



Optimism as a Competitive Advantage



AESC Client Research Report 2023

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Welcome Letter

As we look forward to 2024 and beyond, there's one word that encapsulates AESC's outlook on the years ahead: Optimism. Despite the uncertainty the future holds – economic, political and technological — the most successful leaders focus on turning challenges into opportunities with a lens of “realistic optimism.” This mindset combined with a clear understanding of the importance of retaining current talent and attracting new talent promotes growth, innovation, and operational efficiency. Combining the right talent with the right strategies and culture creates the strongest adaptability, a competitive advantage to leaders, teams, and organizations worldwide.



Karen Greenbaum
CEO, AESC

In this AESC report, we briefly highlight the areas of greatest risk in times of uncertainty, as indicated by more than 1,300 leaders worldwide. We then pivot to insights on turning risks and challenges into opportunities for growth. It's easy to focus on the challenges and turbulence in the world, but the strongest leaders seek to differentiate their business strategies by driving innovation, capturing operational efficiencies, and responding to shifting markets. These same leaders understand the critical connection between retaining current talent, attracting new talent and industry-leading success.

Culture is central to attracting and retaining top talent. This report delves into culture as a catalyst for success, the keys to culture improvement, and leaders' DEI and sustainability strategies.

This year we probe deeper into the influence and impact of technology. Due to the rapid evolution of AI and its ability to reshape industries and organizational strategies, combined with the increased challenges of cybersecurity, we increased our focus on technology. We surveyed leaders about their organization's top tech priorities and emerging priorities. Leaders also identified the risks and opportunities associated with AI.

To round out the report, we looked at the top strengths and competencies needed to succeed in the current business environment. For the first time in our research, leaders identified emotional intelligence as the top strength or competency in the current business environment. They combined this with a results-orientation and a continued need for resilience.

Emotionally intelligent leaders find opportunities in places where others only see challenges. Their ability to inspire others, see the value in all, and encourage innovation provides organizations with a unique competitive advantage.

I am proud to share our findings and hope they will be used to inform 2024 talent and organizational strategies. On behalf of AESC, we are pleased to share our signature global client research. I wish you success – and optimism – in the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen A. Greenbaum". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

1 We Operate From
Where We Stand



1. We Operate From Where We Stand

All organizations are influenced by and must operate within their external economic, social, environmental, and political realities. In this section we briefly explore these external factors, and then pivot to the opportunities that can be captured by those who have the vision to do so.

External Factors Impacting Business

For clients in 2023, the top external factor is economic downturn, followed by inflation and shifting customer behavior. The fourth ranking factor impacting business is labor shortages, followed by recession risk. BlueSteps executive candidates share these concerns.

While economic concerns ranked at the top of client concerns in 2022, labor shortages came in as the second-highest ranked external issue.

In both years, respondents' concern about labor shortages indicates a clear understanding of the impact the right talent has on their business.

External Factors Impacting Business

2023 Client Survey

- 1 Economic downturn
- 2 Inflation
- 3 Shifting customer behavior
- 4 Labor shortages
- 5 Recession risk

2023 Executive Candidates

- 1 Economic downturn
- 2 Shifting customer behavior
- 3 Inflation
- 4 Geopolitical instability
- 5 Recession risk

2022 Client Survey

- 1 Inflation
- 2 Labor shortages
- 3 COVID 19 disruptions
- 4 Supply chain disruptions
- 5 Recession risk

Greatest **Risks** in Times of Uncertainty

We also asked about the greatest risks clients face. These risks are primarily rooted in external concerns. These risks – economic downturn, market volatility and decreased demand – are exacerbated by strained employee morale and the real risk of retaining top talent at all levels, especially in light of a global talent shortage. As business leaders worry about the many external factors, so do the rest of their employees and this creates huge pressures on morale and retention.

Once again, as we compared global client response to global executive candidate responses, they aligned.

Greatest Risks in Times of Uncertainty

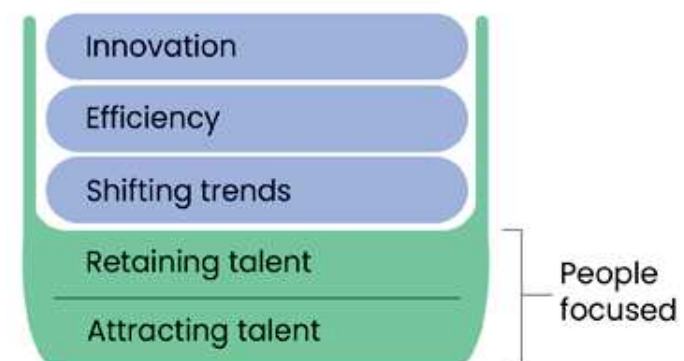


Greatest **Opportunities** in Times of Uncertainty

With external concerns and risks as a backdrop, we asked clients what they saw as the greatest opportunities in times of uncertainty. Their top 5 list was an intriguing balance of business strategies and talent strategies.

The top three opportunities leaders identified were innovation, efficiency, and shifting trends. The top two people-focused opportunities were retaining and attracting talent. The correlation is clear – leaders understand the need to drive innovation, capture efficiency, and respond to shifting market trends. They also understand that these opportunities cannot be captured without retaining high-performing talent and attracting new talent.

Greatest Opportunities in Times of Uncertainty



Internal Factors of Greatest Focus

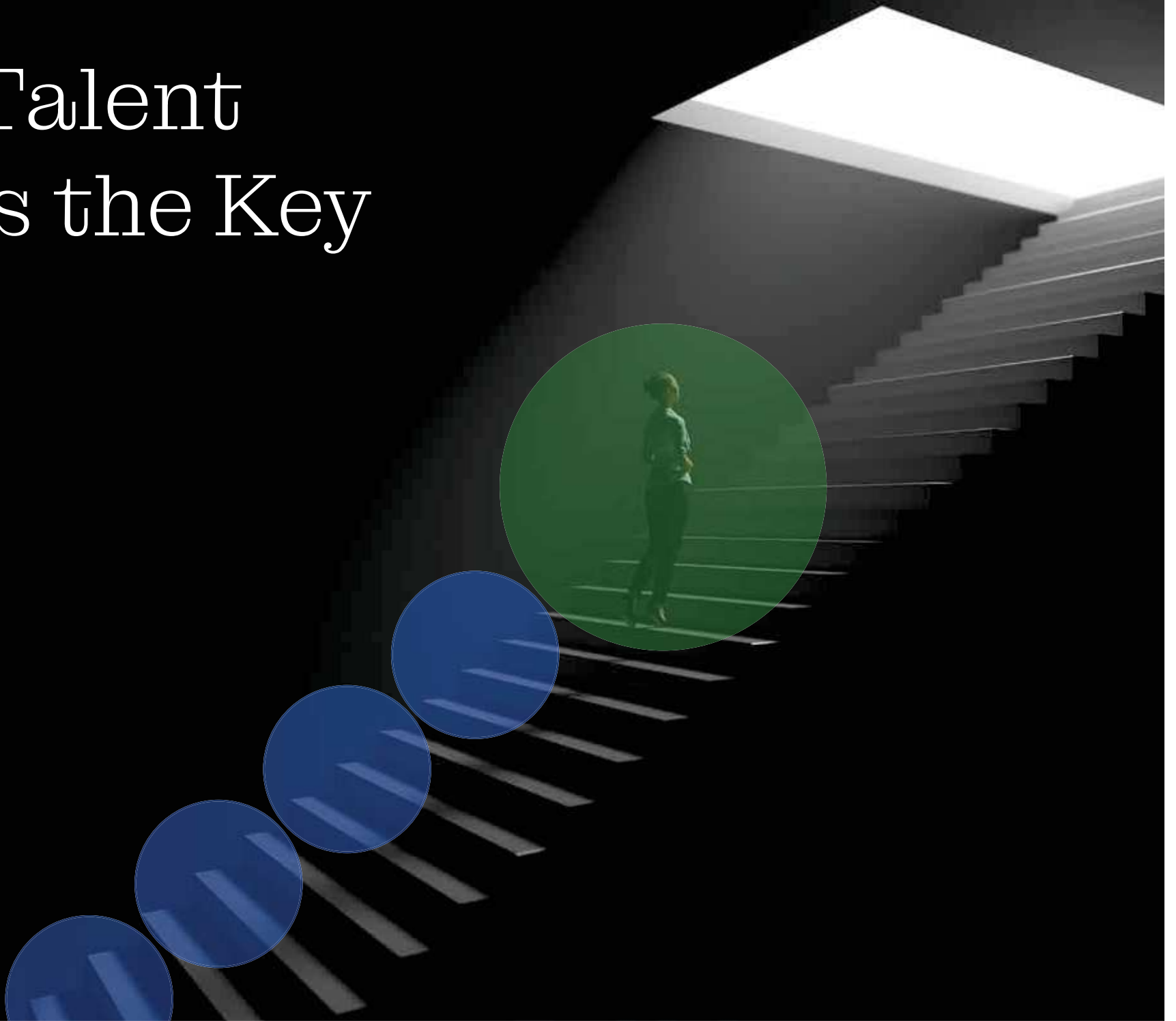
In 2023, retaining top talent ranked a top priority, higher than attracting top talent. This reflects the risk of losing needed talent in an environment where labor shortages are a reality. The areas of greatest focus: organizational agility, digital transformation, evolving business models and customer centricity depend on retaining top talent at all levels.

We note the significant shift of internal focus year over year, from a heavy concentration on attracting and retaining talent in 2022, to broader organizational issues in 2023—issues that require talent to address.

Internal Factors of Greatest Focus



2 Talent is the Key



2. Talent is the Key

Capturing opportunities comes down to people. Whether disruption becomes an obstacle or a catapult to success hinges on an organization’s workforce and strategies.

In an environment with labor shortages, we know that the very best talent around the world has employment choices. These executives look at more than just the “job offer.” They look at the organization, its leaders, and its culture.

Key Drivers to Attracting and Retaining Talent

AESC asked clients about attracting and retaining talent, then asked executive candidates what draws them to an employer and what makes them want to stay. First, the client view of what it takes to attract and retain talent evolved from 2022 to 2023.

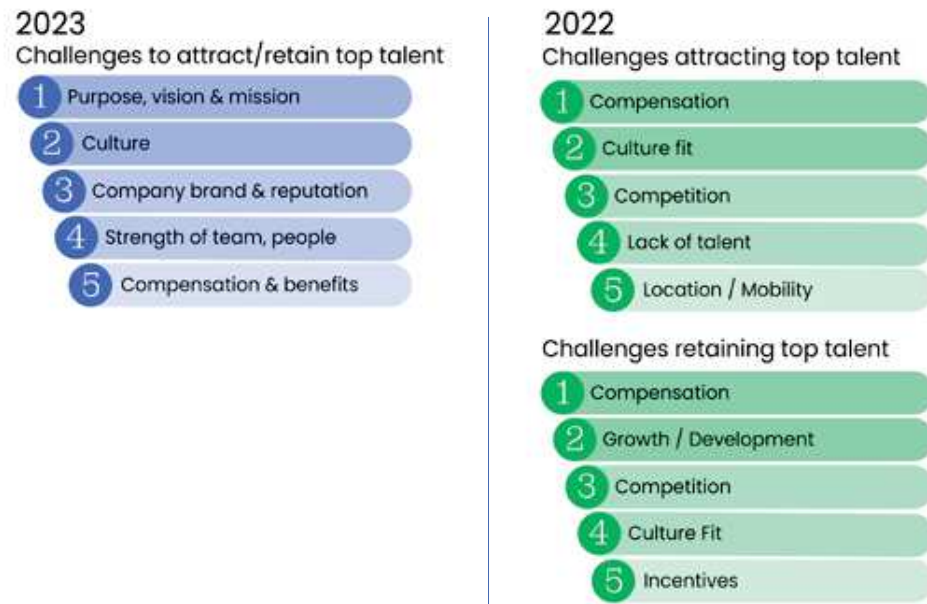
CLIENT VIEW YEAR OVER YEAR

In 2022, we asked two separate questions: the challenges attracting talent and challenges retaining talent. In 2023, we combined those two into a single question on attracting and retaining talent. While clients had different priorities when it came to attracting and retaining talent in 2022, we believe that attraction and retention are two sides of the same coin. Effective leaders understand that there must be alignment between how organizations attract talent and how they keep talent.

In 2023, we see a clear and compelling shift in perspective. Clients around the world clearly understand that top talent has choices. To attract and retain talent, leaders need to create an organization where people want

to come to work and they want to stay. The top priorities – purpose vision & mission; culture, company brand & reputation, and the strength of the team – all come together to create that “employer of choice” environment. The offer – money & benefits – is still in the top 5 list but money alone won’t make the difference if nothing else meets candidates’ expectations.

Client View Year Over Year



CLIENTS AND EXECUTIVE CANDIDATES

When looking at clients versus executive candidates, there are key similarities in the top 5 list. It is true that compensation & benefits moved to the #1 spot for executive candidates, but this alone isn't enough to attract talent and retain talent. Both highlight purpose, vision & mission as well as culture.

Similarly, clients highlight the strength of the team and executive candidates highlight confidence in leadership

Clients and Executive Candidates, 2023

Clients

- 1 Purpose, vision & mission
- 2 Culture
- 3 Company brand & reputation
- 4 Strength of team, people
- 5 Compensation & benefits

Executive candidates

- 1 Compensation & benefits
- 2 Confidence in org. leadership
- 3 Ability to drive change
- 4 Purpose, vision & mission
- 5 Culture

Driving Change: A Unifying Theme

In considering that candidates seek organizations where they can drive change, we delved further into the link between attraction and retention and leading change.

Throughout our research – data gathered from clients and AESC members – we hear that clients are seeking leaders who can drive change. We are struck that executive candidates are seeking opportunities to do just that: the ability to drive change is a top 3 priority.

This aligns with data from AESC’s 2023 member outlook survey, in which we asked AESC members, top executive search and leadership consulting advisors, what topics are on clients’ minds. The survey found that 59% of AESC members report their clients are talking about “hiring leaders who can drive change,” as the number one topic clients are raising. “Hiring leaders who can drive change” ranks 14 percentage points higher than the second-ranking topic.

Topics clients are discussing with you



41% of clients surveyed report a strong readiness to lead change.

The alignment between what clients want and need and what top candidates seek is strong. With the ability to lead change a leadership competency in peak demand, we asked clients about their own organizations’ readiness to lead change.

While 41% report a strong readiness to lead change, that leaves more than half of respondents reporting their organizations are just “average” or even below average. Leading digital transformation was even lower with 39% reporting a strong readiness to lead change and over 20% below average or even lower.

AESC members are in an important position to identify those executive candidates who are eager to lead change and have the experiences of demonstrated success with those clients who are open to and ready for change.

Clients and candidates also agree that culture is central to attracting and retaining top talent.

3 The Catalyst is Culture



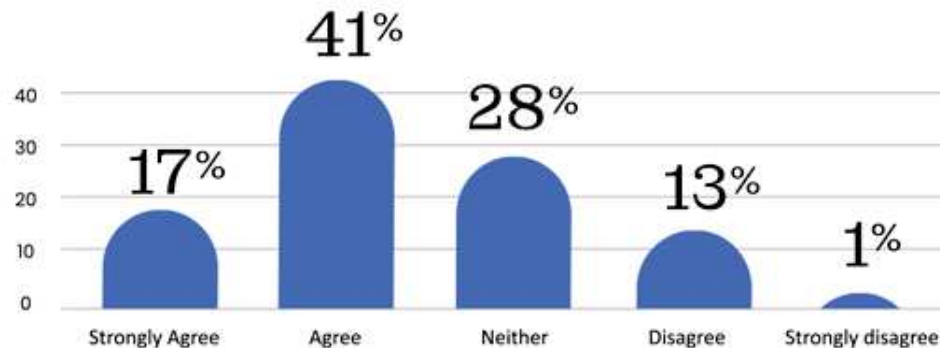
3. The Catalyst is Culture

Culture is the shared values, attitudes and practices that shape an organization. Culture draws people into a company and is the glue that makes them feel part of something – that makes them stay. Culture is the difference between innovation and stagnation; collaboration and isolation; agility and atrophy, inclusion and isolation.

The importance of culture appears consistently across AESC’s research – in our member outlook survey, our candidate survey, and our client survey. Culture is a key driver of organizational success. AESC members understand the importance of a strong, positive culture in attracting and retaining the very best talent.

Culture as an Advantage

In 2023 nearly 60% of clients report that their organizational culture provides a competitive advantage in attracting talent. Only 14% report their culture does not provide a competitive advantage.



Improving Organizational Culture

Based on our survey, it's clear that leaders understand the importance of organizational culture in attracting and retaining top talent. And they see the link between talent and driving innovation, enhancing efficiency and responding quickly and effectively to shifting market trends.

These leaders also understand their role in improving culture – being open, accountable, inclusive and encouraging.

What areas should be prioritized to drive culture improvement? Clients made a clear statement.

Key to culture improvement

Top Two

Communication and transparency

Leadership development & accountability

Next Two

Employee recognition & appreciation

Collaboration & teamwork

The number one key to culture improvement remains the same from earlier surveys: strengthening communication and being more transparent. This remains important especially as organizations continue to navigate remote and hybrid work, and leading teams located in many locations, perhaps even around the world. Effective, transparent communication that is authentic is critical to building a culture of trust.

This leads directly to the second key – the combination of leadership development and leadership accountability. We know how important it is to focus on developing talent across the organization not only in attracting and retaining talent, but in ensuring that talent continues to grow within the organization. Building a culture of both development and accountability is critical.

The next top-ranked choices, employee recognition and appreciation and collaboration and teamwork, are closely followed by the full list, demonstrating the many factors that are required to ensure a strong and effective culture.

The responses tell another important story. Survey respondents were allowed to select only three priorities to improve their cultures. We deliberately created this difficult choice to see which choices might rise to the top. Interestingly, the data shows that everything matters.

Every item was selected in some respondents' top-three, indicating the importance of multiple factors to create a strong culture.

Key to Culture Improvement: Everything Matters!

- 1 Communication and transparency
- 2 Leadership development and accountability
- 3 Employee recognition and appreciation
- 4 Collaboration and teamwork
- 5 Continuous learning / professional growth
- 6 Innovation and creativity
- 7 Trust and mutual respect
- 8 Work/life balance and well-being
- 9 Diversity and inclusion

Culture and DEI

Clients report that their organizations are ready to lead when it comes to DEI. 85% report an average or better readiness, with 46% say they are “advanced” in 2023, representing a four-percentage point improvement over 2021. There remain 17% of respondents who report that their organizations are below average.

Recognizing the critical link between effective cultures and creating an environment that is diverse and inclusive with a sense of belonging by all, we sought to learn more about the DEI strategies that clients around the world find most effective in driving DEI change.

DEI WORKFORCE STRATEGIES:

To lead DEI change, clients must take a strategic approach to engage their workforces. We asked clients to report on the engagement strategies that have had the greatest impact on their DEI initiatives.

High Impact DEI Strategies



The number one strategy identified around the world is creating a safe and inclusive environment. As we reflect on the global trends and events that create a need for safety and inclusion, the impact of political polarization,

social media, economic inequality and cultural and identity issues – it’s no wonder that leaders have identified the important role they can play in creating a safe and inclusive culture.

The second and third strategies aim to answer the question “why should we care about diversity, equity and inclusion?” Leaders have identified strategies that both highlight its importance and the critical roles leaders play in publicly committing to priorities that create an environment where everyone is treated fairly, feels valued, and has a true sense of belonging.

Leaders clearly understand the importance of “tone at the top.”

Employee-led activities celebrating diversity is the fourth most-selected response. AESC’s [DEI Report: Creating Competitive Advantage Through Fairness, Inclusion and Belonging](#) identifies celebration as a key step to achieving sustainable DEI because it builds momentum, provides proof of concept and often can win over skeptics.

CEOs OWN DEI

CEOs are owning DEI and see the role they have to play. For example, 56% of CEOs surveyed identified “Leadership is publicly committed to DEI” in the engagement strategies that have the highest impact.

AESC views DEI as a journey. It is a transformation creating an inclusive environment. Diversity, equity and inclusion are directly related to the other priorities and opportunities identified by clients in this survey: innovation, leading change and customer-centricity.

INCLUSION & OPPORTUNITY IN CLIENT ORGANIZATIONS

We asked two questions designed to evaluate the opportunity to become a top leader in organizations. We focused on women and those who are from an under-represented background. In both cases, there was a difference in views between these leaders and those who are of the majority group. Women saw slightly less opportunity to advance than men saw for women. And those who were under-represented saw less of an opportunity to advance than those who were in the majority. When we look at women versus those who are under-represented, it is also clear that women have more opportunity as perceived by both men, women and those who are in the majority. We have made progress, but we don't yet have equal opportunity for leadership for all.

We asked respondents whether women in their organizations have

Do women have an equal chance as men?



an equal chance as men to become a top leader. The responses for both women and men are positive, at 73% and 79% agreeing (respectively) that women have an equal chance as men. Women are slightly less positive (6 percentage points) and slightly more negative (7 percentage points) than men.

We asked respondents whether individuals from underrepresented backgrounds have an equal chance to become top leaders. The responses from people who do identify as coming from an underrepresented background and those who do not are both positive, at 67% and 80% agreeing (respectively) that individuals from underrepresented backgrounds have an equal chance to become top leaders. Respondents who identified themselves as coming from underrepresented backgrounds are less positive (13 percentage points) and more negative (17 percentage points) than those who do not.

Do individuals from underrepresented backgrounds have an equal chance?



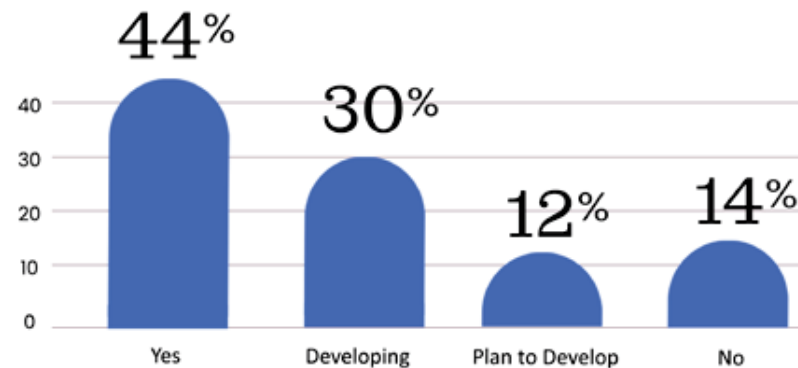
We are encouraged that so many respondents have an optimistic view of the opportunities available to women and individuals from underrepresented groups. However, the actual representation in leadership often lags behind this positive sentiment.

While 77% of client respondents believe that women have an equal chance as men to become top leaders, and 65% believe that people from underrepresented groups have an equal chance, only 48% of these same clients report that their top leaders reflect their customer base.

Culture and Sustainability

Environmental sustainability continues to be an urgent global imperative. Recognizing that different geographies, industries and sizes of organizations are at different stages of sustainability, we framed our sustainability question in a way that allowed for the capture of an organization's intent: they may not be working on a sustainability strategy currently, but they intend to do so. We offered possible answers including yes, developing, plan to develop or no.

Sustainability Strategy – Global Response



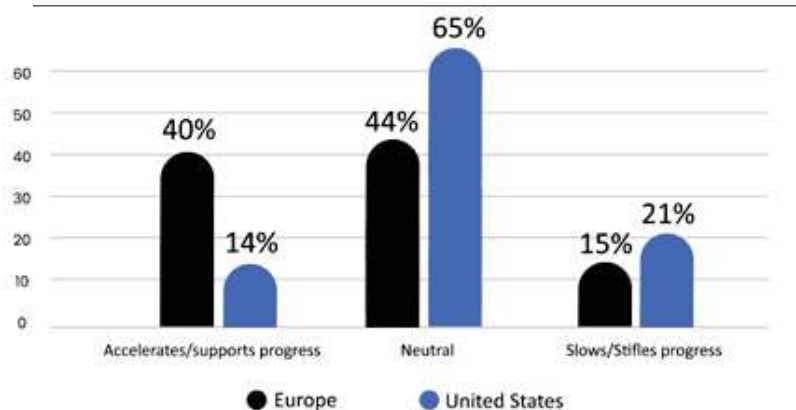
Worldwide, 86% of surveyed report having, developing, or planning to develop a sustainability strategy, with only 14% responding “no,” indicating no plans to develop a strategy.

REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT: A HELP OR HINDERANCE?

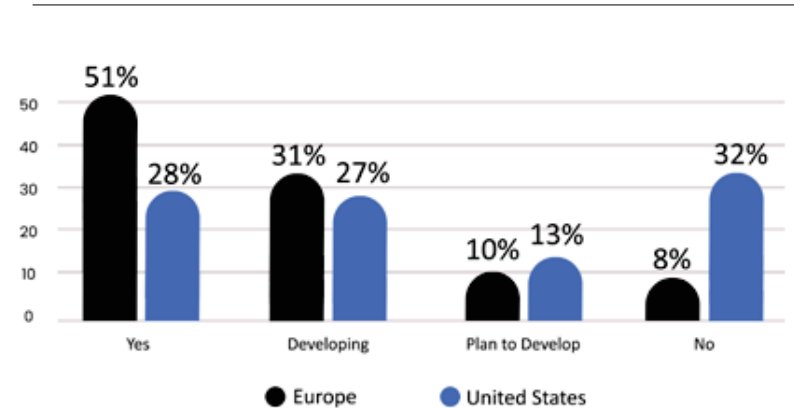
We also asked respondents whether the regulatory environment accelerates and supports progress toward environmental sustainability, is neutral, or slows and stifles progress. While we do not identify specific sustainability regulations in this research, we do see a correlation between respondents reporting a supportive regulatory environment and having or currently developing a sustainability strategy. The chart below does not include respondents who answered “plan to develop.”

- Respondents from the US are the least positive about the regulatory environment and the most likely to have “no” sustainability strategy.
- Respondents from EU countries and Brazil are the most positive about their regulatory environments and most likely to have or be developing a sustainability strategy.

Regulatory Environment



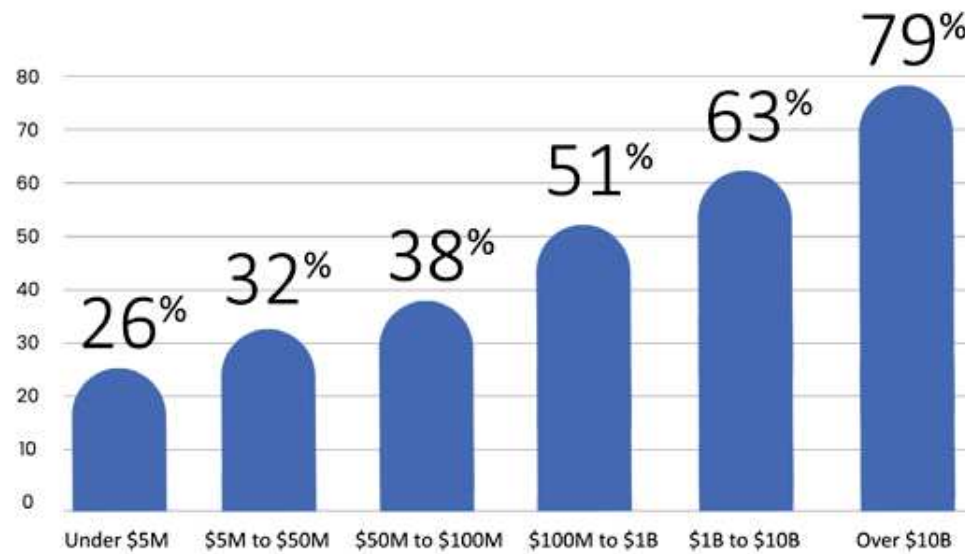
Sustainability Strategy



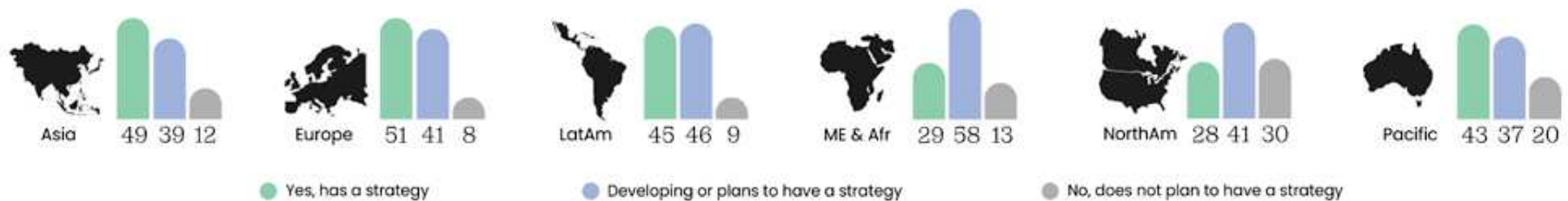
SUSTAINABILITY AND SIZE, INDUSTRY, GEOGRAPHY

The larger the firm, the more likely they'll already have a sustainability strategy. Our data shows a direct correlation between the size of the organization and having a sustainability strategy:

Sustainability - by Organization Size



Sustainability Strategy - Regional Response





4 Talent
and Tech

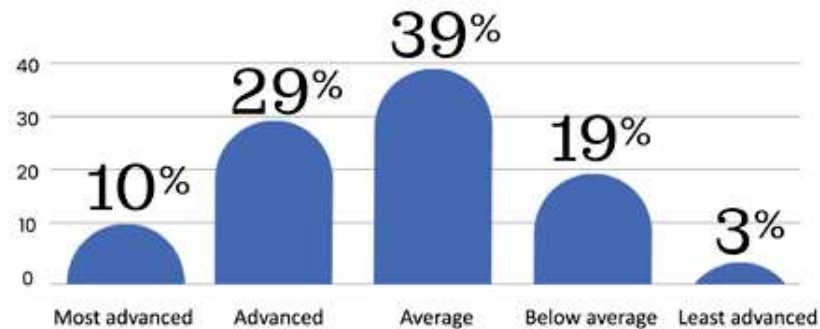
4. Talent and Tech

Ready or not, the influence of technology on business transformation is undeniable. Technology is reshaping industries, altering consumer expectations and forcing organizations to rethink their strategies. Clients identified innovation, efficiency, and shifting trends as the top opportunities in times of uncertainty. We know capturing those opportunities requires the unique combination of people and tech.

Ready to Lead

Clients surveyed report their readiness to lead change in Digital Transformation:

Ready to Lead Change in Digital Transformation



Nearly 40% of clients surveyed rate their organizations' readiness to lead change in digital transformation as advanced or most advanced, a similar percentage of clients who rate their organizations' readiness as average. Only 22% see their organizations as below average or least advanced, which is an indicator that leaders are generally optimistic about their organizations' abilities during the current tech transformation.

Talent in critical and emerging tech roles determines whether an organization can accelerate the adoption of advanced tools and leverage that advantage while assessing and mitigating risks.

In AESC's 2023 State of the Profession Report 41% of members surveyed report their clients are seeking to fill roles related to digital transformation. Respondents identified several emerging C-suite roles they are placing for clients, covering artificial intelligence, transformation, automation, and even the Metaverse.

Priorities in Tech

Technological advances present new opportunities, new ways of working and new threats. We asked clients about their highest tech priorities and the tech priorities that are emerging. Importantly, cybersecurity is the number one priority emphasizing the urgency of managing the growing risk of cyberattacks. The number two priority is data analytics. As access to “big data” grows, businesses understand the edge that they can get through data analytics insights.

1. HIGH PRIORITY



CYBER SECURITY: The innovations, efficiency and speed afforded by new

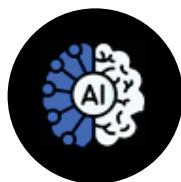
tools are also available to threat actors. Phishing schemes –especially spear-phishing-- are increasingly sophisticated. Similar to software as a services (SaaS), cyber criminals are offering malware as a service, making the latest tools in the threat actor’s arsenal available to anyone who can purchase the subscription. Organized cybercrime is targeting employees as a key point of entry. Attacks have become much more sophisticated.

Members of AESC include a commitment to cybersecurity as a critical element of the “confidentiality” segment of our Code of Conduct.



DATA ANALYTICS: The ability to capture data has grown exponentially in recent years, and newer, easy-to-use tools allow for improved data analytics. Data analytics enhance decision-making, improve operational efficiency, and strengthen customer understanding. Data analytics can also improve target marketing effectiveness.

2. EMERGING PRIORITY



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: While artificial intelligence has been around for quite

some time, advancements in generative AI combined with an increase in big data availability has created transformational opportunities.

Businesses identify AI as the top emerging priority indicating its importance but also the reality that businesses are still learning how to create competitive advantage by successfully integrating AI to drive innovation, capture efficiencies, and gain insight into shifting market trends.

Main Risks Associated with Using AI

The explosive growth of generative AI tools in the last year alone indicates widespread curiosity on the benefits that can be achieved, balanced with caution related to risk management. Executives surveyed identified the main risks and areas of concern associated with the use of AI.

First among the risks identified is data privacy and security, which aligns with the “highest tech priority” of cyber security.

- 1 Data privacy and security
- 2 Legal and regulatory challenges
- 3 Ethical considerations in AI decision-making
- 4 Resistance to change in organization
- 5 Lack of transparency in AI decision-making
- 6 Biased outcomes
- 7 Operational Risks

How Organizations Are Using AI

The top three ways clients are using AI: data analysis, process automation and chatbots, followed by predictive modeling, text analysis and translation.

- 1 Data analysis
- 2 Process automation
- 3 Chatbots
- 4 Predictive modeling
- 5 Text analysis
- 6 Translation

5 What it Takes Right Now



5. What it Takes Now

We are intrigued to learn from clients around the world the most important competencies they need in the current business environment. We intentionally asked, “What strengths and competencies do you need...,” rather than “what competencies are needed for leaders.” Respondents had the opportunity to select up to three strengths and competencies from a list of 30 choices.

Strengths and Competencies

This year brought about a shift in the strengths and competencies clients believe are most important in their roles in the current business environment.

Notably, 2023 is the first time that emotional intelligence ranked at the top of the list.

Clients 2023



Clients 2022



The top three strengths and competencies paint an interesting leadership picture. Leaders understand the importance of emotional intelligence. In fact, this came before results-oriented. Why? Likely leaders understand that without truly connecting with people with empathy and understanding, results will be almost impossible to achieve.

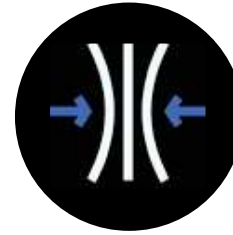
Strengths and competencies important now



Emotionally intelligent



Results oriented



Resilient

These same leaders identified the risk of strained employee morale further emphasizing the need for emotional intelligence. The third highest area is resilience, an area that emerged as a critical competency for successful leadership during COVID and remains important.

Executive candidates also understood the importance of emotional intelligence with this competency making their top 5 list. However, these executives selected customer-centric, results-oriented and adaptable as their top three strengths and competencies and also included being innovative. We can see many similarities but some differences when comparing the two “top 5” lists.

Strengths and competencies – Clients vs BlueSteps

Clients

- 1 Emotionally intelligent
- 2 Results oriented
- 3 Resilient
- 4 Customer-centric
- 5 Value creator

Executive Candidates

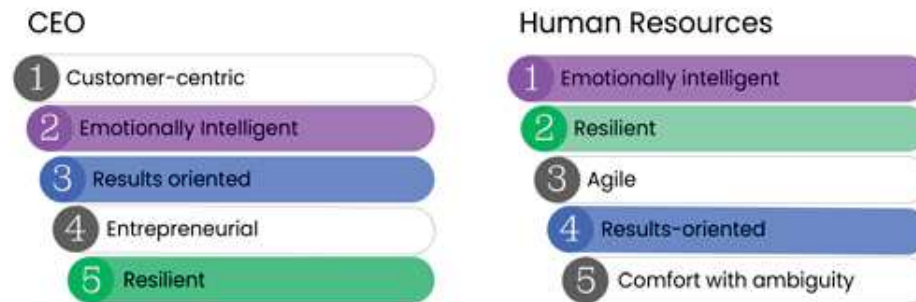
- 1 Customer-centric
- 2 Results oriented
- 3 Adaptable
- 4 Emotionally intelligent
- 5 Innovative

CEO AND HR PERSPECTIVES

The top two roles of respondents to our survey were CEO and Board Directors (36%) and HR related roles (23%). With strong responses from CEOs and HR executives specifically, we had the ability to compare responses from both groups.

CEOs and HR executives agreed on three of the top 5 strengths and competencies for the current business environment: emotionally intelligent, results-oriented, and resilient. CEOs also identified being customer-centric and entrepreneurial. HR leaders also identified agile and being comfortable with ambiguity – two strengths that are not surprising considering the challenges HR leaders face every day.

Strengths and competencies – CEOs vs HR



WHAT WE MEAN BY EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Emotional intelligence, also known as EQ, is the ability to be aware of, control and express one's emotions and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically (Oxford Languages definition). According to Hogan Assessments, "People with higher EQ scores have these four advantages at work: 1. They perceive what others feel and why they behave in certain ways. 2. They are rewarding to deal with and hard to provoke. 3. They remain calm in stressful situations and handle pressure well. 4. They are enthusiastic and optimistic about work."

The Optimistic Leader

Hogan identifies the correlation between optimism and emotional intelligence. In fact, we believe that an optimistic leader is uniquely suited to create competitive advantage. These leaders inspire others, are inclusive and see the value in all, encourage innovation and importantly see opportunities where others see only challenges.

Optimism as a Competitive Advantage

A leader who can inspire, who can see and leverage all the value people have to offer, a leader who encourages innovation and can spot the opportunities amidst uncertainty and challenge – that leader who combines a results-orientation with optimism and inspiration will have a competitive advantage.

We asked leaders worldwide to identify the factors – external and internal—that impact their businesses, and their answers highlight the critical importance of attracting and retaining talent. We asked leaders to identify the greatest risks and opportunities in times of uncertainty and again, their answers highlight the importance that the right talent plays in driving growth through innovation, operational efficiency, and adapting to shifting market trends. These same leaders, when asked to identify the strengths and competencies they most need in the current business environment, identified emotional intelligence, results-orientation and resilience. For the first time, emotional intelligence topped the list.

An emotionally intelligent leader focuses on building an inclusive culture that allows everyone to contribute while leading with realistic optimism. This unique combination of leadership competencies, combined with a people-centered culture that allows the business to attract and retain the right talent, positions a business to turn challenges into unique, differentiated opportunities.

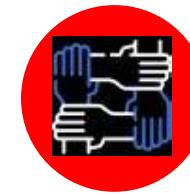
AESC members meet the highest standards in the profession as a condition of membership. AESC members focus on their clients' unique business needs, providing high quality service and using rigorous, evidence-informed, results-focused methodologies. They innovate new solutions when unique and complex challenges require a fresh approach.

Like optimism, working with an AESC member is a competitive advantage.

Optimistic Leaders...



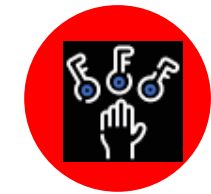
...inspire others



...are inclusive and see value in all



...encourage innovation



...see opportunities (where others see only challenges)

Methodology

AESC conducted two surveys to inform this report: A survey of organizational leaders who are clients or prospective clients of executive search and leadership consulting firms, and Executive Candidates. The surveys were developed in May-June 2023, in parallel to previous AESC client surveys to maintain comparative value. In 2023 AESC changed some questions as indicated in the relevant report sections.

The Client Survey was distributed through AESC’s member networks in order to reach clients directly through the members who serve them:

- All-member emails
- AESC Board and council emails
- Member Co-branded survey distribution
- Member social media

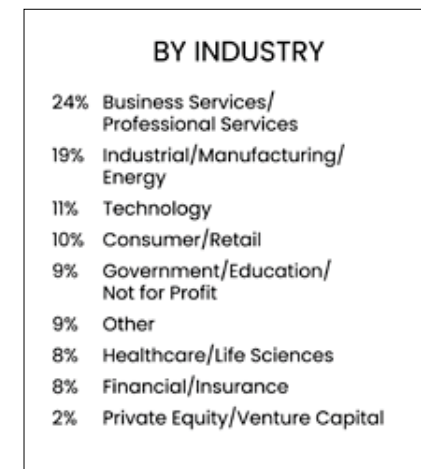
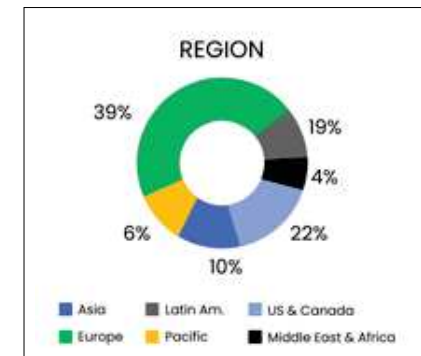
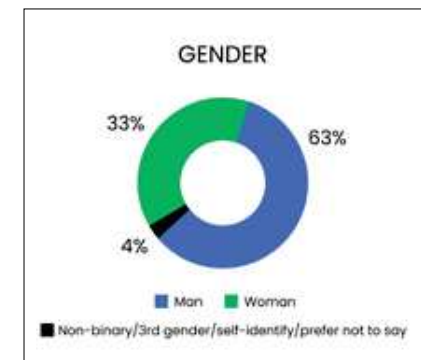
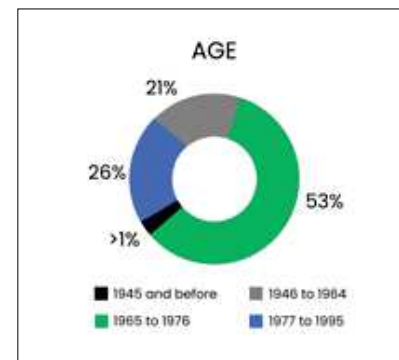
We also reached out to clients and prospective clients through AESC’s digital channels:

- LinkedIn
- AESC’s client-facing SmartBrief newsletter

The Candidate Survey was distributed by email to registrants and members of AESC’s BlueSteps Career Services platform.

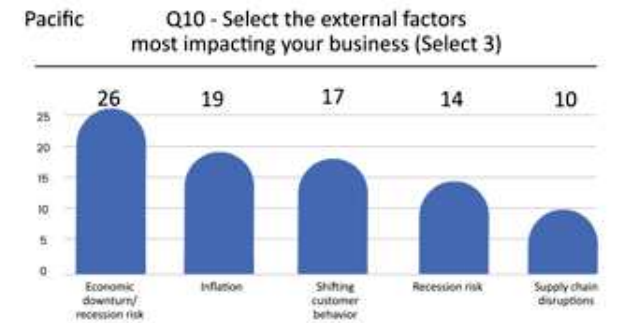
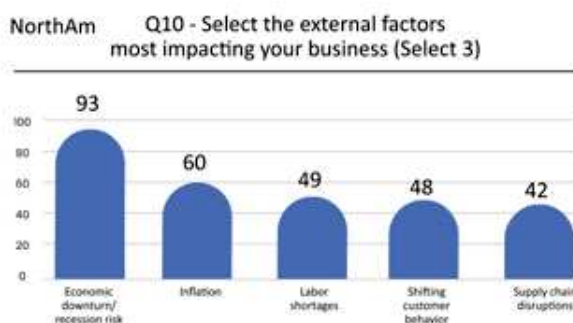
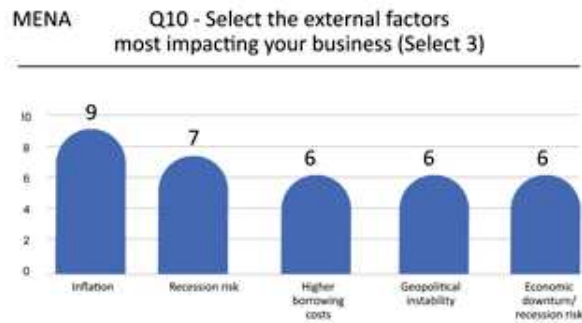
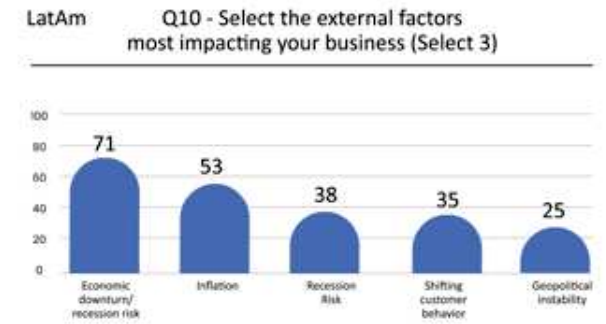
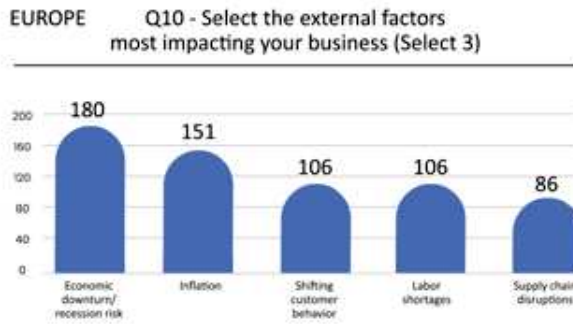
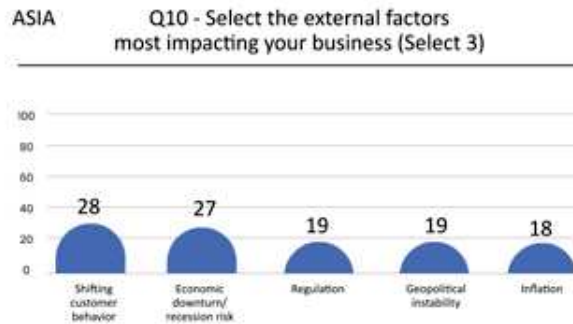
Surveys opened on June 22, 2023 and closed September 30, 2023.

1,346 client executives responded to the Client Survey. 768 BlueSteps candidates responded to the Candidate Survey.



Appendix

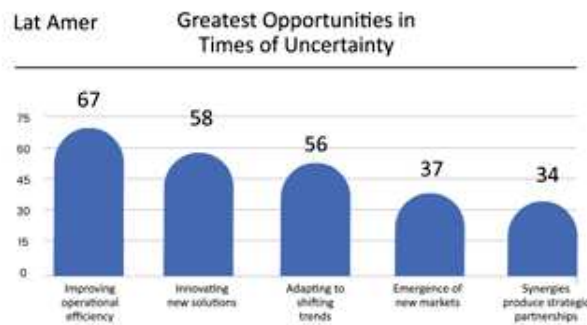
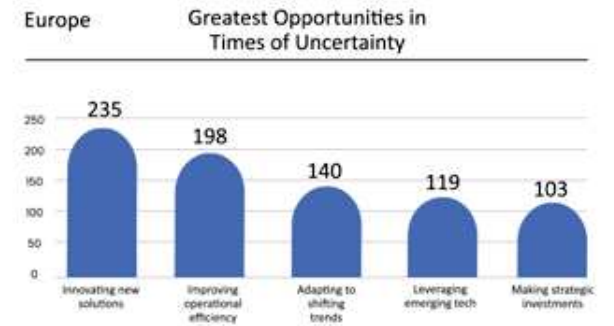
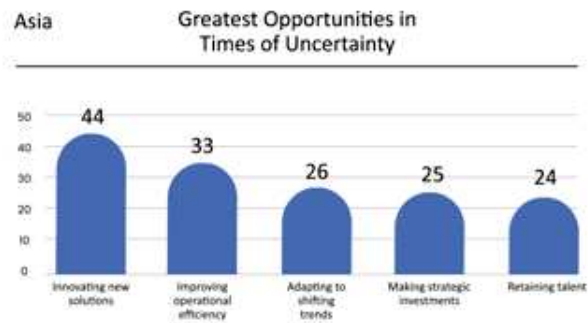
EXTERNAL FACTORS: A REGIONAL VIEW



GREATEST RISKS IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY: A REGIONAL VIEW

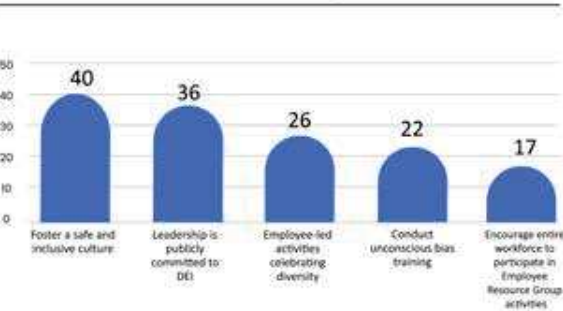


GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY: A REGIONAL VIEW

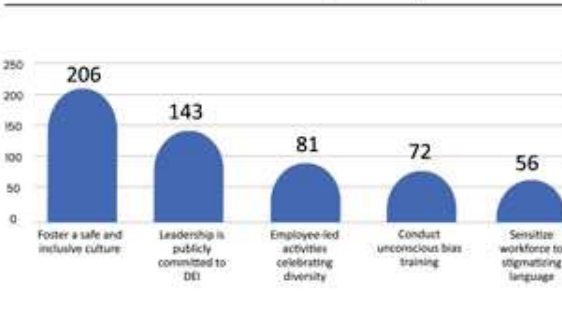


DEI WORKFORCE STRATEGIES: A REGIONAL VIEW

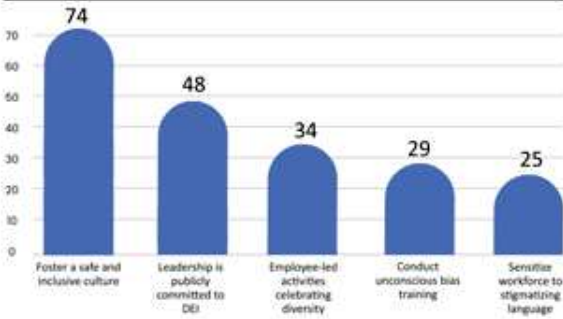
DEI Workforce Strategies - Asia



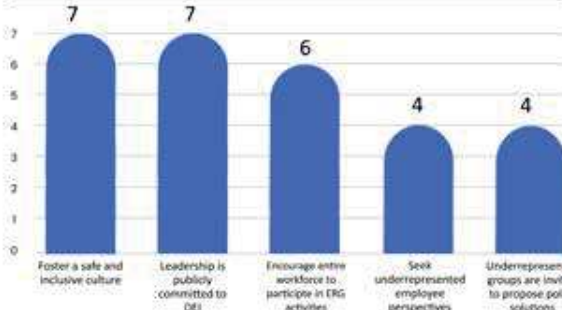
DEI Workforce Strategies - Europe



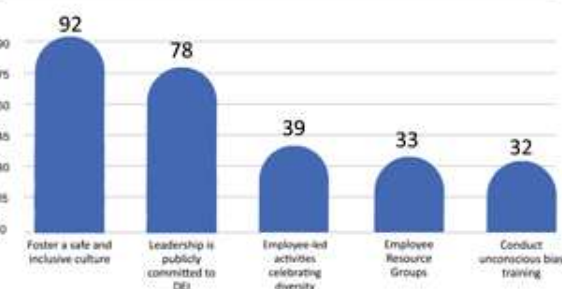
DEI Workforce Strategies - Latin America



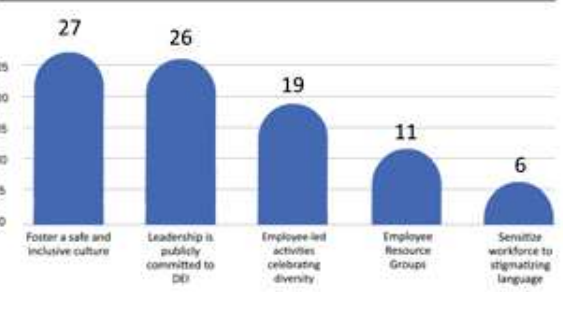
DEI Workforce Strategies - MENA



DEI Workforce Strategies - US and Canada



DEI Workforce Strategies - Pacific



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