




Trends and Leadership Priorities for 2022

What Matters Most?

1

Highlights:

- As the business environment in 2022 evolves, leaders need to focus on themes that matter for business resilience and competitive positioning. Amongst these are sustainable growth, digital strategy, data analytics, ecosystem partnerships, supply chain, customer experience and talent.
- Every business is now a digital business. Leaders must pursue a digital culture that progressively and intentionally enhances the digital capabilities of the business, its people, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Data is your new currency. Leaders must ensure that the data collection strategy is robust and addresses the immediate needs of the business in a forward-looking manner.
- Ecosystem partnerships are crucial for business resilience and innovation. It may be instructive to focus on organisations that provide complementary products and services. This ensures that growth within the ecosystem is reinforcing.
- A working customer experience strategy is important and must show how the business will increase customer satisfaction at all interactions, from discovery to post-purchase.



The world has changed dramatically over the last two years. Early adaptation and experimentation of digital-oriented service delivery models in the last decade has brought necessary shifts in business thinking. As a result, business leaders are now busy with the task of understanding what has changed in their operating environment and the impact on their current and future market positioning. As markets struggle to grapple with manpower impacts of the pandemic-induced [Great Reshuffle](#) on business models, the world is again thrown into a state of fragile uncertainty following the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resultant impacts of this on global inflation, energy prices and supply chains. Businesses now require a new type of focus and resilience to pull through 2022 and the coming years. To put it another way, leaders need to step back, take a breath, and consider how best to reignite growth sustainably, implement robust digital strategy, build ecosystem partnerships, empower digital talents, have resilient supply chains and a working customer experience strategy to position the business for sustained success.

Reigniting business growth

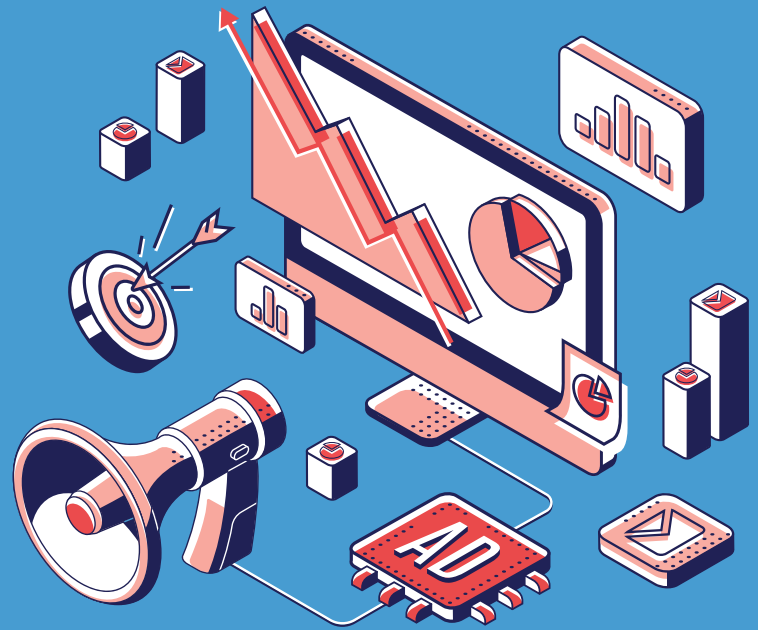
The pandemic phase of COVID-19 appears to be ending for most locations, unless a significant and severe new variant emerges. The task before business leaders is how to emerge stronger and deliver even superior growth. Governments are easing restrictions globally, supply chain disruptions are normalizing, interest rates are being adjusted upwards, people are going back to their jobs. These events present opportunities for economic growth and a pressing need for businesses to reignite growth. All things being equal, we see the likelihood of a V-shaped recovery globally as pent-up demand activates a boom in most markets. For most organisations, the pandemic did slow the tempo of growth as they focused on survival and stabilization, but for few others, it has been a catalyst that has supercharged their digital transformation, and growth.

A necessary and first line of action for leaders could be an evaluation of the entire business model to establish (and fix) vulnerabilities that could have been exposed by the pandemic, or gradually embrace a new operating model. Leaders must embrace emerging opportunities (and challenges), and deploy ambitious, bold, and action-oriented strategies to create the required momentum for competitiveness, productivity, and sustainability. To succeed, investments in digital technologies and talents are non-negotiable.



Digital strategy must be all-encompassing

Every business is now a digital business. Digital strategy must be robust, beginning with the end in mind. It is business strategy that drives digital transformation, not technology. The pandemic accelerated digital investments, innovation, and awareness exponentially, fast forwarding digital transformation by decades. Nonetheless, the need for digital progress across companies, industries and markets remain existential. The world of work has been significantly disrupted by technology and created new expectations from customers and employees. Technology now has the capacity to transform nearly every aspect of the operations of every organisation, and leaders must ensure that their business model is well aligned. Leaders must take digital reinvention more seriously and lead a digital culture that permeates every aspect of the business.



To build a winning digital strategy, business leaders must pursue a digital culture that progressively and intentionally enhances the digital capabilities of the business, its people, and the broader stakeholders. Leaders must seek a realistic appreciation of vulnerabilities and opportunities, blend digital and corporate strategies, and rewire their organisation, for agility. Leaders must approach digitisation comprehensively, embracing solutions that digitises operations end-to-end.

Data is your new currency

Digitalisation has produced an explosion in the quantity, depth, and value of data of all kinds. This data is created by customers and the devices businesses use, and then becomes a product that can be processed, packaged and sold as an input in the production process, or utilised internally to improve production or sales. Decision intelligence tools such as dashboards and business intelligence platforms are deployed towards using data to make better business decisions. An important driver of data optimisation is data literacy. Employees should be equipped with the capacity to recognise, collect, analyse, extract insights from data and utilise such insight for business decisions. Most organisations situate data literacy within the marketing department as an enabler for more online sales. In today's marketplace, every department must use data to enhance its operations and deliver greater value.

As a starting point, leaders must ensure that the data collection strategy is robust and addresses the immediate needs of the business in a forward-looking manner. This is because data-driven decisions are only as good as the data they are based on. To efficiently utilise the power of data, leaders must invest in good big data technologies to evaluate, process and extract insights from data. This data infrastructure can be on-premises, single-cloud, multi-cloud, and hybrid-cloud implementations. Equally important is the recruitment, training and retention of data analysts, data engineers, data scientists, and business analysts who will bring needed data analytics capabilities to the business and help transform data into business insights and intelligence to aid management decision.



Ecosystem partnerships could help boost growth and innovation

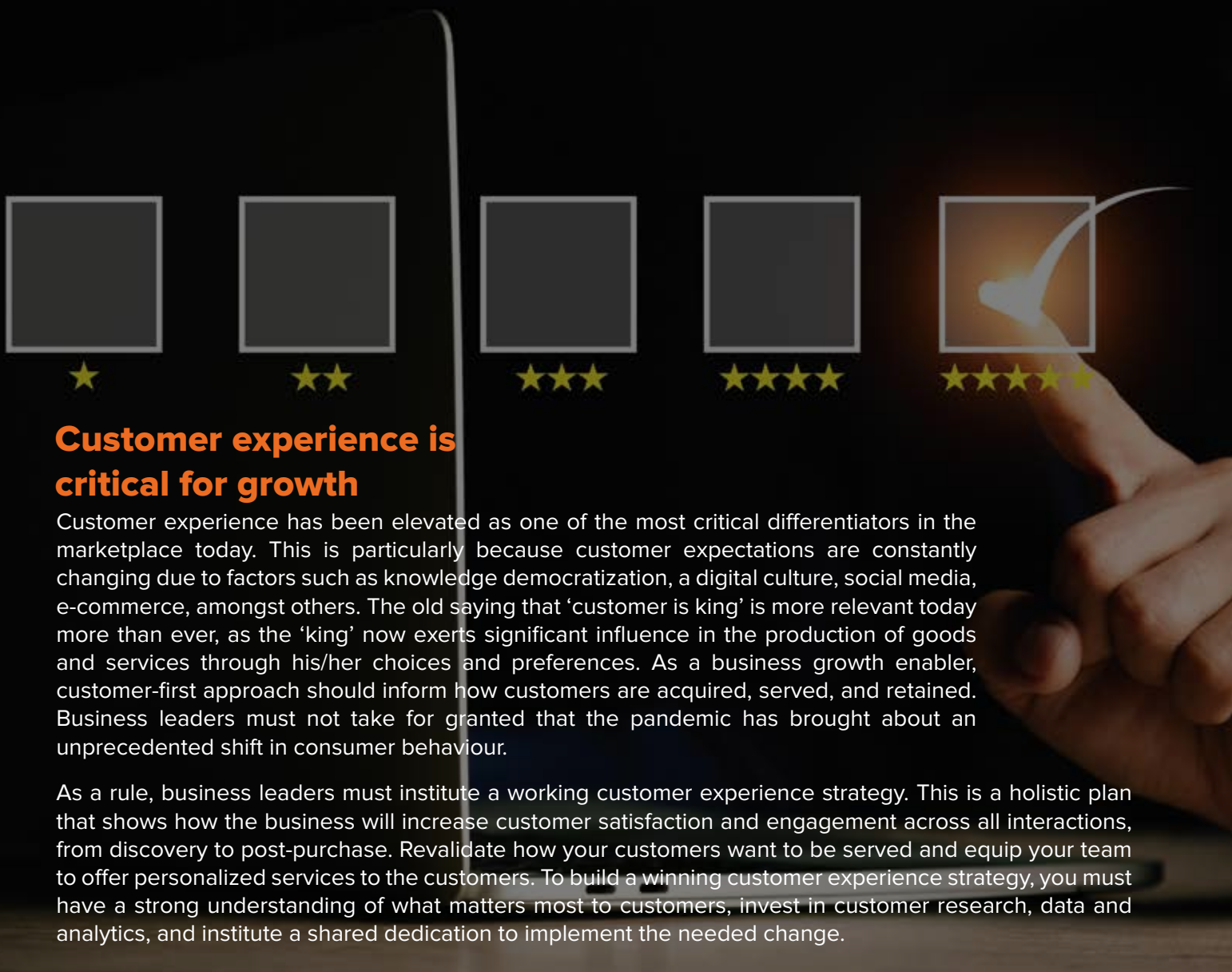
As technology continues to break barriers across sectors and business models, leaders must leverage the increased interconnectedness and interdependence of businesses to drive mutually reinforcing growth. Ecosystem partnerships is crucial for business resilience and innovation. In a recent [Accenture survey](#), 90% of C-suite executives surveyed consider an ecosystem business model important for their company's post-pandemic growth and resilience. By engaging with your ecosystem, your business becomes part of the bigger solution and gains access to larger market. An ecosystem helps stimulate new ideas, new products and new solutions that are more responsive to changing customer requirements. Within the ecosystem, knowledge of market trends and the customer is enhanced collectively, leading to better customer experience. When your partner wins, so do you!

To build ecosystem partnerships, leaders must understand who their customers are, the customer need(s) their businesses address, and companies that provide solutions that address same or other needs of the customer. It may be instructive to focus on organisations that provide complementary products and services. This ensures that growth within the ecosystem is reinforcing. Nevertheless, there must be clarity on a few questions: where on the value chain does your partners' goods and services sit? How does the ecosystem help promote sales and marketing, customer growth and revenue?

Supply chain bottlenecks must be addressed sustainably

Supply chain management systems must be set up to quickly respond to changing demand, supply, and market dynamics, and deliver a resilient business process that addresses emerging uncertainties. Multinationals could consider manufacturing some semi-inputs at base then ship to other markets to complete production/assembly or packaging. This may help to contain costs, build some capability closer to home and more importantly ensure that there is minimal disruption to their supply chain and therefore no gaps in supply to their consumer markets. Technology can also be leveraged to deliver supply chain networks that are smart, dynamic, responsive and enables multi-enterprise collaboration.

Business leaders must ensure that the five components of traditional supply chain management systems (Planning, Sourcing, Manufacturing, Delivery & Logistics, and Returning) are agile and responsive to the elevated uncertainties in the operating environment. Consider expanding supply sources of inputs (or raw materials) and/or review their existing contract with suppliers/off-takers, with particular attention to dependability, flexibility, and cost effectiveness. Supply chain solutions can be bought off-the-shelf or developed in-house to digitize and address the unique business models.



Customer experience is critical for growth

Customer experience has been elevated as one of the most critical differentiators in the marketplace today. This is particularly because customer expectations are constantly changing due to factors such as knowledge democratization, a digital culture, social media, e-commerce, amongst others. The old saying that ‘customer is king’ is more relevant today more than ever, as the ‘king’ now exerts significant influence in the production of goods and services through his/her choices and preferences. As a business growth enabler, customer-first approach should inform how customers are acquired, served, and retained. Business leaders must not take for granted that the pandemic has brought about an unprecedented shift in consumer behaviour.

As a rule, business leaders must institute a working customer experience strategy. This is a holistic plan that shows how the business will increase customer satisfaction and engagement across all interactions, from discovery to post-purchase. Revalidate how your customers want to be served and equip your team to offer personalized services to the customers. To build a winning customer experience strategy, you must have a strong understanding of what matters most to customers, invest in customer research, data and analytics, and institute a shared dedication to implement the needed change.

In summary, the digital age comes with such information overload that could make executives struggle to maintain focus on strategic issues. Effective leadership in the digital economy then requires some deliberate synthesis of what matters most, what should be delegated, and what should be ignored. We believe that over the next 12 months, business leaders need to focus on growth, digital strategy, ecosystem partnerships, supply chains, talent engagement and customer experience. Whilst not exhaustive, these are critical to achieving resilience and sustainable growth as the operating environment remains uncertain. It is equally important that leaders pursue these priorities in an inclusive manner. Team members need a sense of belonging and value in order to bring their best selves to the workplace.

Leaders must provide the necessary resources and support to achieve employee fulfilment and best business outcomes. As organisations position for a hybrid world of work, inclusive leadership becomes more critical for performance, innovation, and engagement. Series II of this publication will focus on managing talents in the digital era – from hybrid work to talent scarcity and employee experience and engagement.

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Verraki is a proudly African company partnering with enterprises and governments to accelerate the development and transformation of Africa by providing business solutions designed for Africa. We build and implement technology solutions for seemingly intractable challenges, provide advisory services to drive the capacity and motivation for change, and curate innovative ventures to unlock new sources of growth across our continent.

A fusion of two words: 'Versorium' (Latin for Turn Around) and 'Meraki' (Greek word used to describe the action of doing something with soul, creativity, pouring oneself into a task), Verraki aptly captures the essence of our company; to turn around African enterprises and governments via smart, future-focused solutions and business insights, new growth opportunities, helping to unleash their potential, turnaround their performance and achieve the seemingly impossible, with the sole goal of creating a better future for Africa.

We are committed to enabling the African (start-up) story by supporting high-impact socially-conscious entrepreneurs and catalysing self-sustaining enterprises and governments within the continent to deliver affordable services across critical sectors.

Our Growth Optimisation Offering

The contemporary business environment is dramatically different from what it was ten years ago, and it continues to evolve at an increasing rate. Consumer trends, macroeconomic shifts, technological advances, changing competitive dynamics and pandemics are accelerating the pace of change, leaving many businesses struggling to grow amidst the turbulence.

At Verraki, we understand client needs and provide innovative new approaches that help enterprises and governments to explore new market opportunities including expansion into new regions, identification of new channels, targeting of new customer segments, or even the creation of new product categories in a way that moves them from "surviving" to "thriving." Verraki develops and delivers the practical tools, frameworks, and organizational capabilities required to gain competitive advantage, and achieve sustainable growth, utilising customer insights, big data, and proprietary knowledge to achieve a deeper understanding of demand, customers, competitors, and opportunities.

Our seasoned executives and team have a broad range of multibillion-dollar P&L experience delivering long-term growth and optimisation vision, strategies, and management at global Fortune 500 companies.

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