



Grant Thornton

REPORT

ENTERPRISE RESILIENCE

Efficiency starts with resilience

5 traits powering stronger performance

Executive summary

Grant Thornton’s Enterprise Resilience Survey shows a clear link between resilience and efficiency. Among highly efficient organizations, 71% rate their resilience as above average — nearly double the rate of less-efficient peers (36%). The payoff is clear: resilience isn’t overhead — it’s a competitive edge. Based on responses from 550 senior leaders in various roles across the industry spectrum, the research highlights five distinct capabilities that differentiate high-efficiency, high-profit organizations. These organizations:

- Prioritize formal workforce resilience programs
- Cut costs without increasing risks
- Enable third-party risk visibility
- Treat compliance as a strategic priority
- Allocate appropriate resources and focus on resilience efforts

As a level set for this report, it’s important to define “enterprise resilience.” Survey respondents reported a broad understanding of what “enterprise resilience” means, and they especially cited the ability to persevere through disruptions with low impact on operations and customers — and the ability to learn from incidents to improve future responses.

The survey asked respondents to self-identify the level of their organizations’ resilience, efficiency and profitability, and responses showed substantial correlation between those qualities. With this foundation established, the takeaway from the survey is that resilience is more than protection — it’s performance. Organizations that invest fully and embed resilience in decision-making gain agility, stability and strong results, even under pressure.

Done right, resilience pays dividends.

What does enterprise resilience mean to you?

Q: Which of the following describe what “enterprise resilience” means to your organization?

The ability to maintain core operations under stress or disruption

80%

Recovering rapidly from incidents with minimal customer impact

72%

Continuously learning from past disruptions to improve future response

69%

Building in redundancy and backup systems so services never go down

65%

Sustaining long-term financial health despite external shocks

61%

Quickly adapting strategies and processes when the market changes

58%

Embedding risk management and compliance into every decision

58%

Having a workforce that’s cross-trained, supported and ready for change

55%

Ensuring supply chain and third-party continuity under all conditions

51%

Introduction

Some executives approach governance and compliance as obligations. But the real payoff comes when those efforts strengthen resilience. Our survey shows that organizations that build resilience don't just avoid disruption — they run more efficiently, innovate faster, and deliver stronger profits.

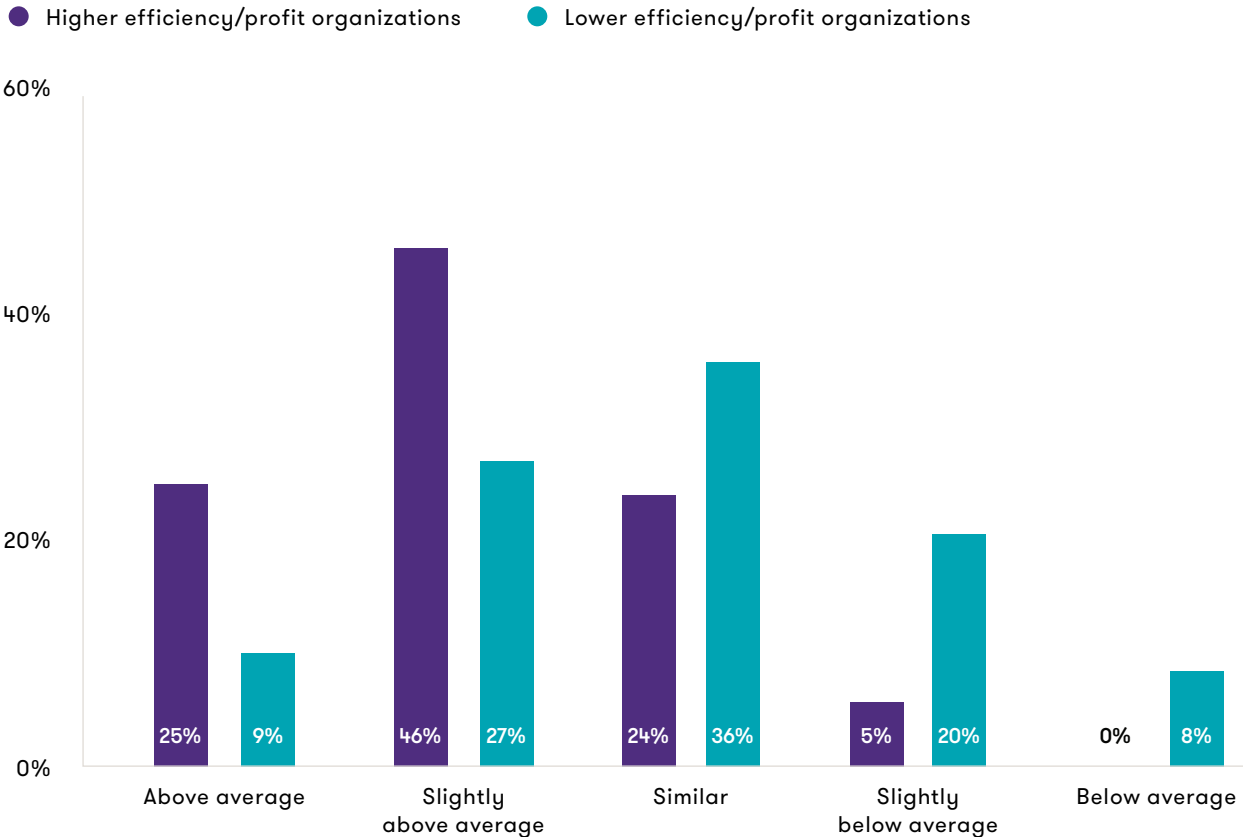
Resilience is no longer just a defensive shield. It's a performance advantage. Companies that treat continuity as a practice, not a checklist, are better positioned to anticipate disruption and act decisively when it strikes.

“You have to be well-informed as a management team on where disruption can occur and what your optionality is to address that disruption,” said Grant Thornton Business Consulting Partner Jonathan Eaton. “Efficient, profitable companies treat business continuity as discipline, not paperwork. They plan and act to mitigate risks.”

This is the first in a three-part series exploring how resilience drives business results. This report focuses on efficiency and profitability. Future reports will examine resilience's role in growth and long-term performance.

The efficiency-resilience connection

Q: Compared to your industry peers, how would you describe your organization’s resilience?



Note: Efficiency and profitability performance against peers were self-reported by executives in the survey.



**Workforce resilience
strengthens agility**

HIGHER EFFICIENCY

66% of high-efficiency companies operate formal workforce resilience programs to strengthen adaptability and employee well-being.

LOWER EFFICIENCY

Just **30%** of low-efficiency firms have formal workforce resilience programs in place.

Workforce resilience isn't a priority for many organizations, even though it promotes efficiency and agility.

Just 58% of our total survey respondents run formal workforce resilience programs such as cross-training and well-being initiatives, and one in five address workforce resilience only when turnover or burnout occurs.

"The speed of technology adoption and AI implementation makes training and workforce resilience programs even more urgent," said Grant Thornton Business Consulting Partner Joe Ranzau. "In addition to teaching employees to use specific technologies, organizations need to train for a broader resilience skill set that will enable them to evolve with tech changes in general. People need to be prepared to explore new technology and also to question tech outputs if they're going to be the human in the loop."

While technology training is a popular facet of workforce resilience in the current environment, [Grant Thornton's quarterly CFO surveys](#) consistently show that increases in workforce training spending aren't keeping pace with digital transformation spending increases. As a result, technology adoption outpaces the collective workforce skill set, and training is an even more crucial factor in business success. Organizations that don't prioritize training will have workforces that get left behind.

AI makes this even clearer. Automation can cut costs, but it doesn't erase the need to build a bench. High-performing organizations have formal programs that identify and develop future leaders by:

- Redesigning junior roles to pair AI-enabled task execution with supervised ownership, rotations and "apprentice" assignments that provide real reps on analysis, client delivery and decision-making.
- Using sandboxes, shadowing and capability academies to help early-career staff build judgment and technical depth required for succession.
- Setting clear skill milestones and tracking progress to ensure the pipeline stays strong.

The message is simple: invest in workforce resilience to keep turnover low and leadership pipelines strong.

"When you invest in workforce resilience, you upskill people and retain them because they feel supported through disruption and see a chance to advance within the organization."

Joe Ranzau
Partner, Business Consulting, Grant Thornton Advisors LLC



**Cut costs without
weakening resilience**

HIGHER EFFICIENCY

69% of high-efficiency firms often factor redundancy and flexibility into their cost-cutting programs.

LOWER EFFICIENCY

Only **26%** of low-efficiency firms incorporate redundancy and flexibility when implementing cost-cutting measures.

When cutting costs, leaders should take care not to slice a hole through their safety net.

“Cutting costs without protecting backups risks bigger losses later,” said Grant Thornton Risk Advisory Partner Leslie Watson-Stracener. “True efficiency removes waste but preserves resilience.”

Cost reductions are one of the primary reasons for automation investments at a time when technology investments are surging, but leaders have the potential to damage resilience when they implement tech.

When cost-cutting, leaders should protect “resilience buffers” — the slack, redundancy and surge capacity that keep the business stable under stress. Trimming too deep into buffers — such as cross-trained teams, critical maintenance, vendor diversification, inventory safety stock, cyber monitoring and incident response — may boost this quarter’s margin but quietly raises the odds and impact of failure.

The results are higher earnings volatility, longer recovery times and reputational and regulatory risk that can dwarf the savings. Buffers aren’t waste; they’re an operating hedge and an option on uncertainty, allowing organizations to absorb shocks, re-route work and meet customer commitments when competitors stall.

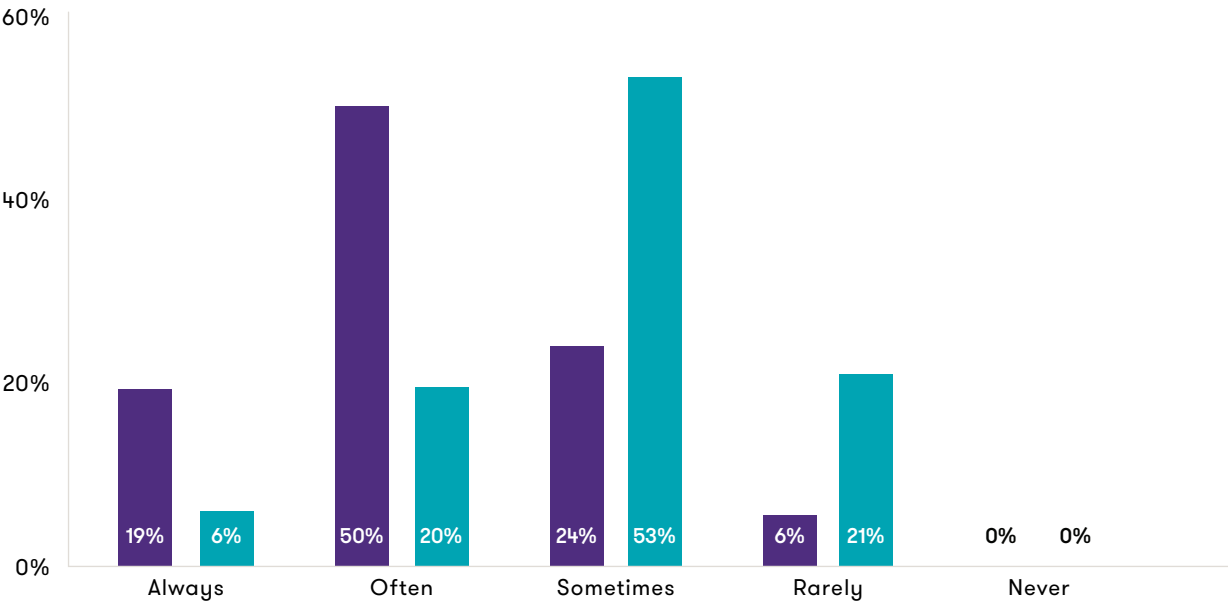
The discipline is to remove true waste, not foundational defensive capabilities, so you protect both the bottom line and the business’s ability to withstand and adapt to disruption.

[Learn how leading companies reduce costs without sacrificing resilience.](#)

Redundancy, flexibility and efficiency

Q: In your organization’s efficiency programs, how often are redundancy and flexibility explicitly factored in to reduce risks?

Higher efficiency/profit organizations Lower efficiency/profit organizations





Enabling third-party risk visibility

HIGHER EFFICIENCY

46% of efficient companies express confidence in their third-party risk visibility, indicating stronger oversight and risk management practices.

LOWER EFFICIENCY

Only **17%** of less-efficient firms feel confident about their third-party risk visibility, suggesting potential gaps in monitoring and control.

Grant Thornton recently performed a third-party risk management analysis using Interos.ai technology on the key suppliers of a client that depends heavily on reliable, on-time deliveries of high-quality supplies. The platform scoured data on the first-tier suppliers, their suppliers, and their suppliers' suppliers for potential risks.

It found that one key first-tier supplier had vendors in its supply chain that posed some significant risks. The client met with the supplier and requested remediation.

"It's hard to say what would have happened if they hadn't done that, but it's just good business and good management," Eaton said.

Third-party risk visibility is a profitability imperative, not just a compliance chore. When leaders understand a supplier's financial health, cyber posture, service performance, concentration exposure and tier-2/3 dependencies, they catch issues early before they turn into stockouts, outages, penalties or scramble premiums. Efficient organizations build profitability by managing supplier risk with discipline. They:

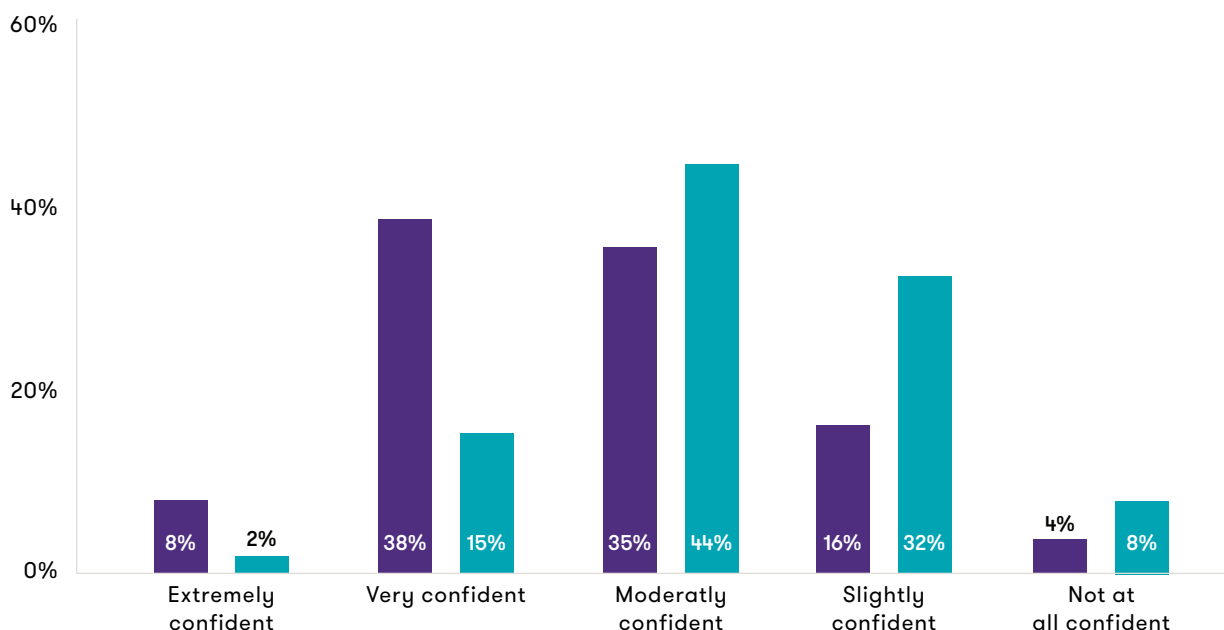
- Run tighter vendor life cycles
- Reduce shadow spend and vendor sprawl
- Speed remediation and dual-sourcing decisions
- Protect gross margin with steadier revenue and faster recovery

Resilient companies make risk transparent and actionable, and they reap efficiency and profitability gains as a result.

Tracking third-party risks

Q: How confident are you in your organization's visibility into third-party/vendor risk exposure?

● Higher efficiency/profit organizations ● Lower efficiency/profit organizations





**Treat compliance as
a strategic priority**

HIGHER EFFICIENCY

67% of higher-efficiency organizations treat compliance as a strategic priority, embedding it into leadership decisions, planning, and governance frameworks.

LOWER EFFICIENCY

Only **38%** of less-efficient organizations integrate compliance into their strategic leadership and governance processes.

Companies that take a proactive approach to compliance have an advantage over their peers that react to rules and regulations only after they are released. While 27% of less-efficient organizations handle compliance in ad hoc fashion, just 8% of their efficient peers do the same.

Prioritizing compliance means treating obligations as design inputs to how the company is run. The board and executive team set risk appetite and compliance objectives alongside financial targets. Leadership committees include compliance signoffs for strategy, investments, new products, vendor onboarding and M&A. High-efficiency organizations make the first line own control quality through playbooks, training and incentives, with audit and legal providing challenge and assurance.

When compliance is built into decisions, the organization experiences fewer breakdowns and faster recovery. For example, our survey report finds that during innovation projects, efficient organizations are more likely to integrate risk management from day one instead of reacting to risks as they arise.

“Compliance and risk management increasingly have a seat at the table from the beginning,” Watson-Stracener said. “They don’t want to be handing out parking tickets. They provide more value as a strategic partner.”

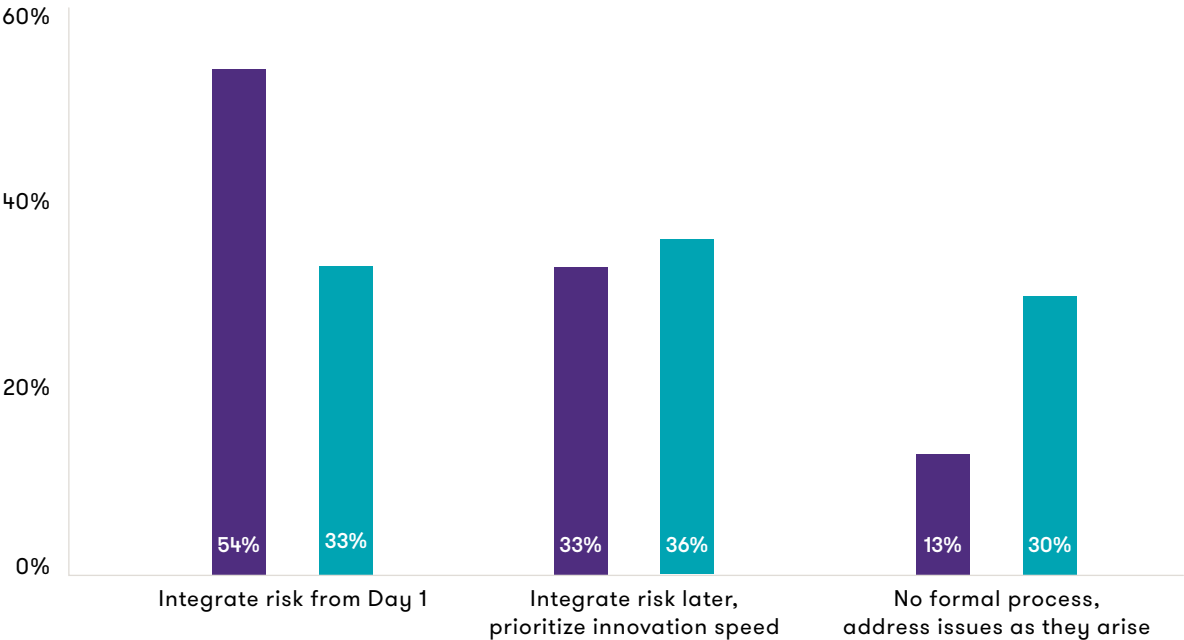
Contrary to popular belief, the strategic prioritization of risk and compliance does not need to slow down innovation. Incidents are caught earlier, remediation costs less, and regulatory findings are rarer and smaller. Time to market improves because approvals move in one pass rather than rework. In short, governance with embedded risk management and compliance produces resilient operations that protect the downside and enable disciplined profitability.

“You want your risk management leaders involved so you can see the potential pitfalls, understand where you should examine your risks along the way, and decide proactively how to lead the response that best serves the organization, its customers and ultimately the shareholders,” Eaton said.

Integrate risk immediately

Q: Which statement best describes your organization’s approach to innovation and risk?

Higher efficiency/profit organizations Lower efficiency/profit organizations





**Align budget,
time and focus
for resilience**

ALL ORGANIZATIONS

33% of organizations in our survey are at least slightly underinvested in resilience initiatives.

Companies often don't devote many resources to resilience despite its importance, as one-fourth of organizations in our survey spend less than 2% of their overall budget on resilience initiatives.

Organizations often feel underinvested in resilience because spending is fragmented, reactive and hard to trace to outcomes. Funding arrives after incidents, ownership is split across functions, and leaders lack clear metrics for risk reduction or time to recover. Vendor sprawl, shadow IT and manual processes inflate baseline noise, so money disappears into maintenance instead of capability. Short planning horizons and competing initiatives crowd out drills, redundancy and modernization. The result is a perception of chronic scarcity, even when dollars are being spent.

Underinvesting in resilience often is a symptom of a larger problem that leaves companies vulnerable.

The fix is alignment, not just a bigger line item. Set a cross-functional resilience roadmap, name accountable owners, and govern it like any strategic portfolio with milestones and KPIs. Allocate not only budget but time for exercises, capacity for cross-training, and focus. When budget, people and attention move together, organizations hit resilience goals, absorb shocks and adapt faster to change.

"If you're going to be good at business continuity planning, you must build a culture of shared accountability and a consistent cadence that identifies the failure modes and empowers leaders with the information to make wise decisions," Eaton said.

Organizations need to look both backward and forward. The look-back should include considering examples of companies that succeeded and failed in the past based on their resilience strategies. The look-ahead should anticipate potential changes to the risk environment. What risks or opportunities will be presented in the coming year with taxes, tariffs, inflation and interest rates? In the more distant future, what changes might come with the next political administration? And always, what cyberthreats are lurking on the horizon?

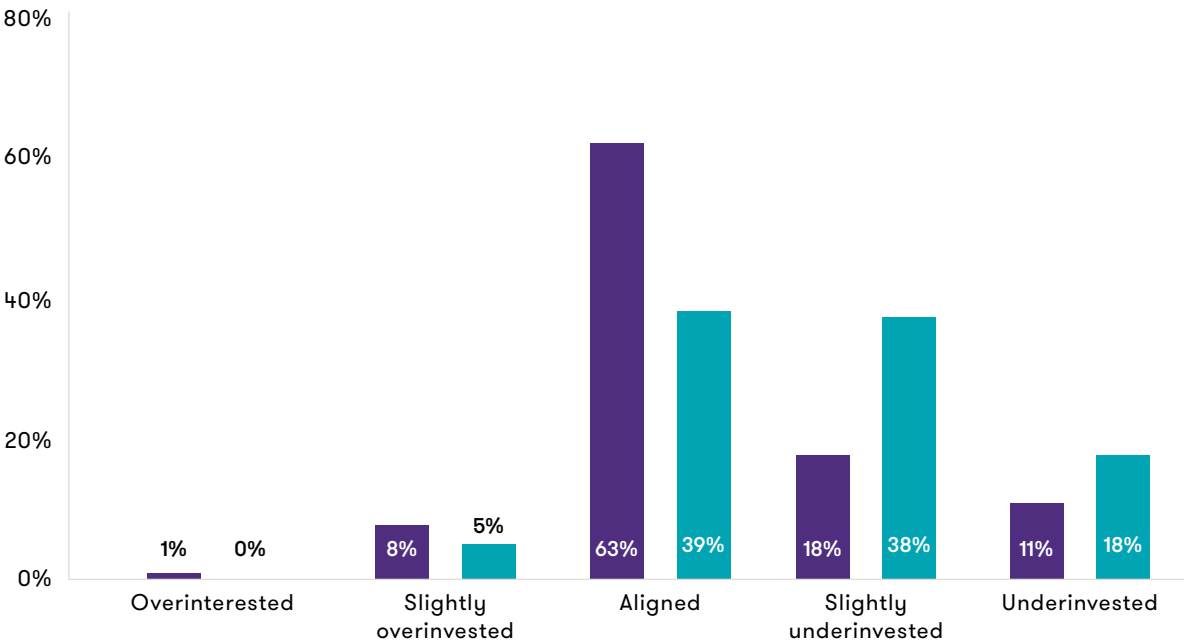
"If your strategic model doesn't have you thinking ahead every day, then you're behind."

Leslie Watson-Stracener
Partner, Risk Advisory, Grant Thornton Advisors LLC

Budgeting for resilience

Q: How would you best describe your budget allocation for resilience initiatives?

Higher efficiency/profit organizations Lower efficiency/profit organizations



Key takeaways:

How resilience drives profitability

Organizations experience tangible benefits when their leaders treat resilience as a profitability play rather than a regulatory obligation. Our survey demonstrates the linkage between resilience, efficiency and profitability. Enterprise resilience is most effective when:

- **It's embedded in strategy and planning, not treated as a side project.**
- **Resources, time and effort are coordinated around common resilience goals.**
- **Leadership sets clear accountability, funding and outcomes across functions.**
- **Special attention is paid to high-risk areas such as automation, innovation, cost management, workforce retention and third-party relationships.**
- **Efficiency is balanced with buffers — people, suppliers, inventory and cash — by design.**
- **Investments in workforce readiness are sufficient to meet the needs of a rapidly changing environment.**
- **Scenario planning and stress-testing inform investment, portfolio and capacity choices.**

“You have to be strategic and plan for the right scenarios,” Watson-Stracener said. “When leaders carefully think through the disruptions that could affect their business, they get better results.”

[Join senior leaders as we discuss what drives efficiency and resilience in today's market.](#)

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With over 20 years of supply chain experience, Jonathan has spent most of his career advising large multinational companies and middle-market companies across multiple industry sectors on how to best transform their supply chains. His industry experience covers consumer and industrial products; food and beverage; retail; auto aftermarket; auto manufacturing; utilities; oil and gas; life sciences; technology and financial services. He also has extensive experience with turnarounds, post-merger integration, divestitures and technology implementations. Jonathan is best recognized for his ability to help clients define their supply chain strategy in response to changing market conditions and other disruptive forces and subsequently helping them transform their supply chains to provide higher customer satisfaction while balancing their inventory and service commitments and minimizing their total supply chain costs.



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Joe is a back-office transformation leader focused on performance and profitability improvement through strategy design, operating model redesign, cross-functional process improvement, post-merger integration and organizational change management. Joe drives value for clients by navigating cross-functional silos and boosting performance by bridging the gap between technology and the human side of operations. His specialties include human resources transformation; target operating model design; global payroll strategy; workforce optimization; organizational change management; program leadership; ERP implementations; executive coaching; emotional intelligence; automation; process redesign; organizational development and training; M&A; culture change; and employee relations.

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About our survey

We surveyed 550 business leaders in various executive and senior roles across industries to understand how they view resilience and implement it into their business practices. Questions applying to this first of three survey reports were structured to examine how higher efficiency organizations handle resilience in key areas such as the workforce, cost optimization, third-party risk, growth, governance and budgeting.



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