020: BDO undertook research among 215 business leaders based in seven European markets* which reveals that European businesses have significant growth plans, despite the challenges posed by the external operating environment.

*Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom

5 key findings

The 5 key findings confirm that European businesses should be prepared for disruption, which is now a part of life.



BDO's CEO of the EMEA region, Trond-Morten Lindberg, comments: "Business leaders are expected to navigate new challenges, such as emerging technologies, but also the future of work agenda, environmental issues and sustainability. With the depletion of natural resources, unconstrained year-on-year economic growth no longer seems as feasible as previously assumed. And the younger generation - tomorrow's new talent - in particular, expect to see the sustainability agenda elevated to the board room."

3 strategic investment areas to unlock growth: talent, technology and innovation

Business leaders are aware of the need to retain a dynamic sense of entrepreneurialism and to respond quickly to new market opportunities. As such, the way businesses aspire to grow has revolutionised, with talent, technology and product innovation being the three priority areas of investment and transformation that these leaders say will drive their future success.

Trond-Morten Lindberg continues: “If talent is a priority area of investment, it is imperative that we clearly understand all generational differences and what the new generation expects from their employers, making every employee, regardless of their age, feel engaged. Employees seek purpose and meaning and the younger generation in particular will want to see gains in efficiency through digitalisation and technology. Equally, they will expect those gains to be invested in improved work-life balance, in sustainability and climate measures and in ensuring equality.”



Opportunities for transformational change

To execute their ambitious plans for the next five years, the business leaders participating in the survey anticipate making transformational changes to their business processes and internal functions. 54% said that transformational change will be needed within their IT and technology functions. The areas of significant change align with their business priorities, such as achieving growth through digitisation and innovating their product and service offerings. European business leaders recognise that business as usual will no longer be the winning strategy to achieve their aggressive growth aspirations. Instead, real change is needed to rethink relations with customers, employers and other external partners.

Dare to be bold

BDO’s CEO EMEA Trond-Morten Lindberg concludes: “To address the many challenges ahead, a leader must dare to ask bold questions and be prepared to create a culture that encourages others to ask similarly bold questions both inside and outside the board room. He or she must consciously activate different stakeholder groups. They have to approach the younger generation and listen to their unbiased thoughts and suggestions. Taking note of the fresh ideas from these first true digital natives will undoubtedly lead to interesting debates and bring real added value to the table.”

The survey responses led BDO to identify a checklist of 10 questions that business leaders should review and discuss, to set their companies on the right path to market leadership. These 10 important questions can be found on page 21 of the report.

[Download the full report.](#)

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