Four Key Trends That Will Impact Tech Strategy Decision-Making In EMEA

What’s Driving The Need For A Future Fit Technology Strategy
Expecting the unexpected has become the new normal.

For many technology leaders, the 2010s felt like unrelenting acceleration in clear weather. Driven by the endless quest for growth, the decade’s most successful firms tapped into new technologies such as mobile, social, and cloud to bring more innovative experiences to their customers and the market.

But 2020 brought an abrupt change.

The COVID-19 pandemic caught many firms by surprise, flipping traditional business models on their heads, accelerating the need for digital transformation, and ushering in a decade that will be characterised by volatility, change, and disruption.

The reality is that uncertainty is the new normal. Every company must adapt. Trends like changing customer values and the redistributed future of work will clash with unpredictable risks, such as future pandemics and geopolitical unrest. Technology executives will be in the middle of it all because technology is at the heart of business transformation. The message is clear: Being able to adapt to disruption is what differentiates leaders from laggards.

Here are some of the trends and risks that will shape the next decade and impact your organization’s technology strategy.
Customers are more empowered.
During the 2020 pandemic, consumers became more empowered and certainly more adept at using their devices. They’ve come to expect more from brands in a relatively short period. As the pandemic crisis eases, technology leaders can help their firms capitalise on consumers’ increased comfort with digital by offering hybrid physical/digital experiences — from augmented-reality car showrooms to in-store digital points of service. Organisations should design experiences that focus on desired customer outcomes, such as saving money or protecting the environment. They can also develop new emotional design, measurement, and optimization muscles as they build values into experience design.

More empowered buyers will continue to demand greater price transparency, convenience, experimentation, privacy, and values from their providers. During the pandemic, consumers spent more time thinking about the environment and their roles in their local and global community, which influenced their purchasing habits. In the future, consumers will direct spending to brands that they trust will connect them to a greater cause.

European tech leaders must take an outside-in approach, focusing on customer outcomes and empathy to ensure technology adapts to business change.

The future of work will be redistributed.
The future of work will look different coming out of the pandemic. Forrester’s most recent PandemicEX survey, which tracked employee feelings during the pandemic, found that 47% of European workers hope to be able to work from home more, even after the crisis is over. And even those who don’t want to work remotely increasingly value flexibility in their workplace. Employees now have better information, more options, and many avenues for communication, leading to higher expectations of employer technologies. Initiatives such as telehealth and software-as-a-service productivity apps will continue to become more integrated into traditional processes by applying structural, process, and cultural change techniques.

Further into the 2020s, automation will become widespread in the distributed workplace, as bots can more quickly perform the most predictable and repetitive activities; contingent labor will remain a strong alternative; and non-tech employees will become citizen developers. Organisations will need positive, insightful workforce analytics — and strategies to prevent data misuse — to improve talent acquisition and retention while achieving overall organisational goals.

In short, the workplace you know today will be very different by the end of this decade, and tech leaders must prepare for — and in many cases lead — that change.

47% is the European average.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
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<td>Germany</td>
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European workers who say they would like to continue working from home at least somewhat after the pandemic is over

Source: Forrester’s Q1 2021 European PandemicEX Survey
Technological investments will help prepare for future disruptions.

While the pandemic did catch many businesses and industries off guard, COVID-19 wasn’t a black swan; any infectious disease expert could have told you a pandemic was inevitable. In the future, there won’t be a 10-year period between global pandemics as there was between H1N1 and COVID-19.

Yet, according to Forrester data, only 30% of business leaders polled revealed that their business continuity plans were equipped to address a pandemic outbreak.

However, Forrester data also shows that 56% of European organisations are more likely to advocate for improved plans and technological investments to help prepare for any potential future disruption.

Health pandemics don’t just impact your business and employees but also your customers. Addressing human health and wellness risks should be central to the customer-obsessed business.

Pandemics and systemic risks are increasing.

Pandemics and other systemic risks will increase in frequency and magnitude. Some of those risks include disease spread, natural disasters, and climate change; data breaches; recessions and economic uncertainty; and geopolitical tensions and unrest. Each systemic risk presents unique challenges to your organisation and will require different mitigation strategies to avoid the most egregious consequences. Business and technology leaders must embrace a more proactive approach to handling unexpected change instead of simply reacting to change when it shows up.

The solution: adaptive, resilient, and creative

To thrive in an era of constant disruption, customer-obsessed firms must create a technology strategy that is adaptive, resilient, and creative. This technology model will accelerate companies’ ability to address new customer, market, and competitive realities as they arise and empower organisations to boldly pursue customer obsession amid ongoing uncertainty and changing business needs. According to Forrester, firms that have mastered these three areas grow at three times their industry averages. And even mastering one of the three can have a significant impact on your firm’s growth rate.

| Which of the required provisioning changes need to be made by your IT department in order to meet the needs of an increasing number of employees working from home? |
|-----------------|------|
| Networks        | 34%  |
| Servers         | 33%  |
| Storage         | 30%  |
| Hardware        | 35%  |
| VPN (virtual private network) | 40%  |
| Endpoint security | 29%  |
| Telecommunications | 28%  |
| Collaboration applications | 31%  |

Source: Forrester Analytics Business Technographics Priorities And Journey COVID-19 Recontact Survey, 2020

Ready to take the next step?

To learn more about Forrester’s Future Fit technology model and how to execute it in your organisation, check out the following complimentary resources:

Future Of Technology In EMEA
Key EMEA insights to help technology leaders build adaptive, thriving, future fit organisations

Sustainability Resources
Guidance for leaders to bring their sustainability initiatives to the forefront of their strategy

Technology & Innovation EMEA
17 – 18 November, 2021: bringing together over 500 technology leaders across EMEA to explore and deploy the power of advanced digital technologies