
News release

Date: 10 February 2022

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Pages: 3 pages

Asia Pacific CEO optimism hits ten-year high, PwC reports

- 76% predict a stronger global economy in the coming year, comparable to global CEOs.
- Relative levels of optimism vary across Asia Pacific countries - the most positive being India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.
- Asia Pacific CEOs rank health risks (58%) as their top priority to address. The second most pressing concern is cyber risks.
- Many businesses in Asia Pacific are proactive in their approach to climate commitments.
- Despite rising interest in Environment, Social and Governance (ESG), strategy is still primarily driven by business metrics.
- Vietnam's GDP growth is believed to get back to 6% - 6.5%, which will be driven by a return of strong foreign direct investment (FDI) into the market.

10 February 2022: Asia Pacific CEOs continue to face pressure generated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and market conditions such as rising inflation, supply chain disruptions and the 'Great Resignation'. Despite an array of shifting headwinds, the CEOs that we surveyed in the region are the most optimistic they have been in ten years about the prospects for a stronger economy in the coming year. 76% predict the global economy will improve, while only 17% expect worsening conditions.

This year's optimism level is slightly higher than a year ago (73%) and significantly higher than 2020, when almost half (48%) of Asia Pacific CEOs predicted a declining economy. These are findings from PwC's 25th Annual Global CEO Survey - Asia Pacific, which polled 4,446 global CEOs from 89 countries and territories worldwide, including 1,618 from Asia Pacific between October - November 2021.

Optimism is trending upwards in most countries within Asia Pacific - the most positive being India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore where ~90% of CEOs anticipate global growth in the coming year.

Confidence in global economic growth translates to a high degree of optimism for Asia Pacific CEO's own businesses: 50% are 'very confident' or 'extremely confident' in 12 month revenue growth prospects.

Nguyen Luong Hien, Deals/Strategy Partner of PwC Vietnam said: "The high level of CEO optimism we found speaks to the strength and resilience of the global economy and the ability of CEOs to manage through uncertainty. In Vietnam, the policy of "living safely with COVID-19" has led to an aggressive vaccination campaign. This allowed the country to resume business activities in late 2021. Vietnam's GDP growth is expected to get back to 6 - 6.5%, which will be driven, in part, by a return of strong foreign direct investment (FDI) into the market. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which took effect from 1 January, will further boost trade and subsequently post-pandemic economic recovery by forming a stable and long-term export market for Vietnam and other ASEAN countries."

Health risks top Asia Pacific CEOs' concerns

CEOs' optimism is high for the most part, but they are also well aware of potential threats that could affect their companies over the coming 12 months.

Asia Pacific CEOs rank health risks (58%) as their top priority to address. It is a clear 10% higher than their global peers who list cyber as their most pressing concern. Not far behind for Asia Pacific CEOs is cyber risk (44%) and macroeconomic volatility (43%).

In Vietnam, health risks are also concerning CEOs. The emergence of the Omicron variant, which is believed to spread quickly, brings fresh worry to the business community. Besides that, cyber risks, particularly third-party risks, which are obscured by the complexity of business relationships between companies and their vendor/supplier networks, are posing threats to organisations.

Dinh Thi Quynh Van, CEO/General Director of PwC Vietnam, commented: "This inaugural Asia Pacific report highlights more than ever the unique challenges facing senior executives in the region. Translating economic fundamentals into revenue growth remains the priority. In Vietnam's pursuit to achieve a socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable growth trajectory, our nation will need the involvement from all stakeholders, including the government, businesses and the society. It's timely for us to build trust among various parties and drive sustainable outcomes for all - underpinning PwC's very own New Equation strategy."

Going Green gaining momentum

Asia Pacific CEOs are ahead of their global peers in net-zero and carbon-neutral commitments: 60-69% of CEOs in the region have made, or are progressing a net-zero and/or carbon-neutral commitment - a clear 9-13% ahead of global peers. In addition to those CEOs that have made net-zero commitments, 11% more Asia Pacific CEOs (77% vs. 66% global CEOs) have had their approach independently assessed and validated. A higher proportion of Asia Pacific CEOs have also embedded these emissions targets into their strategy (43% vs. 37% global CEOs).



Despite rising interest in climate change, non-financial outcomes as well as ESG, strategy is still primarily driven by business metrics such as customer/staff satisfaction and automation/digitisation goals. Much less well-represented, in strategies and compensation, are targets related to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and gender representation or racial and ethnic diversity: only 19% of Asia Pacific CEOs have such targets in their annual bonus or long-term incentive plan.

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About ["PwC's 25th Annual Global CEO Survey - Asia Pacific"](#)

The report offers a revelatory look at how the region's executives are meeting the most pressing challenges of the day, from navigating an uneven global economic recovery to preparing for a net zero society. It also provides insights for leaders who are seeking to deliver sustained outcomes for multiple stakeholders in the face of near-term financial pressure.

About ["PwC's 25th Annual Global CEO Survey"](#)

PwC surveyed 4,446 CEOs in 89 countries and territories in October and November of 2021. The global and regional figures in this report are weighted proportionally to country or regional nominal GDP to ensure that CEOs' views are representative across all major regions. 94% of the interviews were conducted online and 6% by post, by telephone or face-to-face. All quantitative interviews were conducted on a confidential basis. We also conducted in-depth interviews with CEOs from five global regions (North America, Latin America, Western Europe, Asia-Pacific and Africa). Some of these interviews are quoted in this report; in most cases, the full interviews can be found at strategy-business.com/mindoftheceo.

About PwC

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