

As Digital Gap Widens in Wake of Pandemic, 'Experts of Change' Will Define the Future, According to Accenture Technology Vision 2021

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Leadership is critical as every business becomes a technology business

NEW YORK; February 17, 2021 – According to the Accenture Technology Vision 2021, technology was a lifeline during the global pandemic – enabling new ways of working and doing business, creating new interactions and experiences, and improving health and safety. Technology forever changed expectations and behaviors and created entirely new realities across every industry. As companies shift from reacting to the crisis, to reinventing what comes next, the boldest, most visionary leaders — those who use technology to excel at change — will define the future, says the 21st annual report from Accenture (NYSE: ACN) predicting the key technology trends that will shape businesses and industries over the next three years.

The report, *"Leaders Wanted: Experts of Change at a Moment of Truth,"* outlines how leading enterprises are compressing a decade of digital transformation into one or two years. Relying on a strong digital core to adapt and innovate at lightning speed, leaders are growing revenues 5x faster than laggards today, versus only 2x faster between 2015 to 2018, according to Accenture research. The result is a wave of companies racing to reinvent themselves and use technology innovations to shape the new realities they face.

Technology Vision 2021

Leaders Wanted

Experts at Change at a Moment of Truth

Stack Strategically

Architecting a Better Future

77%

of executives state that their technology architecture is becoming very critical or critical to the overall success of their organization.

Mirrored World

The Power of Massive, Intelligent, Digital Twins

87%

of executives agree digital twins are becoming essential to their organization's ability to collaborate in strategic ecosystem partnerships.

I, Technologist

The Democratization of Technology

86%

of executives agree their organization must train their people to think like technologists.

Anywhere, Everywhere

Bring Your Own Environment

87%

of executives believe the remote workforce opens up the market for difficult to find talent and expands the competition for talent among organizations.

From Me to We

A Multiparty System's Path Through Chaos

90%

of executives agree that to be agile and resilient, their organizations need to fast forward their digital transformation with cloud at its core.

"The global pandemic pushed a giant fast forward button to the future. Many organizations stepped up to use technology in extraordinary ways to keep their businesses and communities running — at a pace they thought previously impossible — while others faced the stark reality of their shortcomings, lacking the digital foundation needed to rapidly pivot," said Paul Daugherty, group chief executive — Technology and chief technology officer at Accenture. "We now have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to turn this moment of truth for technology into a moment of trust — embracing the power of exponential technology change to completely reimagine and rebuild the future of business and human experience."

Accenture surveyed more than 6,200 business and technology leaders for the Technology Vision report, and 92% report that their organization is innovating with an urgency and call to action this year. And 91% of executives agree capturing tomorrow's market will require their organization to define it.

Shaping the future will require companies to become experts of change by adhering to three key imperatives. First, leadership demands technology leadership. The era of the fast follower is over —perpetual change is permanent. Tomorrow's leaders will be those that put technology at the forefront of their business strategy. Second, leaders won't wait for a new normal, they'll reinvent, building new realities using radically different mindsets and models. Finally, leaders will embrace a broader responsibility as global citizens, deliberately designing and applying technology to create positive impacts far beyond the enterprise to create a more sustainable and inclusive world.

The Technology Vision identifies five key trends that companies will need to address over the next three years to accelerate and excel at change in all parts of their business:

- **Stack Strategically: Architecting a Better Future** – A new era of industry competition is dawning – one where companies compete on their IT systems architecture. But building and wielding the most competitive technology stack means thinking about technology differently, making business and technology strategies indistinguishable. Eighty-nine percent of executives believe that their organization’s ability to generate business value will increasingly be based on the limitations and opportunities of their technology architecture.
- **Mirrored World: The Power of Massive, Intelligent, Digital Twins** – Leaders are building intelligent digital twins to create living models of factories, supply chains, product lifecycles, and more. Bringing together data and intelligence to represent the physical world in a digital space will unlock new opportunities to operate, collaborate, and innovate. Sixty-five percent of executives surveyed expect their organization’s investment in intelligent digital twins to increase over the next three years.
- **I, Technologist: The Democratization of Technology** – Powerful capabilities are now available to people across business functions, adding a grassroots layer to enterprises’ innovation strategies. Now, every employee can be an innovator, optimizing their work, fixing pain points, and keeping the business in lockstep with new and changing needs. Eighty-eight percent of executives believe technology democratization is becoming critical in their ability to ignite innovation across their organization.
- **Anywhere, Everywhere: Bring Your Own Environment** – The single biggest workforce shift in living memory has positioned businesses to expand the boundaries of the enterprise. When people can “bring your own environment” they have the freedom to seamlessly work from anywhere— whether that’s at home, the office, the airport, partners’ offices, or somewhere else. In this model, leaders can rethink the purpose of working at each location and lean into the opportunity to reimagine their business in this new world. Eighty-one percent of executives agree that leading organizations in their industry will start shifting from a ‘Bring Your Own Device’ to ‘Bring Your Own Environment’ workforce approach.
- **From Me to We: A Multiparty System’s Path Through Chaos** – The demand for contact tracing, frictionless payments, and new ways of building trust brought into sharp focus what had been left undone with enterprises’ existing ecosystems. Multiparty systems can help businesses gain greater resilience and adaptability; unlock new ways to approach the market; and set new, ecosystem-forward standards for their industries. Ninety percent of executives surveyed state that multiparty systems will enable their ecosystems to forge a more resilient and adaptable foundation to create new value with their organization’s partners.

Prioritizing technology innovation in response to a rapidly changing world has never been more important. Consider the restaurant industry: 60% of restaurants listed as ‘temporarily closed’ on Yelp in July were permanently out of business by September. Through the chaos, Starbucks emerged as a leader, using technology to expand customer and retail channels. By August, three million new users downloaded its app, and mobile ordering and drive-thru pick up accounted for 90 percent of sales. As demand surged, it deployed an integrated ticket management system to combine orders from its app, Uber Eats and drive-thru customers into a single workflow for baristas. Starbucks also introduced a new espresso machine with sensors to track how much coffee was being poured and predict necessary maintenance. This is a powerful illustration of technology as the core enabler of a company’s agile, resilient and successful response to change.

For 21 years, Accenture has taken a systematic look across the enterprise landscape to identify emerging technology trends that hold the greatest potential to disrupt businesses and industries. For more information on this year’s report, visit www.accenture.com/technologyvision or follow the conversation on Twitter with #TechVision2021.

About the Methodology

For the 2021 report, the research process included gathering input from the Technology Vision External Advisory Board, a group comprising more than two dozen experienced individuals from the public and private sectors, academia, venture capital firms and entrepreneurial companies. In addition, the Technology Vision team conducted interviews with technology luminaries and industry experts, as well as with nearly 100 Accenture business leaders. In parallel, Accenture Research conducted a global online survey of 6,241 business and IT executives to capture insights into the adoption of emerging technologies. The survey helped identify the key issues and priorities for technology adoption and investment. Respondents were C-level executives and directors at companies across 31 countries and 14 industries.

About Accenture

Accenture is a global professional services company with leading capabilities in digital, cloud and security. Combining unmatched experience and specialized skills across more than 40 industries, we offer Strategy and Consulting, Interactive, Technology and Operations services — all powered by the world’s largest network of Advanced Technology and Intelligent Operations centers. Our 514,000 people deliver on the promise of technology and human ingenuity every day, serving clients in more than 120 countries. We embrace the power of change to create value and shared success for our clients, people, shareholders, partners and communities. Visit us at www.accenture.com.

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