

Operational Agility Is the New Imperative

Operations professionals recognize that digital transformation can vastly improve an organization's agility as they adapt to changing business and customer needs. As technology ecosystems, partner networks, and both business and back-end processes grow increasingly more complex, and as disruptive global phenomenon like the COVID-19 pandemic occur with greater frequency, operations must be adaptable, resilient, and agile to address the challenges and opportunities that come their way.¹

Our research shows that the pandemic made stark the issues that were already present; it also accelerated the need to achieve key operations goals such as improving remote worker inclusion, automating as many tasks as possible, and reducing costs. Unfortunately, many respondents feel they are less collaborative and responsive today than they were prior to the crisis. Firms that are looking to improve should use this study as a roadmap to evaluate their own operational maturity and to identify key areas for improvement.

KEY FINDINGS

- › **Operational agility is crucial for adapting to evolving needs.** Eighty percent of study respondents recognize that their business processes will need to become more agile in order to keep up with the rapidly changing business needs and an ever-expanding and -evolving IT landscape. In order to do this, most firms are moving forward with digital transformation initiatives and focusing operations work on improving data quality, resilience, remote worker inclusion, and technology dependability.
- › **Operationally mature organizations are more automated and proactive than their less mature counterparts.** Respondents from mature organizations, called leaders in this study, have automated more of their business and IT processes, moving beyond just customer-facing processes. These leaders use more advanced automation tools, value high-quality data, and aren't afraid of investing in the right solutions, even during times of economic uncertainty when the less mature organizations, referred to in this study as beginners, tend to be more risk averse.



METHODOLOGY

Cisco commissioned Forrester Consulting to evaluate the operational maturity of organizations of 500 or more employees in North America, Europe, and Asia Pacific.

To achieve these objectives, Forrester conducted an online survey with 1,212 IT and operations decision-makers with responsibility for automation strategy.

This study will unfold as a four-part series with the following installments:

1. Modernize Operations To Digitally Transform And Weather Any Storm
2. Operational Maturity Is Critical To Business Success
3. Automation Is Not Without Challenges, But They Can Be Overcome
4. Automation + Operational Maturity = Major Business Benefits

- › **While leaders work to perfect automations, beginners struggle to overcome talent gaps and cultural resistance.** Though everyone faces bumps along the way, leaders are better prepared to manage these challenges than beginners are. Having already automated many processes, leaders' core challenges center around codifying, testing, and troubleshooting automations. This is why ensuring data quality is so critical to leaders; they recognize that more accurate inputs lead to automation improvements. Beginners, in contrast, tend to encounter issues that threaten to derail progress. They struggle to find the right in-house skillsets to use new technologies and combat general cultural resistance to automation.
- › **Automating IT and business processes compounds the progress and benefits of operations leaders.** More than three-quarters of highly mature organizations report making positive progress toward their top goals, compared to little more than half of beginners. Leaders in our study report more positive impact to revenue, cost savings, customer satisfaction, and business resilience KPIs. They are also more agile, collaborative, and responsive than their less mature counterparts.

To learn more, read the [full four-part series](#).

Appendix A: Endnotes

¹ Source: "Gauge Your Modern Technology Operations Maturity," Forrester Research, Inc., September 29, 2020.

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